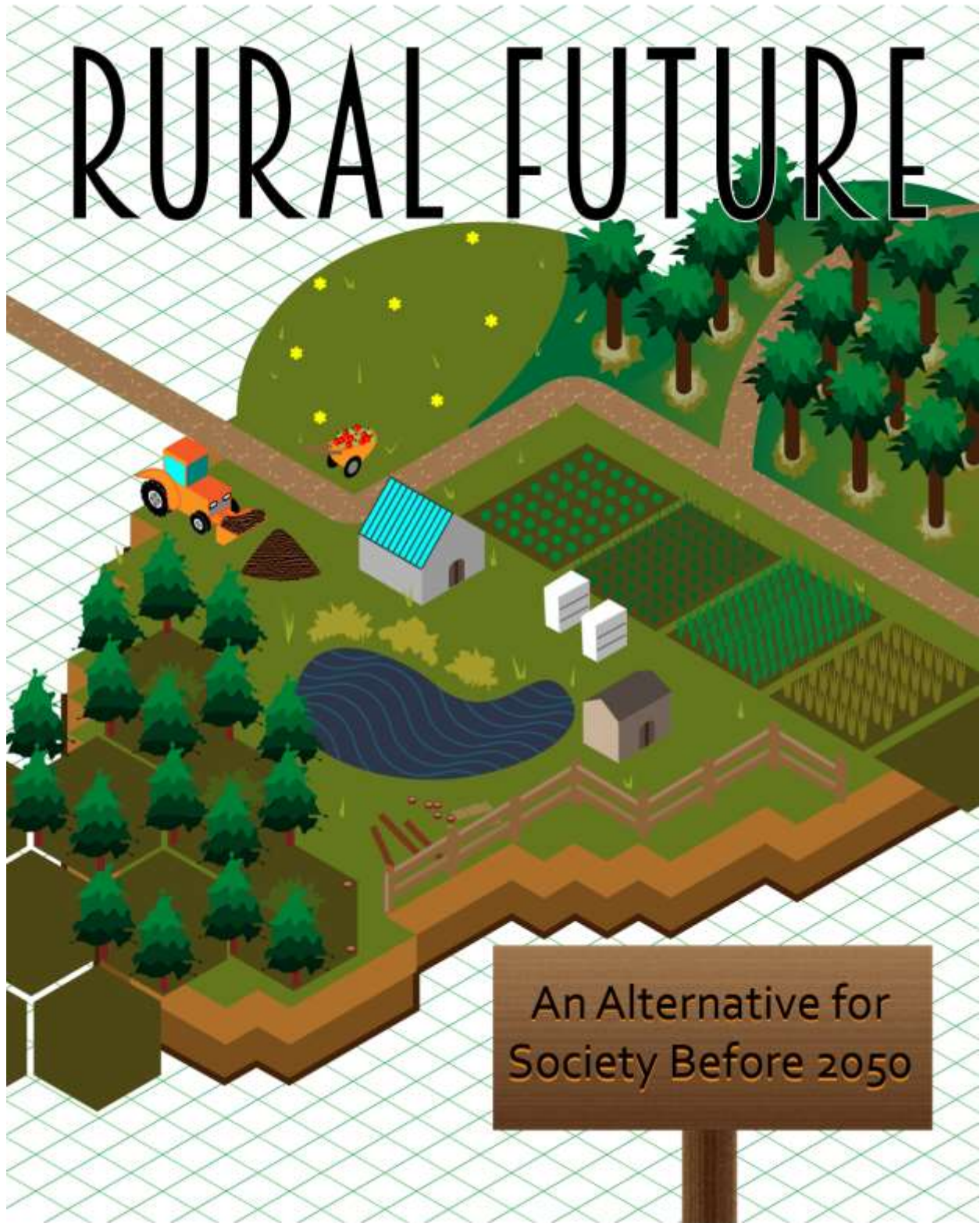


RURAL FUTURE



An Alternative for
Society Before 2050

Rural Future

An Alternative for Society Before 2050 AD

By: Robert H. Giles, Jr., Ph.D.

