



ASPEN, *Populus tremuloides*



Information, reference, and awareness building  
for the SoL Sustainability Consortium

## Sustainability Consortium news

### SoL-related meetings

**January 19-23, 2005**, Holyoke, Massachusetts  
Autonomy And Interdependence: The Exercise Of  
Authority And Leadership In A Changing World  
[www.csgrs.org/Autonomy-Interdependence](http://www.csgrs.org/Autonomy-Interdependence)  
[marc.kessler@uvm.edu](mailto:marc.kessler@uvm.edu)

**March 21-23, 2005**, Politechnic of Bari in  
Southern Italy  
The SoL European Sustainability Group (SoL ESG)  
will hold its fifth meeting [v.albino@poliba.it](mailto:v.albino@poliba.it)  
[pennykennington@waitrose.com](mailto:pennykennington@waitrose.com)

**April 26-28, 2005**, Cost of Maine  
(just north of Boston)  
SoL Sustainability Consortium Spring Member  
Meeting [SeedSara@aol.com](mailto:SeedSara@aol.com)

### ADVANCE NOTICE:

**September 13-17**, Vienna  
SoL Global Forum. We are planning a joint  
presentation at event with the SoL European  
Sustainability Group. Any members of the SoL  
Sustainability Consortium who would like to  
participate in the planning and execution of this  
joint event please contact:

[Joe Laur - joe.laur@seedsys.com](mailto:Joe.Laur-joe.laur@seedsys.com)  
[Sara Schley - SeedSara@aol.com](mailto:Sara.Schley-SeedSara@aol.com)

N<sup>o</sup> 04

January 2005

### Fall Forum Recap - Bob Siegel

*Submitted by Bob Siegel PE, RIT Center for Integrated Manufacturing Studies  
[rainmt@rochester.rr.com](mailto:rainmt@rochester.rr.com)*

Compassion, wisdom, and concern teamed up with science, technology and business at the Society for Organizational Learning (SOL)'s Fall Sustainability Forum in Dearborn, Michigan which had over 300 registered attendees. The event felt like an entrance ramp of possibility onto the superhighway of commerce. Indeed, one of the questions most often asked was, how can we merge onto the sustainable road that these visionaries are talking about, without sliding off the pavement that sustains us now? That pavement, as any number of the forum's speakers, from SOL's Peter Senge, the maestro of the learning organization, to Rocky Mountain Institute's alternative energy guru, Amory Lovins, to Wall Street's Socially Responsible Investor, Frank Dixon, all tell us, is full of potholes and only likely to get worse unless some serious changes are made. *Continued on page 3.*

### How Sustainable Is This Conference?

The Carbon Dioxide Impact of the 2004 Society for Organizational Learning Sustainability Forum *Written and submitted by Michael Sklar,  
[p3solutions@comcast.net](mailto:p3solutions@comcast.net)*

### Executive Summary

Everyday activities can have surprisingly large impacts on emissions of global warming gases. Activities associated with the Society of Organizational Learning Business Sustainability Forum held in Dearborn, Michigan on October 11-14, 2004 created carbon dioxide emissions estimated at 312 tons, or 2,270 pounds per person, based on energy used directly in transportation, lodging, and conference center building operations. Currently available technologies could reduce these emissions, in some cases yielding net cost reductions. Alternatively, these emissions could be offset at relatively modest (~\$2-\$10/ton, or \$2.50-11/person) cost through tree planting or other mitigation initiatives. *Continued on page 4.*

# Among the Fortune 500, a not-so-subtle turn to the left

*Submitted by Sibel Bulay Koyluoglu skoyluog@ford.com*

Article by Marc Gunther appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle on December 5, 2004

Much of America has been grumpy or depressed since Election Day. Some are even said to be in mourning. But people who dread four more years of George W. Bush might cheer up if they take the long view beyond Washington to the corporate world. They'd find that even as America is supposedly turning conservative, big business is moving to the left.

Of course, persuading anyone, let alone a liberal, that America's most powerful companies are becoming more socially responsible is no easy task. In the wake of Enron and other scandals, cynicism about big business is rampant. But the truth is that corporate America is gradually becoming more compassionate, more green, more diverse, more transparent and more committed to serving the common good — as well as the bottom line.

