

FTY 112 – Forests Through Time: Discussions
Assignment for Week 1: 25 pt
Due Tuesday, September 9

Read the statement by Dr. Leopold (below) and then respond to the questions. The point value for each question is indicated in parentheses. Points are given for proper usage of information from the recorded lectures and readings, approximately 1 point per information item.

The following was written by Aldo Leopold in 1938:

The outstanding scientific discovery of the twentieth century is not television, or radio, but rather the complexity of the land organism. Only those who know the most about it can appreciate how little we know about it. The last word in ignorance is the man who says of an animal or plant: “What good is it?” If the land mechanism as a whole is good, then every part is good, whether we understand it or not. If the biota, in the course of eons, has built something we like but do not understand, then who but a fool would discard seemingly useless parts? To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering.

1. What is the “land organism”? Describe what you think is meant by this. (10 pt)
2. What does it take to “know the most about” the forest? (10 pt) For example, what needs to be measured?
3. Science does not involve value judgments, but the question is asked “What good is it?”, an animal or plant in the forest. Is this a value judgment? Explain your answer. (5 pt)