Edited by: Laurel Sindewald

June 2017

Appendix Three

Decent Work

This unit is proposed as a working, base concept of “the good” in Rural System. It is a statement of policy-like objectives, discussed in *Rural Future* and related documents of the proposed Rural System. I have placed it here, in the Appendix, for the same reasons that I prefer not to discuss my personal religion. If what it is does not show clearly, then there is hardly any need for discussing it.

Several layers are imagined to be behind the way staff and participants in Rural System work or do business. No one is told what to believe, think, or what attitudes to hold, but we like to communicate our intent and direction, as well as merge layers of knowledge for our staff and customers. This appendix unit suggests that the content of the book and its *intentions* can be tested against the statements here. I believe they are consistent, and if not, adjustments need to be made over time.

Staff and participants are encouraged to hold these ideas collectively, as a code of conduct that landowners and citizens can expect from us, while working with all aspects of Rural System. *Rural Future* attempts to express, even in a limited way, what we “stand for” —concepts in which we believe, and how we operate and address public, client, and personal concerns. We try to extend our limits and correct quickly our failures in living and working according to the creed herein.

We do not hide that we are profit-oriented, and we hold that “long-term, bounded profit” is a key phrase, as is estimated quality of life (Q*), an index to how well we are improving the environment and improving the life quality for rural people of the region (and associates everywhere).

We the people are dependent upon our communities and groups, and all are dependent upon the environment ... *all together*. We allow citizens ways to participate in restoring, producing, and managing the rural environment, and in gaining personal and family profits (net gains) from doing so. Of course, there are many gains other than profits. “Profit,” herein, is an index to, and prerequisite to, most of these other gains (listed in Chapter 2), collectively called the results of **Decent Work**.

We understand “quality performance” as that which:

- has clear requirements and standards, definitions of “the good”;
- measures production conformance and customer satisfaction;
- seeks conformance to these requirements and standards;
- seeks ways to prevent, then eliminate, non-conformance and defects;
- avoids secondary, often unseen and undesirable costs and consequences; and
- seeks ways to reduce the difference between the listed benefits delivered and customer expectations for those.

“Quality is never an accident. It is always the result of intelligent effort.”

—John Ruskin, English historian

Following the list of benefits, we work to guarantee courteous, prompt work to deliver cost-effective, practical services that meet our customer and colleagues’ objectives ... and we work hard to help them clarify and articulate those objectives. Our products are of high-quality, are safe, reasonably-tested, while often being innovative, and we guarantee them and are willing to provide reasonable returns or replacements if there is significant dissatisfaction.

We have many select products, grown under superior conditions devoid of known toxic agents. We offer many, diverse opportunities and seek to meet the personal and group needs and interests within the rural context, of both staff and customers. We seek out and offer special views, but work to achieve lasting, diverse pastoral, aquatic, and forest viewscapes. We seek to impede destruction of scenes that are important to many people, and to build a regional visual “personality,” or spirit.

We move reasoned ideas into tested prototypes, when and where we can find or join risk-taking investors. We move observations and data toward information, and we seek to build a workable knowledge base for improving models leading to sound decisions and related action throughout the rural region, with its evolving needs and challenges.

We encourage developing places and times for reflection, since they can provide reflection and inspiration. Inspiration also comes from opportunities provided for observations of plants, animals, natural systems, and scenery, as well as from special behavior of individuals and groups. We know well that there are individuals and “loners,” but we also know of the needs for relating with others for help, for resilience, reliability, teamwork—and for many, health, religious, cultural, and recreational reasons as well. “Community” has expanding meanings for us. We work for planned synergism among community members. Thus, we offer many memberships providing secure opportunities for forming micro-communities and knowledge, reliance, and resilience from such associations.

Our local events combine benefits, but a few can be singularly spectacular—at least for individuals. Special lectures, tours, and group meetings on “the green” seem to be useful, likely events. However, electronic conference-calls and Internet-exchanges may be rich events when they take on special meaning and discovery, locally, for some people.

