
Sustainability Science Award: Margaret A. Palmer and J. B. Ruhl

(2015) Aligning restoration science and the law to sustain ecological infrastructure for the future. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 13:512–519. DOI:10.1890/150053



Margaret Palmer

The Sustainability Science Award recognizes the authors of the scholarly work that makes the greatest contribution to the emerging science of ecosystem and regional sustainability through the integration of ecological and social sciences. Margaret Palmer and J. B. Ruhl tackle a critical issue in sustainability science: how the application of ecological science can be translated into effective policy that ensures the restoration of degraded ecosystems.

The complimentary expertise of the authors and their shared interest in restoration science and policy make this paper particularly noteworthy.

Dr. Ruhl, director of Vanderbilt University's Program on Law and Innovation and codirector of the Energy Environment and Land Use Program, has invested his career in legal and regulatory aspects of restoration and environmental science. As director of the Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center (SESYNC), Margaret Palmer, a professor of entomology at the University of Maryland and director of the National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center (SESYNC), brings a transformative vision for advancing research and public understanding of sustainability science.

They make the case that while restoration is a crucial tool that is used in environmental policy, lack of a clear ecological context for what constitutes restoration leads to confusion in implementing policy. The key, they argue, is to include consideration of establishing self-sustaining living systems and the landscape and environmental context essential to recovery. The paper presents an actionable research plan that bridges science and policy and includes specific guidance about how to best incorporate a clear and science-based definition of restoration into administrative laws.



J. B. Ruhl