

## Environmental Values and Ethics in the Kola Peninsula, Russia

Based on information published in 1996 in THE GEORGE WRIGHT FORUM (Robert E. Manning, William A. Valliere, and Ben A. Minter, "Environmental Values and Ethics: An Empirical Study of the Philosophical Foundations for Park Policy," Volume 13, No. 2, pp. 20-31), we have distributed the following questionnaire (Table 1) among school teachers and pupils in the higher forms in the community around the Lapland Biosphere Reserve, which occupies part of the Kola Peninsula in Murmansk Province in far northeastern Russia. Two hundred ninety-five completed questionnaires were returned. Each questionnaire contained 16 assertions about reserve values. Respondents were asked to indicate which of these assertions they agree with. Each person could agree with as many assertions as he or she wanted, as long as the responses did not contradict one another. The total number of responses was 1,011, which were distributed as follows.

Aesthetic values (assertions number 1 and 8) were identified in 9.3% of the responses. Ethical assertions (numbers 4, 6, 14, and 15) constituted 29.1% of the responses. Belief that reserves are important for better knowing the world (numbers 3 and 5) was expressed in 9.7% of the responses.

The idea that humans are responsible for caring for the rest of nature (numbers 2, 7, 10, and 16) garnered the most responses: 47.9%. Assertions expressing merely consumer treatment of nature (number 12 and 13) made up only 3.7% of the responses. Finally, no one agreed with the negative assertion that "reserves are not necessary" (number 9) and only three responses (0.3%) consid-

ered that humans and nature are fundamentally different (number 11)

The "champion" assertion (number 10), forming 13.4% of the responses, was that "as a part of nature, humans have a responsibility to care for the rest of nature."

The results of the questionnaire are amazing and wonderful. For decades, Communist propaganda drummed into people's heads from childhood such slogans as "We cannot wait for favors from nature, our aim is to take them from her" or "The best nature protection is a use of her riches," etc. Striving to promote a primitive consumption ethic was the official attitude to nature in the former USSR, and was valid until now in Russia. It is really amazing how

few supporters there are for such points of view among the respondents.

When examining the results of the questionnaire one has to take into account that visits to and most uses of Russian reserves are strictly controlled, in contrast to American national parks. If it were otherwise, it seems that those who would like to

enjoy the beauty of nature and outdoor recreation activities in reserves would be in the majority.

It is highly encouraging that ordinary people, especially teenagers, manifest a more enlightened and mature attitude to environmental problems than decision makers. This suggests reason for optimism and hope.

### **Table 1. Questionnaire concerning reserve values**

#### **I consider reserves as a place:**

1. to enjoy the beauty of nature & outdoor recreation activities	6.7%
2. to protect the environment in order to ensure our own survival	10.0%
3. to conduct scientific studies on the natural environment	6.2%
4. to express our ethical obligations to care for other forms of life	7.2%
5. that is important to the history of our country	3.5%
6. to get closer to God	5.3%

#### **I consider reserves to be important because:**

7. they will be valuable for future generations of humans	13.0%
8. I simply like knowing they exist	2.6%

#### **I consider that:**

9. reserves are not necessary	0.0%
10. as part of nature, humans have a responsibility to care for the rest of nature	13.4%
11. humans and nature are fundamentally different	0.3%
12. nature is the store of raw materials	1.5%
13. humans should manage nature as efficiently as possible	2.2%
14. humans should protect nature because it is God's creation and it is sacred	8.3%
15. humans should not cause needless pain and suffering to animals, because all living things have a spirit	8.3%
16. protecting of nature is necessary to human survival	11.5%

Percentages are of the total number of responses (n = 1,011)

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