Memory seems personal, but some of us hold that it is a shared thought or process that can be changed, and is affected by drugs, diets, and wellness. We work to provide products, services, and opportunities that produce pleasant, perhaps exciting, consoling, positively-dynamic, and helpful memories. We work on developing memory skills, but also on helping people gain texts, images, art, and tasteful small objects that focus and assist in pleasant or useful recall or reflection. Our concept of **Decent Work** includes actions and attitudes of:

- being effective and efficient with energy and time;
- having sufficient resources for a quality life;
- minimizing waste;
- maximizing embodied energy;
- sharing expertise;

- using sampling concepts reasonably;
- being gentle on the land;
- achieving and maintaining personal and “public” health, both physical and mental;
- having concern for children becoming fully human;
- being superior parents and/or being supportive of parenting;
- having high literacy, always learning;
- being diversified;
- avoiding conspicuous consumption;
- engaging in meaningful physical and mental work and exercise;
- gaining full control of impulses (e.g., aggression and immediate gratification);
- displaying appropriate manners and attention to shame;
- being supportive of and assisting others, and living in an environment of teamwork;
- having standards, with non-negotiable limits;
- enhancing conditions for tomorrow's citizens; and
- being clear about the difference to people between efficiency and effectiveness.

Seeking long-term, adequate profits from the rural land and waters requires retaining and building resource productivity, as well as its many benefits, for diverse current and potential users of private lands. To this generalized end of profit, the staff tends to develop highly-related programs and projects reflective of the above dimensions of Decent Work, including:

- treating each unit of land as unique, but also as a changing system, guided by intrinsic “rules”;
- encouraging appropriately long timber rotations;
- making site-specific, multi-purpose timber production prescriptions;
- preserving and enhancing visual quality of the lands and waters;
- reducing water-borne land, road, and trail sediments and their movement;
- using and maintaining integrity of riparian-reach volumes;
- using fairly, forest site-type and age-specific logging techniques;
- using well, relevant information about adjacent and surrounding areas;
- avoiding losses in areas in numbers of animal and plant species (i.e., richness);
- discouraging numbers and effects of invasive species;
- protecting and increasing soil productivity;
- protecting included wetlands and riparian volumes;
- encouraging mixed tree species and mixed forest product production;
- enhancing wild plant and animal population densities and their uses;
- reducing waste of all kinds at least until it is well-managed;
- engaging in many types of cost-effective energy conservation;
- engaging in spatial as well as temporal planning for Rural System areas, lands, and waters, converging on reasonable levels of accuracy and confidence;
- developing procedures for adding significant value to products, opportunities, and services of the land and waters;
- making spatial arrangements for positive synergistic effects among resources; and
- studying and resolving unified concepts of land health and/or wellness.

We are evolving, perhaps with the characteristics of conscious capitalism introduced by John MacKey of Whole Foods Markets ... still concerned about virtue as well as profitability.

Are we really among the *conscious capitalists*? Who are we, really? Staff and Rural System members' purpose is clear; our main system objective is to make money ... in addition to—and in order to—achieve our other objectives. Where does that lead; what does it mean? We work diligently on employment and the environment, while doing diligent work in health, education, and human survival. We work for a culture that fosters love and trust, and invite others to “look around” and decide whether we become successful in doing so.

