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# The Re-Greening of Anguilla

by Lee H. Skolnick, FAIA

Those privileged to live here, spend significant time, or even briefly visit this island, know that along with the graciousness of its people, Anguilla's greatest assets have been generously provided by nature. Its healing sunshine, refreshing breezes, miraculous beaches and resplendent waters combine to make every day a gift, to be savoured and gratefully appreciated. And, though a wide variety of challenges abound in each of our lives, we all share an infinite indebtedness for the pleasure, sustenance—the very existence—that nature affords us, asking virtually nothing in return.

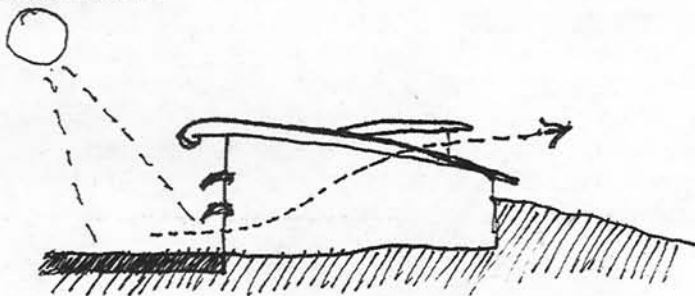
And yet, if there is anything that recent global economic, political and climatic events and trends have revealed to us, it is that we do, in fact, have critical personal and societal responsibilities in relation to the environment. If we are to expect nature to continue to sustain us, then we must make the commensurate commitment to sustain it. Gone are the days (did they ever really exist?) when we could blithely operate as if the effects of our activities had no impact on the health of the earth. Today, we must accept the evidence as it has been proven to us—that we, in fact, are a force of nature, and that the decisions we make about the way we live—and build—will help determine the quality of our future.

This is the first in a series of articles that will explore the environmental sustainability of Anguilla and how it can be positively affected in small and large ways. It is initiated in the hope that we can all come together to meet these challenges head on, by adopting a 'greener' way of life and thus help to ensure a brighter and healthier future for this very special place and the generations that will come after us. It is intended as a call to action – a provocation to us all to commit to the Re-Greening of Anguilla.

Some say we are living now in the most critical moment in the three and a half billion year history of life on earth. They say that this brief moment, and what we do with it, will determine whether there will be a future for our descendants – or, at least, if it will be a bright or a dismal one. Dire prognostications abound; Domsday scenarios assault us. Scientists predict environmental holocausts filled with new ice ages, massive flooding, choking atmosphere, mass extinctions, famine, drought, horrific storms and more. Some dismiss these pictures as ill-informed and consciously inflammatory, pitched rhetoric. Others simply ignore the signs, theories and hard evidence out of denial, ignorance, entitlement or just plain laziness. Still others believe that this is all pre-ordained by our Creator and described clearly in the Bible. And yet, it would be hard to find any sane, reasonably well-informed individual who would forcefully argue that we can afford to continue to practice the type of consumption, waste production, population growth and unfettered development that we have up until now, forever and with impunity.

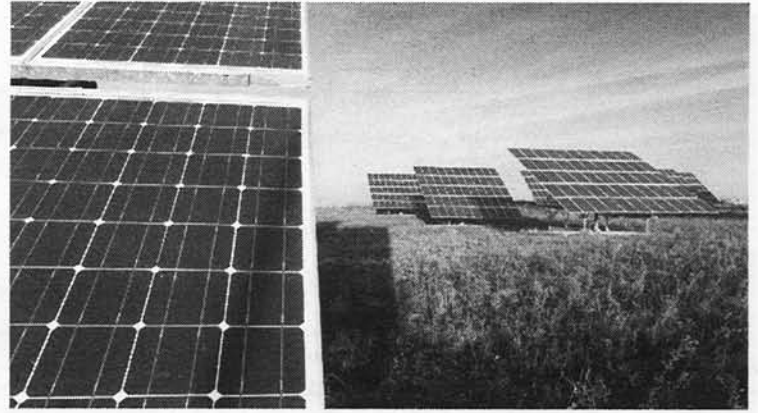
Who can discount the facts that the world's vast resources are rapidly being expended, that nature's purity is being despoiled by pollution and explosive development, that non-renewable energy use is rising exponentially, that biodiversity is shrinking catastrophically, or that clean air and water are increasingly hard to find? While many seek refuge from the harsh realities of life by coming to the relative paradise they find on our little island, we must recognize that the onslaught of global environmental degradation will not leave us spared forever. What will we do if the ocean's rise? Where will we find sustenance if importing water and food become prohibitively expensive? How will we power our lifestyles if off-island energy sources and fuel dry up? What will be left if increasingly violent storms devastate our homes, buildings and beaches; or global warming and a destroyed ozone layer burn the landscape and disrupt the delicate balance of plant and animal species both on land and in the sea?

