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Review of *Conserving Biodiversity in Agricultural Landscapes: Model-Based Planning Tools* Edited by Robert K. Swihart and Jeffrey E. Moore

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Conserving Biodiversity in Agricultural Landscapes: Model-Based Planning Tools. Edited by Robert K. Swihart and Jeffrey E. Moore. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2004. xiii + 336 pp. Tables, figures, literature cited, index. \$62.95 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

Despite its title, this book is more about advice to public sector authorities on how to plan housing and industrial developments in agricultural regions than about “conserving biodiversity in agricultural landscapes.” The book presents models of “nature-based planning” and assumes that in jurisdictions where legislated planning mechanisms are absent, biodiversity is automatically threatened. It is a book for those who see land use planning as the only answer to difficult landscape issues.

There is little appreciation that most agricultural lands are privately owned and inhabited by people who subscribe to the values and cultural norms of agrarian societies. These societies place constraints on personal behavior while at the same time clinging fiercely to the independent traditions that built them in the first place. Suggestions on how to “plan” development in such “cultures” is notably absent.

The book views private land ownership and the concomitant desire by farmers and landowners to maximize economic return as constraints to “nature-based planning” rather than characteristics to work with in the design of programs to conserve biodiversity on agricultural landscapes. In the case of the Midwestern United States, for example, the book notes that political ideology is conservative and strongly supportive of private property rights, as if this precluded the conservation of biodiversity. While the desire of farmers to control their own land in the Midwest may seem like an impediment to conservation, why have millions of acres been enrolled in what is arguably the greatest biodiversity conservation program in history, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)?

The almost complete lack of reference to agricultural policy is puzzling since if it is agricultural policy (such as production subsidies) that has reduced species abundance and diversity through the promotion of monoculture, then it will be agricultural policy that reverses this trend. In addition to CRP, the USDA administers the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, the Environmental Quality Improvement Program, and the Wetlands Reserve Program that collectively spend \$3 billion per year on the agricultural landscape to improve environmental quality and conserve biodiversity. No environmental or planning agency comes close to this level of impact.

The book also assumes that society has a choice between economic growth and environmental quality, as if it were a zero-sum game; yet it is only a rich society like the U.S. that could possibly afford such major conservation programs as listed above.

The book is well-written and rigorous and will be welcomed by land use planners working in densely populated landscapes. It is most applicable to situations where urban and suburban expansion is encroaching on private farmland and where there are laws or the political will to reduce the private rights of landowners in favor of mandatory zoning. It will be of limited use on the extensive agricultural landscapes of the Great Plains where trade rules, agricultural policy, and market demands will determine land use and hence biodiversity conservation. **Robert D. Sopuck**, *Western Canada, Delta Waterfowl Foundation, Manitoba*.