



CENTER FOR COLLABORATIVE CONSERVATION



WARNER COLLEGE
OF NATURAL RESOURCES
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY



2018 Collaborative Conservation Fellows Retreat and Training

February 14-16, 2018
Tamasag Retreat Center
Bellvue, Colorado

CCC Fellows Draft Retreat Agenda

February 14, 2018

Wednesday 8:00 am-5:30 pm

Tamasag Center

4825 County Road 52E, Bellvue, Colorado

7:00-8:00am

Drive to Tamasag, coffee and socializing

8:00 am – 9:00am

Introductions, Retreat Agenda and Logistics, Welcome
Kim (and Robin if available)

9:00 am – 9:30 am

What is Collaborative Conservation?
(small groups and share) Kim

9:30 am- 10:00am

Break

10:00 am -Noon

Session 1: Develop Your Team Situation Assessment (fellows
work in their teams, present and discuss)
Kim

12:00 pm -1:00pm

Lunch (with past fellows)

1:00 pm – 2:30 pm

Session 2: Past Fellows Share Their Wisdom
Kim and Past Fellows

2:30 pm – 3:00 pm

Break

3:00 pm – 4:30 pm

Session 3: Leadership and Self Awareness
Brett Bruyere

4:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Reflections on the Day – Questions and Sharing, evaluations

5:00pm -5:15 pm

Drive back to Fort Collins

Fellows Retreat

February 15, 2018

8:00 am – 5:00 pm Thursday

Tamasag Center

4825 County Road 52E, Bellvue, Colorado

7:00 am – 8:00 am

Drive to Tamasag, coffee and socializing

8:00 am – 9:30 am

Session 4: Collaborative Research & Fact Finding

Robin Reid

9:30 am- 10:00 am

Break

10:00 am- 12:00 pm

Session 5: Making Project Media Products

Wes White

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

Lunch

1:00 pm – 2:30 pm

Session 6: Building Partnerships

Rox Hicks and Heather Knight

2:30 pm- 3:00 pm

Break

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

**Session 7: Open Discussion on International Collaboration
and Cultural Ways of Knowing**

Dominique M. David-Chavez + Group

4:00 pm – 4:45 pm

Reflections on the Day – Questions and Sharing, Retreat evaluations

4:45 pm – 5:00 pm

Drive back to Fort Collins

Fellows Retreat

February 16, 2018

8:00 am – 1:30 pm Friday

Tamasag Center

4825 County Road 52E, Bellvue, Colorado

7:00 am – 8:00 am

Drive to Tamasag, coffee and socializing

8:00 am – 12:00 pm

Session 8: Facilitating the Collaborative Process

Carrie Bennett, Learning Through Difference, LLC

Noon – 1:00 pm

Continue Facilitation ...Working Lunch

1:00 pm -2:00 pm

Wrap up, final evaluations, and drive back to Fort Collins

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

What is Collaborative Conservation?

Time: Wednesday Feb. 14, 9:00 am – 9:30 am

Leader: Kim Skyelander

Description: What is collaboration? What is conservation? Who does collaborative conservation and why? What are the strengths and critiques of collaborative conservation? What are your experiences?

Session 1

Developing Your Team Situation Assessment

Time: Wednesday Feb. 13, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Leader: Kim Skyelander

Description:

A situation assessment provides a flexible framework to understand the issues at hand, the context and history of the issues, the stakeholders and their agenda, boundaries of interest, relationships and their hierarchies, and appropriate approaches and processes relevant to the issues. It is also important to frame oneself within the situation: what are your personal history, lens, biases, opinions, etc. that may influence how you approach your work and how communities relate to you (which potentially affects your project's success)?

This is a very important process of developing baseline knowledge of the systems you are working with, which combined with critical self-reflection, will help minimize controversy and conflict.

This workshop will take the participants through exercises that help them identify inter-relationships between themselves and the system where they work, helping them to anticipate what some of the potential unidentified and unintended consequences – both positive and negative – of their work might be.

