

Aesthetics Module

Aesthetics consist of the perceptions of beauty gained through personal senses and experiences. Such perceptions play a major role in a person's sense of responsibility for taking care of the land and water in a watershed.



Introduction

Aesthetics as it applies to scenic beauty is the sensory perception of what is beautiful. What may be beautiful to one person may not be to another. Yet most people can agree on many of the characteristics of natural beauty with respect to streams and watersheds. Aesthetically pleasing streams leave people with a feeling of comfort, harmony, and satisfaction. Aesthetically displeasing streams often evoke emotions of frustration, despair, or neglect. People have a sense of ownership to protect aesthetically pleasing streams while they tend to abandon aesthetically displeasing streams, which further degrades the stream.

A river's natural beauty is dependent on an ever-changing watershed that responds to climate, season, and its carrying capacity for human use. The natural features of a stream can evoke feelings of intimacy with the environment. This intimacy is enhanced by good water quality, natural stream channels, stable stream banks, healthy and abundant riparian vegetation, diverse aquatic life, diverse wildlife, and the extent to which general "naturalness" is pervasive in the watershed. Aesthetic experiences that evoke this kind of intimacy are strong motivators of human behavior. Natural beauty also inspires and facilitates the creative process. Artists, musicians, writers, poets, outdoor enthusiasts, dancers, educators, naturalists, and children at play express themselves in some creative way as a result of the natural world's impact on them.

STREAM TEAMS involved in environmental impact projects are motivated and committed to a great extent by aesthetics and the satisfaction derived from environmental action. Aesthetics also contribute to a sense of stewardship. STREAM TEAM members working on stream projects gain a greater appreciation for the natural beauty of their stream. They interact with other individuals who share their appreciation of the natural world, their unique sensory experiences, their intrinsic motivations, and their common conservation ethic. Such experiences create a bond that strengthens their commitment to being good stewards of the natural world.

***The Natural Good* - Dr. Sam Vaknin**

There is "right" in the mathematical, physical, or pragmatic sense. It is "right" to do something in a certain way. In other words, it is viable, practical, functional, it coheres with the world. Similarly, we say that it is "good" to do the "right" thing and that we "ought to" do it. It is the kind of "right" and "good" that compel us to act because we "ought to". If we adopt a different course, if we neglect, omit, or refuse to act in the "right" and "good" way, as we "ought to" - we are punished. Nature herself penalizes such violations. The immutable laws of nature are the source of the "rightness" and "goodness" of these courses of action. We are compelled to adopt them - because we have no other CHOICE. . . The laws of nature constrain our moral principles.