Governing Thoughts and Concepts Often Found Within Decent Work of Rural System

1. We have a strong bias toward modified General Systems Theory, and its usefulness as an aid in organizing and communicating within the complex enterprise. Modular subsystems with common objectives and a set of policies can excel in natural resource management.
2. Principles of biology and ecology shown to allow species and systems long-term survival are noted, and can be used to advantage within Rural System.
3. We make attempts to share ideas and knowledge, test the goodness of some of them on the land, and gain energy for the fight ahead for an environment fit for humans.
4. Rural System can be considered an experiment—a test of the soundness of an entrepreneurial paradigm for sustained natural resource management.
5. Rural lands and waters may be seen as a working platform, with unlimited opportunities for producing ideas, products, and services (see the list of “general benefits” in Chapter 2). The platform must be tended very carefully if it will improve and sustain profits.
6. Dynamic and chaotic social and environmental conditions, as well as resources undergoing predictable transitions, can be estimated, and profits can be sustained if managed with computer optimization as a whole system.
7. Major fossil energy shortages (of various types) will occur within 20 years, and such shortages can be the source of major profits from alternative energy sources if preparation is made for those conditions.
8. A rationally robust strategy (Chapter 6) needs to be used in rural resource management.
9. Ranging (Chapter 9), comprehensive diverse outdoor recreation and tourism, can excel in a region with evidently-increasing quality of life and natural resource management.
10. The results of successful, diverse economic development may be linked to the requirement that a sound Q^* index to such results must be stable or increasing.
11. We maintain desired conditions (those achieved), and link them to designed, diverse, managed ecological systems.
12. Having a rural concentration for efficiency and effectiveness, resilience and reliability, we work with influential, *trans-border* urban and frontier systems, and seek cooperation.
13. We attempt prompt, courteous service, a few of the “old manners” that remain good for our potential and current customers ... and for us.

14. We emphasize “the long-term” in our strategies, models, and planning, because we study history and likely future.
15. We welcome suggestions for improvements and attempt to offer incentives for making them, and rewards for those that become part of the profit-base of the total enterprise.
16. Our facilities and appearance are safe, clean, attractive, and are part of our marketing base for “good-health.”
17. We provide progress reports and timely information as well as results for customers.
18. We compete with equals or lesser enterprises, concepts, and agencies. Competing with known superiors is irrational; competing with equals only assures wins half the time. Competition is done to win. Our preferred alternative is collaboration, or forming a partnership... when “win” is well-known and decided.
19. We do not “discriminate” in any of our programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. We actively seek to find employment opportunities for people who seem disadvantaged by circumstances beyond their control or major influence.
20. We *do* discriminate against employing and maintaining current employees on the basis of ability, performance, dress, and appearance ... any behaviors that may likely lead to lost or diminished profits; attitudes leading to reduce group cohesion and positive synergistic results; and impaired creative work linked to the objectives of the enterprise.
21. We engage in restoring physical and biological systems of rural areas, and restoring associated quality of life of families and communities.
22. Information is our primary product and resource, hard-won, and we rarely provide it at zero cost.
23. Ability to do synthetic work and make superior decisions are also resources that we plan to sell. The results can also be sold. Empowering others to do work (as with a computer program) is more important sometimes than providing information.
24. Research results in theses and dissertations and government reports are rich “mines” from which wealth can be gained. Mining them is one of our tasks, and we may seek funds or “trades” to secure such results.
25. We check into the fair-trade provisions of cooperating companies and individuals, and their products (e.g., clothing, crafts, music, coffee, tea, cocoa). We'll attempt to avoid including those in our activities that are not in compliance.

“**Decent Work**” is a decent concept. Mark Levin, Director of the International Labor Organization (ILO) Cooperative Branch in Geneva, Switzerland, described the results of thoughtful work on the concept in a paper published in the Owners at Work newsletter of the Ohio Employee Center. The idea of Decent Work includes employment for people where there are conditions of freedom; not having discrimination or harassment; providing sufficient income to satisfy basic economic, social, and family needs and responsibilities; having adequate social protection for workers and their families; and being able to have a voice and participate in decisions about the workplace.

Decent work elements seem highly consistent with the long-held tenets of people in the agricultural cooperative movement and others—people who strive for the traits of honesty,

openness, social responsibility, and caring for others; honest dealings with fairness and accuracy, and accountability in local as well as in the international trading and financial marketplace; reliable quality and fair prices; and a unique level of openness throughout the organization. The values of social responsibility and caring for others reflect concerns for the health and wellbeing of individuals within communities.

Seems decent.

