

The Sensible Environmentalist

Former Greenpeace co-founder Patrick Moore urges more science instead of sensationalism on environmental issues. **BY TOM DODGE**



PHOTO: GREENSPIRIT STRATEGIES LTD.



PHOTO: SALVATORE BARBERA

As a young firebrand environmental activist, adventurer and ecologist, Patrick Moore, in 1971, became a founder and director of Greenpeace, the international environmental organization. The group's early efforts brought worldwide attention to hydrogen bomb testing in the Pacific Ocean. Later, Moore stormed the high seas aboard the Greenpeace ship, Rainbow Warrior, to protest the slaughter of whales. But after 15 years, his relationship with Greenpeace had become increasingly contentious, and Moore left the organization in 1986.

"I didn't leave Greenpeace so much as Greenpeace left me," he tells international audiences he's speaking to today. As the lone scientist onboard,

he tried to lend a reasoned, fact-based voice to Greenpeace protests against nuclear war and for endangered species protection and pollution issues. He had earned his Ph.D. in ecology "back when that word wasn't even known to the general public."

Today, Moore is chair and chief scientist with Greenspirit Strategies Ltd., an environmental

consulting firm based in Vancouver, British Columbia. "I had no choice but to leave Greenpeace because my fellow directors started adopting positions I didn't agree with. Since I've left, they've adopted many positions where I think they are going down the wrong track."

Patrick Moore's (photo top left, top row, second from left) career with Greenpeace included H-bomb-testing protests and cruises on the Rainbow Warrior II.

Instead of establishing environmental policy based on scientific fact and logic, Moore accuses environmental activist groups of basing their approach on scare tactics and emotionalism. He says those tactics are in play on every major international issue from biotechnology to renewable energy, deforestation and climate change.

Through it all, Moore has become a reasoned proponent of commercial agriculture, new technologies and stewardship that protect fragile soils around the world—practices that promote production the world will need to feed 9 billion people by 2050.

"I think they [environmental activists] end up putting forward proposals that actually will reduce our ability to improve nutrition and health care, and take us away from renewable things," he says.

LOOKING FOR CONSENSUS. While some environmentalists have accused him of selling out as a paid corporate shill on environmental issues, Moore says his efforts now are to sit at the table with "those in charge" and work out reasonable solutions to environmental and sustainability problems. Enough with the "Frankenfood" scares; time now to analyze scientific fact and lend reason to controversial issues. He calls it the path from "confrontation to consensus."

His family's background was forestry and fishing in British Columbia, and when Moore left Greenpeace, he initially started a salmon-farming business. Always an activist, he soon found himself on several committees



Patrick Moore

PHOTO: GREENSPIRIT STRATEGIES LTD.

and boards devoted to the environment, the economy and sustainability. In 2002, he became an environmental consultant with the start-up of Greenspirit Strategies. He believes public relations and communication are keys to consensus politics. While on the international speaking circuit, he also has published several books, including his recent memoir, "Confessions of a Greenpeace Dropout: The Making of a Sensible Environmentalist."

Moore has no truck with critics who say he's in bed with some of the world's great polluters. "They would make me out to be a traitor or turncoat. I'm not. The only issue that I campaigned on with Greenpeace that I've changed my mind on is nuclear energy. They would make it that I'm calling for the resumption of hydrogen bomb testing and the slaughter of whales. I'm not, of course. I think we made a mistake on nuclear energy, and I'm trying to make up for that mistake."

As a co-chair of the Nuclear Energy Institute's (NEI) Clean and Safe Energy Coalition, Moore has endorsed NEI's stand that nuclear energy is a safe and clean alternative to fossil fuels. He believes nuclear energy, as well as natural gas, are important components in reducing dependence on fossil fuels while reducing CO₂ emissions. That's also a position that Ernest Moniz, an MIT professor and the Obama administration's choice to run the Energy Department, takes in favor of renewable sources of energy production. The studies he and Moore refer to show nuclear energy and natural gas production could lower by half the emissions that now result with coal as the primary energy source.

BACKS BIOTECH. Moore is a strong proponent of genetic modification (GMOs) and biotechnology in agriculture. "These are great breakthroughs in our ability to improve nutrition, production and medicine through genetic science. We now know how to do it methodically for specific traits—disease resistance, plant nutrient uptake, drought and salt resistance. No one is using genetic modification for evil purposes; everyone is using it to improve things."

Moore adds that mechanized agriculture "is the solution to poverty and population growth. All the countries that have mechanized agriculture—the industrial countries—have negative population growth and great wealth. When 80% of the people are employed in growing food in subsistence agricultural settings, you don't have people to do other things like making goods and providing services.

"In mechanized agriculture, with the machinery, chemicals, genetics and technology, less than 5% of the people grow food, and the rest of the people can be

gainfully employed manufacturing goods and providing services. The vision for the future is to mechanize agriculture and food production."

Moore's advice to farmers is "to communicate more about your industry. Farmers should urge their organizations to put more resources into communicating with the public.

"On the ground, farmers should support programs that allow them to do their agriculture but also improve their environmental performance ... in terms of reducing siltation of water, allowing biodiversity to occur in the context of farming near wetlands and waterways."

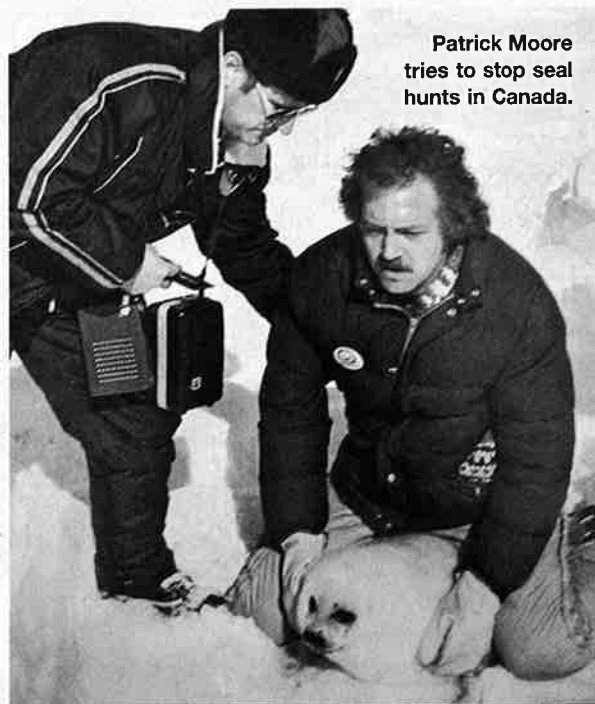
He cites the example of California's rice farmers who had traditionally burned off their fields. The resulting smoke and pollution rose a hue and cry from California's urban population. Statewide round tables were created, at which farmers, environmentalists and businesspeople sat down to hash out a workable alternative to burning. That alternative was reflooding the fields after harvest. As a result, Moore points out, "Shorebirds came. Habitat was created. The fact is rice stubble rots under

water providing nutrients to the soils, and so the fields don't have to be burned. That is sustainability. It required multi-stakeholders to form a round table consensus.

"The middle way has eluded us all through history. Environmentalism should be in the middle," Moore continues. "There are some good ideas on the right—marketing. There are some good ideas on the left—regulation. The key is how to find the middle way." ●

"I didn't leave Greenpeace so much as Greenpeace left me."

PATRICK MOORE



Patrick Moore tries to stop seal hunts in Canada.

PHOTO: GREENSPIRIT STRATEGIES LTD.