Objectives:

1. Participants will assess: their CCC Fellows Project's stakeholders and identify their possible agendas, assess potential collaborators, identify the geographic and cultural context and drivers of their project, and identify potential and existing conflicts.
2. Participants will begin to identify gaps in their knowledge related to their CCC Fellows Project.
3. Participants will reflect on what they personally bring to the situation and how this may influence process and outcomes.
4. Participants will share in research/practice groups, and with the whole group.

Session 2

Past Fellows Share Their Wisdom

Time: Wednesday Feb. 14, 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm

Leader: Kim Skyelander

Description:

Five fellows from past cohorts will share their insights into their fellowships. They will describe their projects, the challenges and successes, what they learned personally and professionally from their projects, and provide tips to new fellows about how to make their fellowship run smoothly.

Session 3

Leadership and Self-Awareness

Time: Wednesday Feb. 14, 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm

Leader: Brett Bruyere

Description:

The importance of leadership to conservation is critical. The complex and dynamic nature of conservation issues require individuals with skills to work with diverse individuals and groups, at a variety of scales, and in an environment that is always changing. A critical first step to effectively lead others toward a shared vision is *knowing yourself*. Self-awareness helps us recognize the circumstances in which we will thrive as leaders, as well as those in which we must work harder to effectively influence others.

This session will provide participants with an overview of conservation leadership, discuss the role of self-awareness as an important first step in leadership, and facilitate opportunities for participants to reflect about the values, passions, and interpersonal preferences that guide your everyday life.

Objectives:

1. Participants will articulate strategies for successful conservation leadership.
2. Participants will recognize the importance of self-awareness in effective leadership.
3. Participants will reflect about their values, passions, communication styles and similar aspects of themselves that contribute to building self-awareness and effective conservation leadership.

Session 4

Collaborative Research & Fact-Finding

Thursday Feb. 15, 8:00 am-9:30 am

Leaders: Robin Reid

Description:

Western scientific research is a cultural construct that often does not integrate with indigenous science and experiential knowledge. Here we will describe ways to integrate different ways of knowing and different knowledge sources to create and negotiate the meaning of information to support conservation action.

The purpose of this part of the Fellows Retreat is to study, discuss and make plans to incorporate collaboration research and fact-finding approaches as part of your CCC Fellowship. For graduate students and faculty, this will take the form of ways to incorporate stakeholders in the research process.

For practitioners, this will take the form of ways to work with researchers. For both groups, the session will discuss ways to integrate experiential, indigenous and scientific knowledge, the incentives different partners have in this process, the power of expert knowledge, the process of collaborative or participatory research from start to finish, ways to negotiate the meaning of new data and information and ways to communicate the resulting information to different audiences.

Objectives:

- Participants will discuss the important principles behind western / indigenous science, and collaborative research and fact-finding approaches.
- Participants will explore different practical examples of collaborative research and fact-finding practices from both practitioner and research perspectives.
- Participants will start to design ways they can incorporate collaborative research and fact-finding approaches into their fellows' projects.

Session 5

Making Project Media Products

Time: Thursday Feb. 15, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Leader: Wes White

Description:

The main objective of this module is to introduce CCC fellows to the basics of communication strategy, media production, and available resources. CCC puts emphasis on communication skills and their fellows being able to use various types of media to communicate about their projects and the science behind them. Participants should come prepared to discuss their intended audience, stakeholders, multiple languages needed and other barriers, purpose, output, and delivery of their product related to their specific project.

This module will go over the basics of strategic communication, creating storyboards, scripts, finding and working with free or cheap media development resources, and creating a consumable product such as a podcast or video, as well as the do's and don'ts. Students will work with project members to practice storyboarding, recording audio and video footage, and the use of available resources.

Fellows are STRONGLY encouraged to bring their smart devices, laptops, etc. to this session.

Objectives:

- Understanding your target audience (often stakeholders) and how to best reach them.
- Understanding basics of audio and video production and available tools and resources.
- Understanding storyboarding and best practices for video production
- Understanding the legal aspects of creating publicly consumable media products.

