

Press Release



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Rocky Mountain Institute



Announcing the most important environmental and business book of the year

The bookstore shelves are crammed with **dire warnings** of environmental decline, and **rosy forecasts** of economic opportunity.

Here, at last, is a book that reconciles these seemingly contradictory views—and offers a practical strategy for solving one in a way that achieves the other.

Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution, by Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins and Hunter Lovins, describes a future in which business and environmental interests increasingly overlap, and in which businesses play the pivotal role in bringing humanity back within its planetary limits. It has just been published by Little, Brown (\$26.95; ISBN 0-316-35316-7).

This trio of **visionary authors** is well qualified to lead the charge of the “next industrial revolution.” Paul Hawken is renowned as both an entrepreneur and an environmentalist, and his previous book, *The Ecology of Commerce*, was a manifesto for corporate ecological reform. Amory Lovins is widely regarded as the godfather of resource efficiency; he and Hunter Lovins co-founded and co-direct Rocky Mountain Institute, one of the most influential organizations in the world of resource policy today.

Natural Capitalism assumes no environmental bias on the part of its readers. It doesn’t preach or bash business, but instead builds a relentless case for the money-making potential of a more **environmentally friendly business model**. And unlike most eco-tomes, it doesn’t call for more regulations or belt-tightening; in fact, following its recommendations would eventually make environmental regulations irrelevant.

Here’s the book’s thesis.

Most businesses still operate according to a set of assumptions that hark back to the first Industrial Revolution, when natural resources were abundant and labor was the limiting factor of production. Now, however, there’s a surplus of people, while nature—land, resources, the capacity to absorb wastes—is in decline, and expensive or irreplaceable.

That shift, the authors assert, creates a whole new business climate with its own challenges and **opportunities**. The “next industrial revolution” is already being led by companies that are learning to profit and gain competitive advantage from the radically more productive use of natural resources. These companies are improving their bottom lines and realizing benefits both for today’s shareholders and for future generations.

Not only that, their leaders and employees are feeling better about what they do. Firing the “unproductive tons, gallons, and kilowatt-hours” often makes it possible to keep the people, who will foster the innovation that drives future improvement.

Because this integration of ecological and economic goals is profitable as well as necessary, the authors claim, it will replace traditional industrialism within a **new paradigm** of production, just as industrialism previously replaced agrarianism.

(more)

Natural capital refers to the natural resources and ecosystem services that make possible all economic activity, and indeed all life. These services are of immense economic value; some are literally priceless, since they have no known substitutes. Yet current business practices typically fail to take into account the value of these assets. As a result, natural capital is being degraded and liquidated by the wasteful use of such resources as energy, materials, water, fiber, and topsoil.

The first of natural capitalism's **four principles**, therefore, is radically increased resource productivity. Implementing just this first principle can significantly improve a firm's bottom line, and can also help finance the other three. They are: redesigning industry on biological models with closed loops and zero waste; shifting from the sale of goods (for example, light bulbs) to the provision of services (illumination); and reinvesting in the natural capital that is the basis of future prosperity.

Natural Capitalism discovers a **new world**—the huge, growing, and largely unexplored common ground between business and environmental interests. As such, it's got a lot of people excited.

Environmental leaders and business gurus are united in their **praise** of *Natural Capitalism*.

- Bill McKibben (*The End of Nature*) writes: "There is not an idea in this powerful book that doesn't make intuitive, obvious, immediate, calculable sense."
- David Orr (*Earth in Mind*): "By illuminating the common ground between economics, environment, and society with crystal clarity and eloquence, *Natural Capitalism* is the design manual for the 21st century. Read it! Read it again!"
- Allen Hershkowitz of the Natural Resources Defense Council calls *Natural Capitalism* "a watershed text. Even the busiest among us—from the President on down—should take the time to read this book."
- Says Peter Senge (*The Fifth Discipline*): "If Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* was the bible for the first Industrial Revolution, then *Natural Capitalism* may well prove to be it for the next."
- Tachi Kiuchi, Managing Director of Mitsubishi Electric Corporation, raves: "*Natural Capitalism* reads like a manifesto, a touching and powerful credo, for the second industrial revolution. Three of the world's best brains have put together all their wisdom and created a work that future historians may look back upon as a milestone on our way to a new, sustainable economy."
- "You had better have a copy of this on your shelf or you will not be able to identify tomorrow's companies and industries as they appear before your eyes," advises Professor Stuart Hart of the University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler Business School.
- And *Publishers Weekly* calls *Natural Capitalism* "an ambitious, visionary, monster book. . . the book's reach is phenomenal. It belongs to the galvanizing tradition of Frances Moore Lappé's *Diet for a Small Planet* and Stewart Brand's *The Whole Earth Catalog*."