

*Declaration of the 3<sup>rd</sup> European Conference on Restoration Ecology, Budapest, Hungary, August 30 2002*

**Ecological Restoration and the Quest for Sustainability**

Last week's flooding in central Europe was clearly caused by the overly ambitious conversion of natural lands to agricultural and other economic production. This flooding was only one of many symptoms of global disrepair. It is increasingly clear that the poor state of health of the world's life-supporting ecosystems, and the biosphere, endangers our long-term survival.

At the world summit in Johannesburg this week, the focus is sustainable rural and economic development for all nations on Earth, but most urgently for those in developing countries. However, the ramifications of the poverty and misery in the developing nations affect people everywhere. Poverty engenders and is largely engendered by environmental degradation and the disasters they precipitate. Ecological restoration of degraded ecosystems should be a pre-eminent priority on the agenda of the United Nations, and all of its member states. New efforts are urgently required to ensure the ongoing supply of nature's goods and services, sometimes called 'natural capital'. We make the following assertions :

- 1. All societies, and the global community, depend on a continuous supply of natural goods and ecosystem services flowing from healthy, resilient ecosystems.**
- 2. Natural goods and services are depleted by any reduction in lands that contain functional ecosystems, including sustainable cultural landscapes.**
- 3. The flow of natural goods and services can be increased through the restoration of ecosystems that have been damaged, degraded, or destroyed.**
- 4. This increase in natural goods and services will improve both ecological health and economic benefits in the face of human-created problems and the coming global climate changes.**

**5. Ecological restoration promises to be one of the keys for achieving economic sustainability. Sustainable development requires that we turn our attention to, and reallocate our financial resources towards ecological restoration.**

Signed on behalf of the delegates at the Society for Ecological Restoration meeting,  
Budapest, Hungary:

**Prof Attila Borhidi**, President of the Conference

Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Ecology and Botany, Vácrátót 2163  
Hungary

**Dr. Katalin Torok**, Chair of the Conference

Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Ecology and Botany, Vácrátót, Hungary

**Prof. Eric Higgs**, Chairman of the Society for Ecological Restoration-International (address)

University of Victoria, School of Environmental Studies, Victoria, Canada

**Dr. Rudy van Diggelen**, President of the European chapter of the SER-International

University of Groningen, Laboratory of Plant Ecology, Groningen, Netherlands

Contact address:

Rudy van Diggelen  
University of Groningen,  
Laboratory of Plant Ecology,  
P.O. Box 14  
9750 AA Haren  
The Netherlands  
Phone: +31 50 3632281  
Fax: +31 50 36 32273  
[r.v.diggelen@biol.rug.nl](mailto:r.v.diggelen@biol.rug.nl)

For more information: [www.ser.org](http://www.ser.org)