Session 6

Building Partnerships

Time: Thursday Feb. 15, 1:00 pm -2:30 pm

Leaders: Rox Hicks and Heather Knight

Description:

Conservation today is as much about working with people and livelihoods as it is about conserving our natural heritage. The ability to effectively engage numerous and diverse stakeholder groups, incorporate livelihood issues, and creatively leverage limited resources can affect conservation outcomes. Partnerships are therefore an important foundation for collaboration and conservation success. Knowing when and how to form partnerships, how to sustain and manage them for success over time, and when to transition them, requires as much strategic thinking, planning and time as does conservation action. There is good theoretical information and a wealth of experience to guide us on this topic.

This module will: introduce different types of partnerships, identify characteristics of successful partnerships, and explore how to build, sustain and transition partnerships.

Objectives:

1. Participant will define and compare different types of partnerships.
2. Participant will identify characteristics of successful partnerships.
3. Participant will learn key elements in forming and sustaining successful partnerships, challenges associated with maintaining partnerships, the longevity of partnerships, their transition, new players entering into existing partnerships, and what a partnership is not.
4. Participant will identify key ingredients for a sustainable partnership.

Session 7**Discussion: Interorganizational Collaboration and Cross Cultural Learning**

Time: Thursday Feb. 15, 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Leader: Dominique M. David-Chavez and Group

Description:

When working with NGO's, agencies, businesses, governments, etc. how do you share the credit for a project, develop shared goals, share data, and not compete for funding?

When working with cultures other than our own, it is important to know what assumptions, worldviews and differing kinds of knowledge we, our processes, and our projects bring to our work.

Let's share our own various cross-cultural experiences and discuss "rules of thumb" when working with cultures different in some degree from our own. (These differences could be geographic, demographic, economic, values, customs, use of language, etc.)

Session 8**Facilitating the Collaborative Process**

Time: Friday Feb. 16, 8:00 am – 1:00 pm

Leader: Carrie Bennett, Learning Through Difference, LLC

Description:

Facilitation is the craft of helping groups do their best thinking together. Good facilitation includes the adaptive application of a diverse suite of tools. With these tools, facilitators help teams communicate effectively, deepen participants' understanding of other perspectives, and increase the speed and efficiency with which teams are able to reach resolution. With strong facilitation, participants can trust the facilitator and the process, even if they do not yet trust one another. Strengthened relationships and trust between stakeholders are often, thus, a byproduct, instead of a prerequisite of collaborative work.

This workshop will help build participants' facilitation toolboxes and hone their ability to apply these tools in their projects.

Objectives:

- Fellows will build skill to manage groups for successful communication and collaboration. These skills will include the following:
 - Identifying common goals- agreeing on the problem you are trying to solve.
 - Applying a tested process for problem solving that supports transparency and stability (applying an interest-based collaborative problem-solving cycle).
 - Managing unexpected derailments- managing conflict and facilitator first aid
- Fellows will apply learning to their own projects.

SYSTEMS THINKING

What is a System?

A system is an entity that maintains its existence through the mutual interaction of its parts. A system exists and operates in time and space. The key term in this definition is “interaction.” A system is much more than a “heap” or a “lump” of parts; the interactions—more than the parts—are responsible for the characteristics of the system.

This definition of system implies something beyond cause and effect. Rather than simply “A” influencing “B”; “B” also influences “A”. Examples of systems include: particle, atom, molecule, cell, organ, person, community, region, nation, world, solar system, galaxy, and universe – in increasing levels of complexity. Some argue that there is only one system – the “Universe” – and all other systems are sub-systems of this larger system. The relevant question is where one chooses to draw the system boundaries.

What is “Systems Thinking”?

Systems-thinking is seeing beyond what initially appears to be a set of isolated and independent incidents to identify the system of interactions. This type of thinking encourages us to recognize connections between events so we can better understand and influence them.

Systems Thinking as a Mindset... Systems thinking is a mindset to understand how things work. It is a perspective for going beyond events to discover patterns of behavior, seeking the underlying systemic relationships responsible for resulting events. Systems thinking requires adopting a “world-view” which examines the interrelationships among multiple elements.