For example: Hewlett-Packard, Dell and IBM recently agreed on a far-reaching code of conduct to protect the health, safety, labor and human rights of people who work for their suppliers in the developing world. Their suppliers, who make electronics in Mexico, China and Southeast Asia, will be audited to insure compliance. Facilities that fail the tests will have to reform or lose business. Social activists praised the computer-makers, ordinarily arch-rivals, for joining together to protect workers' rights. No law requires them to do so.

For the complete article visit: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2004/12/05/EDGUNTHER05.DTL&type=printable>

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## Recent Publications and Resources

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### Is There Really A Climate Change Consensus?

*Excerpt taken from [www.worldchanging.com](http://www.worldchanging.com), Submitted by Peter Senge [psenge@MIT.EDU](mailto:psenge@MIT.EDU)* Yes. Naomi Oreskes at Science magazine undertook a study of the 928 peer-reviewed papers and reports published between 1993 and 2003 which included the keywords "climate change" when indexed. Not one of them argued that observed climate change was natural in origin. As Oreskes puts it: This analysis shows that scientists publishing in the peer-reviewed literature agree with IPCC, the National Academy of Sciences, and the public statements of their professional societies. Politicians, economists, journalists, and others may have the impression of confusion, disagreement, or discord among climate scientists, but that impression is incorrect. Many details about climate interactions are not well understood, and there are ample grounds for continued research to provide a better basis for understanding climate dynamics. The question of what to do about climate change is also still open. But there is a scientific consensus on the reality of anthropogenic climate change. Climate scientists have repeatedly tried to make this clear. It is time for the rest of us to listen. For the complete report visit: <http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/306/5702/1686>

### Company Boards Fail To Identify Key Social and Environmental Risks

*Submitted by Jaleel Carter, SoL, [jaleel@solonline.org](mailto:jaleel@solonline.org)* But major progress reported by international survey of top corporate sustainability reports. Boards are failing to disclose to financial investors how environmental and social issues pose strategic risks and opportunities for their businesses, according to an international review of corporate sustainability reports by SustainAbility, the United Nations Environment Programme and Standard & Poor's. Risk & Opportunity: Best Practice in Non-Financial Reporting finds that only three reports of the Top 50 assess the balance sheet implications of key environmental and social risks, despite this information being increasingly important to analysts, investors, lenders, insurers and re-insurers. The survey is SustainAbility and UNEP's sixth international review of corporate environmental and sustainability reports. But the 2004 survey is the first in partnership with Standard & Poor's – and the first to explore the link between credit ratings and the quality of companies' governance and disclosure of non-financial risks. Over 350 reports were submitted and 50 were selected by an international independent expert committee for a full analysis. The top three overall are Co-operative Financial Services (UK), Novo Nordisk (Denmark) and BP (UK). Over half of the Top 50 reports are new to the survey and overall there has been a significant rise in sustainability reporting quality since 2002.

For the complete report visit: [http://www.solonline.org/repository/file?item\\_id=8842025](http://www.solonline.org/repository/file?item_id=8842025)

### The Changing Landscape of Liability

*Submitted by Seb Beloe, SustainAbility Ltd, [beloe@sustainability.com](mailto:beloe@sustainability.com)* The issue of past, current and potential liabilities has exercised boards of large companies for decades. This report makes the case that the landscape of liability – and therefore the risks for companies and to shareholder value – is changing and changing rapidly. It explores the evidence, maps the changes and attempts to guide business with the help of studies to navigate new and uncharted territory. The studies examine and draw conclusions in relation to climate change, human rights, obesity and legacy issues. As the first comprehensive study of the link between CR/SD and strategic social/environmental risk management, the report has relevance across a wide range of functions including managers involved in corporate responsibility, corporate governance and risk management. Significant among its recommendations is a call for companies to shift from passive to active corporate responsibility as the best way to mitigate risk to shareholder value from society's increasing expectations of social, environmental and economic responsibility. It includes examples of what this means in practice. For the complete report visit: <http://www.sustainability.com/publications/latest/liability.asp>