So, are we doomed? Is all hope lost? ABSOLUTELY NOT! Like all intelligent and responsible members of humanity, we can help provide the solutions to the problems we have helped create. First we must understand and embrace the simple concept of ecology. This is the profound idea that all things are connected and interrelated; that what we do has far-reaching impact, and that every small, positive act ripples out and combines with others to produce big, positive results.



Sun and Breeze Study by LHSA+DP

*By analyzing the natural elements of sun and wind, then strategically siting buildings to take advantage of shading and ventilation opportunities, we can work with nature to make more comfortable, energy efficient living environments. And these 'passive' strategies don't have to cost more money, they just require thoughtful planning and design.*



*While we should protect our skin from over-exposure to harmful UV rays, solar collectors can drink in the sun's energy to help produce pollution-free electrical power and water heating. And while we save the planet from the toxic effects of burning fossil fuels, we take advantage of nature's eternal gift of free energy.*

So where do we start? Development can be carefully planned and regulated to preserve Anguilla's innate beauty and natural resources.. Energy can be generated by harnessing the renewable resources with which we have been blessed – the sun, wind, sea currents and the tides.. Most types of waste and materials can be recycled to create new products and resources.. Sea water can be converted to pure, healthy drinking water.. Foodstuffs can be cultivated and consumed locally.. Responsible harvesting of seafood can continue to thrive. Buildings can be built that are inherently energy-efficient and carbon-neutral.. Cars and trucks can be emission-free and powered by electric cells instead of fossil fuels.

In fact, virtually every part of our daily and ongoing activities can be improved by taking a focused look at how we can live more 'green-ly'. And none of these strategies will compromise our quality of life. In truth, our lives will get better in both the short and long terms. Interestingly, this particular moment in our more immediate history makes the pressure we feel relative to the environment powerfully providential. As we see nature's cataclysmic response looming on the horizon; as we find our safety and security threatened by dependence on foreign oil controlled by geo-politically dysfunctional regimes and as business and industry spiral downwards based on anachronistic models which don't apply to the new world order, a great, symbiotic convergence is occurring.

The smartest, most visionary and entrepreneurial are seeing a vast economic opportunity in clean energy and new green technologies. New research and discoveries will combine with free global trade and instantaneous communication to push environmental innovation, green business and shared economic growth. We can and will find ways to be kinder to the planet, exploit no one, be happier and better off. The future will find us doing well by doing good for the planet. All the signs point to both the need and the opportunity. And, the wonderful part is that each of us can play a part. By 'greening' our individual lives, we can 're-green' Anguilla, and the world.

In future articles, I will offer some information and advice on steps we can take to create a healthier, more sustainable environment. From everyday practices, to building design and construction strategies, to larger energy planning and waste issues, there is much we can think about and do right now and in the future. Awareness is the first step, so I encourage you to tap into the activities and proposals of the Anguilla Renewable Energy Committee.

*Lee H. Skolnick, FAIA, Founder and Principal of Lee H. H. Skolnick Architecture+Design, has focused on international award winning sustainable, environmentally conscious design for over 2 decades. The New York firm has created LEED Gold Certified projects and several local properties including Kamique Villas and Shoal Bay Resort. Anguilla visitors since 1991, the Skolnicks look forward to the Spring completion of their Rendezvous Bay home*