Why Not Use the Traditional Scientific Method?

Descartes and Bacon provided us with a precise recipe for understanding the world – the scientific method. Later Newton, with the discovery of the laws of motion and gravity, provided us with a clockwork paradigm for understanding the universe. These paradigms are not wrong, but incomplete. The Newtonian paradigm is based on linear cause and effect relationships. The difficulty with linear cause and effect understandings is that they only provide a short-term perspective for understanding how things work.

When we go beyond the linear cause and effect paradigm to study patterns of behavior and the systemic interrelationships among the parts of the system we develop a deeper understanding of how things operate in time and space.

This understanding allows us to work with the system instead of against it. Rather than trying to manipulate it as in traditional scientific approaches to problem solving, a systems thinking perspective encourages the development of interventions to create lasting change within the system.

When Should we use a Systems Thinking Approach?

Examples where systems thinking has proven its value include:

- Complex problems involving multiple actors who need to see the “big picture” and not just their individual part.
- Recurring problems, which are often made worse through piecemeal attempts to fix them.
- Issues where an action influences (and is influenced by) the environment surrounding the issue. These can include both the natural environment and competing social and economic environments.
- Problems whose solutions are not obvious.

Many of the important problems plaguing us today are scientifically complex and involve multiple stakeholders. Dealing with such problems is notoriously difficult; sometimes a solution is reached, but only after extensive compromising.

Such solutions may discourage the prospects of effectively addressing the problem. The benefit of systems thinking lies in its ability to effectively respond to complexity and raise our thinking to a level that encourages development of collaborative, creative options for complex problems.

Where Did These Ideas Come From?

Systems thinking, as a formal method, has its roots in the field of system dynamics, founded in 1956 by MIT professor Jay Forrester. Professor Forrester recognized the need for a better way of testing new ideas about social systems, in the same way we can test ideas in engineering. Typically engineers build models to test new ideas; the same can be done in the world of systems thinking.

**Situation Assessment & Systems Thinking
Conceptual Situation Map**

Situation Assessment & Systems Thinking
Conceptual Situation Map

Building Partnerships

Defining Partnerships

A Partnership is a voluntary collaborative agreement between two or more organizations in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common goal. Partnerships may involve one organization utilizing another's unique abilities, equipment or services, or it may be a "sharing" of resources (money, time, knowledge, equipment, etc.), to accomplish short or long-term objectives for one or all of the participating partners.

A Partnership Is

- ◇ A handshake, not a handout.
- ◇ A written or informal agreement between the parties
- ◇ An agreement that outlines the parties', mutual interest in, mutual benefits from, or mutually desired goals of a common objective
- ◇ An agreement that involves voluntary participation
- ◇ Consistent with the partners' plans, policies, and priorities
- ◇ Wholly owned by each partner organization
- ◇ An agreement that demonstrates real benefits to the public/communities

Why Partner

- ❖ Partnerships add value by drawing on the expertise of a variety of people and leverage different types of resources and competencies
- ❖ Partnerships mobilize people and resources to create changes
- ❖ Partnerships operate with the understanding that everyone has a piece of the truth
- ❖ Partnerships multiply the creativity and solutions! Two heads (or more) are better than one!
- ❖ Partnerships increase citizens' personal sense of responsibility, involvement, commitment, and develops a shared vision for long term change

How to Start a Partnership

- Get to know a community; including its human and natural history
- Learn about common issues and concerns
- Learn about differences and challenges/conflicts
- Learn about what has been done before and what has not
- Determine who are the leaders and willing participants and who are not
- Determine who affects change/action and who does not
- Bring willing community members together to share the above and find common ground and identify where to start
- Collectively identify what to do and what is needed and who will need to be a participant

The 80/20 RULE

Ability to view a partnership project through a different "Lens"! Focus on what people have in "common" (i.e. resources- land base, water; economics; community) not on the contentious view points. By doing this you may only get 80% of the partners to agree. However, you may get 100% agreement later in the process which comes with *trust* and *credibility*.