### **Risk and Opportunity: Best Practice in non Financial Reporting**

*Submitted by Seb Beloe, SustainAbility Ltd, beloe@sustainability.com* Risk & Opportunity is The Global Reporters 2004 Survey of Corporate Sustainability Reporting. The Global Reporters research programme would not be possible without the financial support of companies dedicated to evolving the accountability and reporting agendas. For the 2004 round, we express our sincere thanks to our major sponsor Pfizer, and to the twelve other supporters ABN Amro, Credit Suisse, Co-operative Insurance Society, The Co-operative Bank, the US Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Leaders Program, Ford Motor Company, Johnson & Johnson, Novo Nordisk, Rohm and Haas, Shell, Starbucks Coffee Company and Telecom Italia who ensured the project took wing. Sponsors were updated on progress but did not have any form of editorial control. For the complete report visit: [http://www.solonline.org/repository/file?item\\_id=8842019](http://www.solonline.org/repository/file?item_id=8842019)

### **Sustainability Performance And Business Competitiveness** A special theme issue of "Greener Management International"

*Submitted by Peter Senge psenge@MIT.EDU* This special issue of "Greener Management International" focuses on the relationship between competitiveness and sustainability at the firm level. Over the last decade, the relationship between environmental and economic performance, and more recently the interaction between sustainability performance and business competitiveness have received considerable attention. However, to date, only some partial aspects (such as the link between environmental and economic performance of firms, or the effect of corporate social responsibility on business financial performance) of the relationship between sustainability performance, competitiveness and economic performance have been studied from a theoretical as well as an empirical perspective. No unique relationship has prevailed in empirical studies so far. For this observation a number of explanations have been brought forward. These include methodological reasons, such as the lack of statistical data or its low quality or the fact that environmental and sustainability data is often available for short time periods only. Furthermore, various theoretical explanations have been developed, such as the influence of different corporate strategies or the relatively small average influence of environmental or sustainability issues in industry as one factor amongst many on the economic or financial success of firms. This is the starting point of the special issue, which aim to compile the different insights on various aspects of the link between sustainability performance, business competitiveness and economic success in attempt to provide a comprehensive and structured view on this relationship. The aim is to assist in establishing a body of knowledge on the state of practice in this field and to help in identifying prospective future fields of work. A limited number of individual copies of this special issue are available for purchase at the price of £25.00/\$45.00. To place an order, to view all paper abstracts, or to view the "Introduction" by Marcus Wagner and Stefan Schaltegger and the paper "Developing Value: The Business Case for Sustainability in Emerging Markets" by Jodie Thorpe and Kavita Prakash-Mani, SustainAbility, UK, please visit the Greenleaf website at: <http://www.greenleaf-publishing.com/gmi/gmi44.htm>

### **Design:Green Workshop Handout - Now Available Online for Product Designers**

*Submitted by Jacquelyn A. Ottman, J. Ottman Consulting jottman@greenmarketing.com* Missed the Design:Green workshops this past Spring? Want to learn more about how eco-design can enhance competitiveness and lead to innovation? Then download a free 56 page pdf of the Design:Green Workshop Handout and Eco-design Resource Guide for U.S. Product Designers, now available for downloading from [www.designgreen.org](http://www.designgreen.org).

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**Fall Forum Recap** *Continued from page 1.* Resource depletion, global warming, contamination of drinking water, air pollution, political instability, species extinction, social injustice, alienation, cultural identity loss, the list of challenges before us, sitting atop the lofty perch of the most technologically advanced society the world has ever know, is breathtaking.

The solution to these challenging questions will need to be drawn from a vast and diverse array of knowledge and wisdom; many elements of that array were represented at this event. Not only were corporate leaders in the room alongside government and non-government organization (NGO) officials, but there were also children attending from several developing countries, hosted by the Schlumberger SEED program and the UN Decade for Education in Sustainable Development. In addition, we also had Peem Juan Arcos as a kind of Ambassador of the Environment who came up from the rain forests of Ecuador traveling for two weeks by canoe and on foot, just to reach the airport for the final leg of the journey that would bring him to Dearborn.

