

Jordan's View of Restoration

"A botanist walking through the John Curtis Prairie today couldn't tell it from the original prairie. That's partly because no botanist today has ever seen an original prairie. The original tall grass prairies exist only in books, and these books are an important part of the DNA for ecological restoration."

The speaker was William Jordan III, editor of **Restoration Management Notes**, executive secretary of the recently formed Society for Ecological Restoration, and keynote speaker at the Feb. 22, 1991 opening day of Cascadia Conference for designing, maintaining, and restoring natural landscapes. The conferees, gathered in Portland, OR, were listening to Jordan describe the restoration of a 60-acre prairie plot at the University of Wisconsin/Madison Arboretum.

"In tiny plots, here and there, we found — still clinging to existence — scraps of 'the living dead'," Jordan said. "The cryptic prairie, in the form of glacial relics, is still struggling along in the shade of oaks. These scraps can be brought back by cutting the trees and burning the prairie. The pieces of the puzzle still exist and we can coax them back into sturdiness and put them together. By doing so, we can build our soils, preserve the plants, and bring back some of the original regional flavor," Jordan said.

Not only can restoration by the use of native plants save on labor, fuel, and exercise, Jordan noted, but such restoration is the basis for creating a healthy human relationship with nature. Aldo Leopold called restoration a mutually beneficial relationship. Thoreau, in **Walden**, exhorted mankind to "reenter Nature."

Jordan described three types of relationships with nature: personal, historical, and celebratory. By participating in ecological landscape restoration, he said, one can become a functioning, working *part* of the landscape, "inhabiting it in an ecological way."

The process of restoration traces, in a way, our

human history, Jordan said. It begins with hunting and gathering the relict species, evoking the primitive “hunter/gatherer” psychology. It progresses to the agricultural/gardener stage, and finally it reaches the scientific level, where it explores the deep human cultural past in its ritual entirety. “It tells us,” Jordan said, “that restoration is a performing art, and that in the performance, we discover our reciprocal relationship with nature. When it is complete, we will have learned to DO it, and to CARE about doing it.”