

Responses to Guest Speaker

ENVS 305: Environmental History and Ethics

During the part of the winter Env. History and Ethics course we focused on issues surrounding Lake Whatcom Reservoir management. One special focus was on the currently proposed but contested transfer or reconveyance of almost 9,000 acres of state land to the county for a park, reducing the amount of logging on this portion of the watershed to almost none. I invited a strong opponent to this proposal, who, since the proposal passed, has sued the County. He defended the special landscape management plan in place which allows limited logging in the watershed, and presented a traditional forestry point of view, enhanced with experience in the developing world. For many students his point of view is challenging. After his visit I asked them to write briefly in class on one of these questions:

**How did Whitmore's talk affect your understanding of your own value?
Reflect on the civic values that underlie coming to agree on difficult topics.**

Here is a selection of their responses:

Although I may disagree with aspects of Whitmore's stance on logging the proposed land for reconveyance, I respect his willingness to not only hear the other side's opinions, but reflect on them and consider their legitimacy.... After all we will always live in a world divided by opinion and biased, so we might as well be respectful, but also we must be willing to stand up for what we believe in.

Whitmore's talk made me realize that I value the importance of calmly sharing your ideas, even if you're the minority.

I value the preservation of our beautiful NW forests, yet there needs to be some sort of balance between the beauty of un-touched nature, and the industry that many people are involved in. My values have changed slightly in that I acknowledge both of these are ideals present in today's society.

Whitmore's talk did alter, in some way, my own values. I realized that perhaps not all loggers are bad people and I know that was an overgeneralization to start with but to say the lumber industry has a bad reputation would be accurate. I felt he was sincere when he said the land could be used for multiple purposes.

Whitmore was just doing his job in providing the supply for a less-than sustainable product. It is our job to reduce or eliminate demand as consumers.

Whitmore's talk made me realize that my values are less of a radical environmentalist than I may have thought... Rather than take immediate offence to this man because he may be an industrialist it is important to think about his perspective.

Whitmore's talk certainly caused me to take a step back and consider my own morals when it comes to environmental issues. But it also reminded me that morality is not always black and white, at least it isn't in my opinion.

He thinks everyone should be able to be happy with their slice and do with it as they please. However, I am realizing that compromise isn't always the best solution. In this critical moment in time, not everyone can get what they want.