

The Sensible Environmentalist

(NAPS)—**DEAR DR. MOORE:**
**What does it take to be a
“sensible” environmentalist?**

I began calling myself a sensible environmentalist because I saw the environmental movement becoming too extreme — falling prey to misguided priorities and refusing to evolve beyond confrontation.



Moore

When I helped co-found Greenpeace, our goal was to raise alarm. People were causing harm to this planet and giving little thought to the environment. As the first activists, we used confrontation to make people notice.

Although there are still important issues, environmental protection is now fully entrenched in North American law. Environmentalists are consulted and asked to help shape policy — and that's good. But one mark of a sensible environmentalist is a willingness to stop shouting at the gates and come inside, so we can work on solutions together.

To me, sensible environmentalists are guided by:

1) *Sustainable development* — which, simply put, means balancing environmental protection with the social and economic needs of humans. Six billion people live on this planet. Any agenda that doesn't account for this reality is impractical.

2) *Renewability*. Sensible environmentalists use renewable mate-

rials and energy wherever possible. This is important and not always obvious. Unlike many extremists, I'm a strong proponent of wood use, providing it comes from sustainably managed forests.

United Nations data supports this: forested land is expanding on continents where people use the most wood, and shrinking where people use less. This also supports my belief that demand for wood in the market provides incentive to plant more trees and leads to greater forest abundance.

3) *Sound scientific evidence*. Sensible environmentalists are sticklers for facts. For example, I don't believe in blanket opposition to genetically modified foods. World populations are growing and GM foods help us produce more food on less land — while reducing the use of chemical pesticides. This will save us from having to convert additional forests to farmland.

The larger environmental groups do have members that I consider sensible. They rely on scientific evidence and work hard to find constructive solutions to real issues. I hope these individuals will reclaim the movement from those whose priorities are political and have little to do with the environment. Someday we can all be sensible environmentalists.

Dr. Patrick Moore has been a leader of the environmental movement for more than 30 years. A co-founder of Greenpeace, he holds a PhD in ecology and a BSc in forest biology. Questions can be sent to Patrick@SensibleEnvironmentalist.com.