

Wildfire and Land Use Planning: Where Do We Go From Here?

Sonoma State University

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- Tom Jacobson, Sonoma State University
- Max Moritz, PhD, Bren School of Environmental Science and Management, UC Santa Barbara
- Eric de Kok, Governor's Office of Planning and Research
- Pete Parkinson, Past President, American Planning Association, California Chapter

Jail the Planners for Not Preventing Sandy!



Only a week ago, scientists and professionals all over the world were appalled by the [conviction and sentencing](#) of Italian Seismologists for failure to predict an earthquake in L'Aquila, Italy. This seems absurd. Earthquakes are not really predictable. But, the potential damages of Sandy were well known long before the storm struck the East Coast of the United States on October 29, 2012. Planners and city officials approved developments on the New York, New Jersey and Carolina coast in areas of known high risk. Why shouldn't they go to jail?

I advance this argument to get the attention of our planning profession, which has been complacent and diffident when we know better. We blame our political masters. But an engineer who knowingly gives bad advice loses his/her license. We have to wake up. Sandy should be our line in the sand. We cannot say we are agnostic about climate change and the forces of nature. We know all about these issues and we have a duty to communicate this information clearly and forcefully to our communities. Climate change may be unsettled in degree and direction or even cause. But the information on increasingly severe weather is settled science. Even skeptics agree on this. So, why should planners endorse developments in dangerous areas? Even a 1 in

Design with Nature and Wildfire

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DESIGN
WITH NATURE

IAN L. McHARG

Design with Nature

- Published 1969
- Written by Ian McHarg (1920-2001)
- Landscape architect and city planner
- An academic and practicing planner



The origin

- McHarg commissioned to make open space recommendations for metro Philadelphia: How much space needed for “organized sweating?”
- Instead, proposed using open space protection as framework for city planning

Basic principles

- Protect open space with unique value (to humans)
- Don't allow development where dangerous

McHarg identified natural processes (now, “ecosystem services”)

- Surface water
- Wetlands
- Floodplains
- Aquifer recharge areas
- Aquifers
- Forests
- Prime ag land

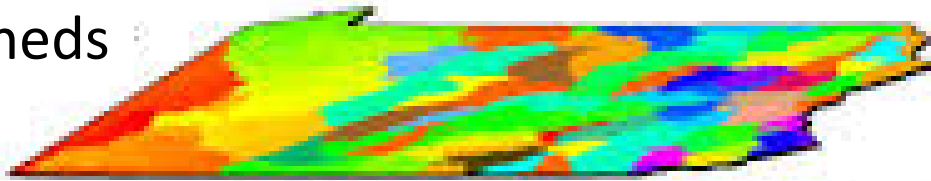
And identified natural hazards to avoid

- Floodplains
- Earthquake faults
- Unstable slopes
- Areas of coastal inundation
- Fire prone areas
- Etc.

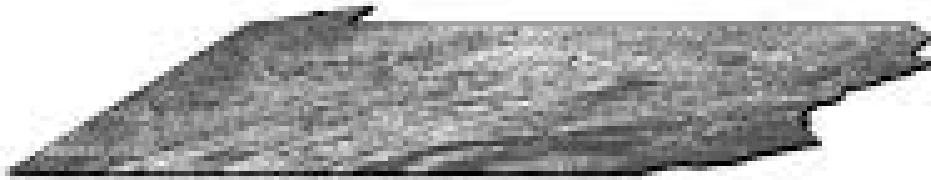
Developed a system

- Identify areas of natural processes and hazard on a series of maps
- Layer the maps (ultimately, accomplished with GIS)
- Result identifies where and how development would be appropriate

watersheds



slopes



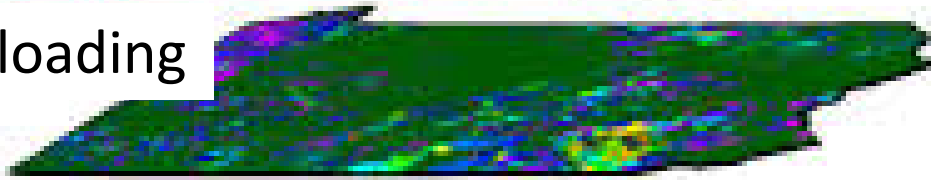
soils



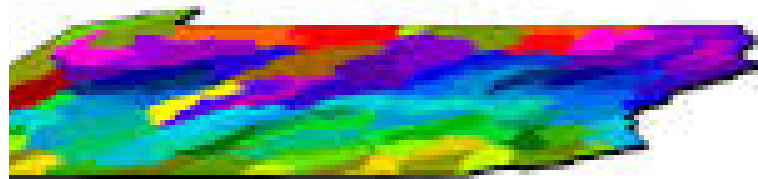
land use



animal loading



agricultural
pollution
potential



How do *Design with Nature*
principles inform land use planning
and wildfire?