There were sessions on Materials Pooling, Social Sustainability, Products and Markets, Women Leading Sustainability and others. Some of the plenary conversations and workshops included: Opportunities and Challenges for Sustainability from a Learning Perspective, Reducing Unsustainability Does Not Create Sustainability, Biomimicry, How Can We Build Commitment for Creating Sustainability, Tales from the Front in Leading Change in the Current Business Environment, Overcoming Systemic Barriers to Sustainability, Sustainable Mobility: Seeing and Acting from a Whole Systems Perspective, and Winning the Oil Endgame. Among speakers were such notables as Amory Lovins, Peter Senge, Janine Benyus, Roger Saillant, Jeff Hollender and many others. During and between these very focused and often intense sessions, people spoke from their hearts with a sense of passionate urgency that often seemed to flow from a deep sense of commitment to the idea of making a change in the direction this society is moving.

That's what these three days were all about and that's exactly what's needed. We need all the different energies because this is a battle with many fronts. This is a problem with many facets. We need the teachers. We need the poets. We need the engineers, *Continued on page 4.*

**Fall Forum Recap** *Continued from page 3.* the politicians, the corporate officers. We need the people who will go to the field and work with the indigenous people in the village, the poor, the hungry—to learn from them while giving them what they need to survive. We need their diversity. We are a group of people who have come together with a big job to do. And what makes our job different is that we have come to fix the work of previous groups of people who came together with a big job to do, whether those people came together as a corporation or an army. Whatever it was, they came together to give expression to their best ideals at the time, given the context of their situation and the way they understood the world at the time. Of course, people, being people, those ideals, much like ours are today, were shaded by their own weaknesses and fears and bias. This is, real life, after all.

But because our job is about looking to change structures that exist today, structures that are important, structures that feed people. Because of this, there's going to be resistance, there's going to be fear. People don't want to change the things that provide their security. Once there is fear, the going becomes much more difficult. This is why the centerpiece of this work has to be trust. We must find a way to engender trust in everything we do. To speak from our hearts, to be willing to be vulnerable, to be willing to be wrong.

The task is to find a path back to the indigenous heart of our lives that connects us back to something deep and sustainable. There is something within each of us, within our community and within the Earth—something at the core of life that has a sustainable indigenous heart—something that we've moved away from, that we need to reconnect with.

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**How Sustainable Is This Conference** *Continued from page 1.* Fundamental cultural changes require individuals to see the world differently, and such changes permanently transform the way individuals see their world. For example, employees of organizations that have embraced lean production see waste and opportunities for improvement where others see 'business as usual.' A similar change in perspectives will be necessary for modern societies to make the transition to an environmentally sustainable state.

Everyday actions have environmental impacts – sometimes surprisingly large impacts. The act of attending this conference, for example, created significant greenhouse gas emissions. Fossil fuels were burned to power the planes, trains, and motor vehicles that transported attendees to the conference. Still more fossil fuels were burned to generate the electricity, space heat, and hot water used during attendees' hotel stay and their time at the conference center itself. Fossil fuels were burned to transport and prepare the food that attendees ate. And fossil fuels were burned to produce and transport materials ranging from paper to beverage containers to coffee cups used at the conference.

The burning of fossil fuels generates a range of emissions that trap heat in Earth's atmosphere. This 'greenhouse effect' makes Earth habitable. However, human activities have substantially increased the concentration of gases that intensify the greenhouse effect, thereby driving global increases in average temperature over the last several decades and exacerbating the risk of further temperature increases as well as disruptive changes in climate, ocean circulation, agriculture, and ecosystems.

Learning to see the environmentally unsustainable aspects of our current lifestyle and technologies is a critical step in the journey towards a truly sustainable society. This paper is intended to help attendees of the Society for Organizational Learning's 2004 Sustainability Forum (SOLSF) see this conference from that perspective. For the complete article, please contact *Michael Sklar at p3solutions@comcast.net*

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**Sustainability Consortium** news

The Sustainability Consortium is a project of the Society for Organizational Learning

Distributed free of charge to Consortium members. Feel free to distribute to interested colleagues and stakeholders. Submit news or articles of interest for future issues to: [sustainabilitynewsletter@solonline.org](mailto:sustainabilitynewsletter@solonline.org).

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