Workshop Synopsis:

2012 marks the 50th anniversary of the publication of Rachel Carson’s seminal book, Silent Spring. As we enter the second decade of the 21st century, we see evidence of the unintended consequences of human actions on the living biosphere. Environmental policies initiated in the 1970’s have shifted since Silent Spring catalyzed action. Most of the environmental damage accumulated over the last fifty years derives from fossil fuel combustion for energy and transportation, and the bioaccumulation of toxic synthetic chemicals. Environmental policies consistent with natural laws can be derived from principles set out in Rachel Carson’s writing. Her principles, as an environmental ethic, offer guidance for a transition to a sustainable economy that preserves a viable human habitat while protecting the life support system all living things share – clean air, pure water, fertile ground and the biodiversity of species. An environmental ethic based on sound understanding of the interconnectedness of living systems helps to neutralize divisive politics and focus attention on the long term viability of all living species, including humans.

This workshop will discuss Rachel Carson’s environmental ethic in the context of fifty years’ experience since the publication of Silent Spring. We will examine three areas of opportunity to apply Rachel Carson’s principles in the 21st century to improve the global interconnected ecosystems of the living biosphere: sustainable energy use; green chemistry; and sustainable agro-ecosystems. We will reflect on the critical role of human behavior in sustaining the global biodiversity of species.

Workshop Format:

(30 Min) P.DeMarco: Introduction and presentation: Rachel Carson’s Environmental Ethic a Perspective from Silent Spring for Modern Times

(20 min) Volker Hartkopf- “Sustainable Energy Systems for a Growing World”

(20 min) Nancy Gift “Poison-free Growing: Sustainable Agro-ecosystems”

(20 min) Eric Beckman “Green Chemistry Solutions”

(20 min) Audience Participation Q/A Role of human behavior in sustaining global biodiversity of species

(10 min) Edward O. Wilson (invited) Reflection and Summation