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Letter from the Editor

Ann Acheson
University of Maine - Main, ann.acheson@umit.maine.edu

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Dear Readers,

What do you think when you hear the word “sustainability?” What does it mean? It seems as though everywhere you turn these days, someone is mentioning it. There are academic programs in sustainability (e.g., Arizona State has a School of Sustainability). Large companies tout their sustainability focus (e.g., the DuPont chemical company says “Sustainability is at the core of what we do”). There are “Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes”—“the first global indexes tracking the financial performance of the leading sustainability-driven companies worldwide.” Even the world’s largest retailer, Walmart, is on the bandwagon; on their web site “Sustainability” page they say: “we know that being an efficient and profitable business and being a good steward of the environment are goals that can work together.”

This special issue of *Maine Policy Review* is devoted to the topic of sustainability, and in particular, the work being carried out in Maine through the Sustainability Solutions Initiative (SSI). This NSF/EPSCoR-funded endeavor has brought together most of state’s colleges and universities whose faculty researchers and students are working with stakeholders on pressing issues related to energy, water, land use, forestry and agriculture, marine resources, and economic development. Guest editor Linda Silka, director of the Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center, University of Maine, with invaluable assistance from graduate students Bridie McGreavy and Britt Cline and faculty member Laura Lindenfeld, developed the content of this issue and worked with authors to see it through to fruition. As editor, I’ve rarely had so easy a time putting an issue together, and I’m very grateful for all the time and work they have put in.

So, back to my original question about what “sustainability” means: I’m not going to tell you. To find out more, you’ll need to read the Margaret Chase Smith Essay by Senator George J. Mitchell that leads off this issue, and all of the many interesting articles, sidebars, student spotlights, and “top-10” lists that follow. We hope you will come away with a better understanding of sustainability science in Maine and of the pioneering work being done through the state’s colleges and universities to apply knowledge that will be useful to both citizens and the environment.

Best,