Decent Work concepts provide insights about the roles that the community plays in the success of any enterprise (e.g., security, support, landscape, setting, infrastructure)—including Rural System—and thus the opportunities for appropriate and fair participation. We are trapped by the insights of Friedman in his book, *The World is Flat*, about the outsourcing of work and the flow of employees and their expertise. Efforts within Rural System tend to agree with him that:

“The more lifetime learning opportunities that companies provide, the more they are both widening the skill base of their own workforce and fulfilling a moral obligation to workers whose jobs are outsourced to see to it that they leave more employable than they came. If there is a new social contract implicit between employers and employees today, it should be this: ***You give me your labor, and I shall guarantee that as long as you work here, I shall give you every opportunity - through either career advancement or training - to become more employable, more versatile.***”¹ (Emphasis mine)

We study how to become the “human factor” in regional land use policy and Rural System practice, in that we work for safety and comfort of workers, job satisfaction, high performance ratios, and conditions seen as socially acceptable (such as those of unions and OSHA rule conditions). We test ourselves for proper (truthful) labeling, branding, and “value-adding” attempts.

As we seek to describe desirable conditions of work together, we find they are much the same for life itself, and when fully developed they become a description of “the good life” for each of us. We have found premises of secular humanists consistent with much writing in the rural systems realm. We encourage thoughtful work with the following premises for ongoing efforts within Rural System. Discussions and suggestions for revisions are welcomed.

- We plan to create opportunities for Decent Work and income in rural areas through enabling investment and through developing opportunities for gaining or improving skills, particularly for self-employed people and for micro-, small, and medium enterprises.
- We work to create a participatory, creative culture—first a regional one.
- We resist speculative financial markets and move toward a real economy based on savings, investment, and creativity that generate solid companies and quality jobs.
- We promote social entrepreneurship and socially-responsible investment funds (e.g., limiting linkage between pension funds and stock markets). We are sensitive to our *ever-changing* corporate status.

¹ Friedman TL. 2005. *The world is flat: a brief history of the twenty-first century*. New York (NY): Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

- We protect the value of savings and investments, and invite discussions with our Wealth Management staff.
- We seek to relax perceived limits on local or national economic growth with environmental regulation, encouraging investment for developments with results that can be sustained using new, environment-friendly technologies.
- We are committed to discovering truths and to applying reason to understanding the universe and to solving human problems.
- We are skeptical of untested claims to knowledge, and, as open to novel ideas, we seek departures in our thinking.
- We deplore efforts to denigrate human intelligence.
- We invest in information technologies and enable poor people, regions, and countries to access these.
- We believe that discovery and technology can contribute to the betterment of human life.
- We are engaged by the arts no less than by the sciences.
- We enjoy life here and now, and seek to develop our creative talents to their fullest.
- We are citizens of the universe and are excited by discoveries.
- We discourage explaining the world in supernatural terms and looking outside nature for “salvation.”
- We are committed to—and work to see practiced—the principle of the separation of church and state.
- We believe in an open and pluralistic society, and work to implement an effective democracy as a major way to protect human rights from authoritarian elites and repressive majorities.
- We cultivate the arts of conversation, negotiation, and compromise as means of resolving differences and achieving mutual understanding.
- We place policy options on a sound footing by promoting dialog among workers, employers, and representative voices of society.
- We encourage open and free flow of communication, and offer training and inducements to develop involvement in “the enterprise” (an ownership culture with knowledge of objectives, financials, production, and efficiencies).
- We engage in participatory management where possible.
- We attempt to secure justice and fairness in society and to eliminate discrimination and intolerance. We balance such efforts with those essential for Rural System success and survival.
- We attempt to transcend divisive parochial loyalties based on race, religion, gender, nationality, creed, class, sexual orientation, or ethnicity, and strive to work together for the common good of humanity.

- We support the disadvantaged and the handicapped, and support assisting them to be able to help themselves and to participate in Rural System actions and projects.
- We attempt to protect and enhance the Earth and its resources, to preserve it and its productivity for future generations, and to avoid inflicting needless suffering on other species.
- We respect the right to privacy. Mature adults should be allowed to fulfill their aspirations, to express their sexual preferences, to exercise reproductive freedom, to have access to comprehensive and informed health-care, and to die with self-guided dignity.
- We believe in the common moral decencies: altruism, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, and responsibility. We think our ethics are amenable to critical, rational guidance. There are normative standards that we discover together. Moral principles used are tested by their consequences.
- We are cultivating moral excellence. We participate in the moral education of our children. We want to nourish reason and compassion.
- We seek realistic alternatives to theologies of despair and ideologies of violence, and for sources of rich personal significance and genuine satisfaction in service to others.
- We believe in and work toward the fullest realization of the best and noblest of which we are capable as humans.
- We believe in optimism rather than pessimism, hope rather than despair, learning in the place of dogma, won-knowledge instead of ignorance, joy rather than guilt or sin, tolerance in the place of fear, love instead of hatred, compassion over selfishness, beauty instead of ugliness, and reason rather than blind faith or irrationality.
- We strive for consistency in actions displaying this underlayment that we consider Decent Work.

*Perhaps you will share ideas related to aspects of **Decent Work** with Rural System staff, about one or more of the topics above.*

About the Author

While many Americans are presently astonished at conditions in rural America, Robert Giles, Jr., Ph.D., has been working tirelessly for decades on planning solutions to interconnected rural problems. Dr. Giles is a Professor Emeritus of Wildlife Management at Virginia Tech where he taught for 30 years. His Bachelor of Science degree in Biology and Master of Science degree in Wildlife Management are from Virginia Tech. His Ph.D. in Zoology is from The Ohio State University.

Dr. Giles was born on May 25, 1933 in Lynchburg, Virginia. He attended E.C. Glass High School, during which he was awarded a Bausch and Lomb Science award for studies of the ring-necked pheasant. As an Eagle Scout, he was awarded the W.T. Hornaday National Award for Distinguished Service to Conservation and the James E. West Scouting Conservation Scholarship. During his undergraduate years at Virginia Tech, Dr. Giles was an editor for several magazines and the president of the V.P.I. Corps of Cadets of 6,000 students. He was also a member of seven national honorary societies.

During his time as a Professor in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife at Virginia Tech, Dr. Giles was known for his innovative applications of computer programming and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to land management questions well before such skills became standard practice within the field (and before GIS was a term). With the support of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), he created the woodland resource management system of TVA, once used on 300 farms a year. With staff and students, he created the first wildlife information base (BOVA – Biota of Virginia database). As chairman of a local planning commission, consultant to the National Wildlife Refuge System, aid to the State Cooperation Commission, consultant for Wintergreen and several realtors, and as a landowner himself, he has developed a unique and alternative perspective on land and its management. He wrote the first plan for wildlife other-than-game for Virginia.

Dr. Giles began working on the Rural System concept in the early 1980s, but did not begin in earnest until his retirement in 1998. When asked about his aims for designing Rural System, he said, “I am now convinced that a superior demonstration of modern comprehensive natural resource management is badly needed and is now possible and most likely within the context of a new corporate rural structure. I do not want to do research. I do want demonstrations of the results of literally millions of dollars of unused research findings. I propose to bring all the power of the computer that I can to realistic and relevant use for parts of the region. This will include using that power already achieved by investments of resource agencies. I propose a system, subject to the law and to reasonable issues of cost, propriety, and community acceptance, that achieves such objectives.”

A colleague of his once said that Dr. Giles can come up with more ideas in an hour than most people can in a lifetime. His creativity is exceeded only by his humanity. Raised in Southwest Virginia, Dr. Giles knows the struggles of people in Central Appalachia, impoverished after the collapse of coal and tobacco industries. He has visited rural areas of Africa (Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda), China and India, and is well-educated in the sufferings of people in poverty worldwide.

Dr. Giles is a systems thinker. He believes that the problems faced by environmentalists and those of interest to humanitarians are interconnected, and that a system of problems must be met with a system of solutions. His career, his values, and his innovative capabilities make him

uniquely suited to tell the story of how a for-profit systems approach can best solve the rural problems of a progressive, capitalist society.

Contact information:

Robert H. Giles, Jr., Ph.D.
509 Fairview Avenue
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060
United States of America

Publisher:

Handshake Media, Incorporated
<http://www.handshakemediainc.com>
contact@handshake20.com