Key Elements of Successful Partnerships

Relationships-founded on reciprocity, honesty, trust, integrity, & open communication

- Working beyond individual boundaries with all parties involved-collective ownership
- Founded on a shared need/vision-acknowledges differences
- Agreed upon decision-making process

- Willingness to give up or share control and authority
- Based on credible data, local and indigenous knowledge-recognizes knowledge gaps
- Willingness to learn & listen to others, negotiate/compromise, seek creative win-win solutions
- Shared roles, risks, responsibilities and resources
- Involves and embraces inherent complexity- results are longer lasting
- Process for monitoring and evaluating and adapting
- Celebrate successes and learning
- Implement innovative solutions for longevity and funding

Managing Partnerships

TAKES TIME!

- ✓ ENERGY and COMMITMENT!
- ✓ STRATEGIC PLANNING!
- ✓ THINKING!
- ✓ MANAGING W/ INTEGRITY!

Spotting Trouble

- ❖ When people don't show up
- ❖ When resources don't become available
- ❖ When time passes and action does not follow
- ❖ When rumors start
- ❖ When results are not being achieved

How to Proceed when a Partnership is not Working

- ✓ Act quickly but strategically
- ✓ Identify what is not working and why-what has changed, why
- ✓ Do not assume anything
- ✓ Use open and inclusive and non-threatening communication- in person
- ✓ Look for positive solutions and not for opportunity to create blame
- ✓ Bring the group together to discuss, identify if there is a problem and a resolution

Sustaining & Transitioning Partnerships

- Recognize and plan for change-avoid perception of “abandonment”
- Start with an adaptive approach-monitor, evaluate and redefine over time-create a process that can respond to new threats, new partner situations, etc.
- Be willing to pass on or share responsibility and leadership
- Create resilient & sustainable partners-well supported with sufficient and appropriate resources, capacity & commitment
- Re-engage if needed-talk about when, how and who? – assess the cost of leaving versus rejoining

A Partnership Is Not...

- * A conflict of interest or appearance of conflict of interest or preferential treatment of one entity over another
- * An endorsement of commercial products, services, or entities
- * A way to get around laws that apply to things like recreational use, procurement of goods and services, etc.
- * Marketing or promotion of partners in any way, except for recognition of the contribution
- * A one way street
- * A pretense of allowing others to be heard and then decision making that is not inclusive of others

2018 Fellows Retreat Trainers

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CCC RETREAT 2018 – Wednesday (Day 1) EVALUATIONS

Session 1: Situation Assessment (Kim)

1. Rate the usefulness of this session's training for your project specifically (likelihood it will affect how you approach/conduct your project) (1 = low to 5 = high)

2. Rate the level of information coverage (you can circle more than one if appropriate):
 - a. This was not a topic of great interest or need for me to begin with
 - b. I thought this would be useful, but it just wasn't what I was looking for
 - c. Too much – shorten the session please
 - d. Coverage was just right
 - e. Good amount of coverage for getting started... but give me more!

3. General comments or elaborations (what did you like the most? The least?)

Session 2: Past Fellows Share Their Wisdom

1. Rate the usefulness of this session's training for your project specifically (likelihood it will affect how you approach/conduct your project) (1-5)

2. Rate the level of information coverage (you can circle more than one if appropriate):
 - a. This was not a topic of great interest or need for me to begin with
 - b. I thought this would be useful, but it just wasn't what I was looking for
 - c. Too much – shorten the session please
 - d. Coverage was just right
 - e. Good amount of coverage for getting started... but give me more!

3. General comments or elaborations (what did you like the most? The least?)

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CCC RETREAT 2018 – Wednesday (Day 1) EVALUATIONS continued...

Session 3: Leadership and Self Awareness (Brett)

1. Rate the usefulness of this session's training for your project specifically (likelihood it will affect how you approach/conduct your project) (1-5)

2. Rate the level of information coverage (you can circle more than one if appropriate):
 - a. This was not a topic of great interest or need for me to begin with
 - b. I thought this would be useful, but it just wasn't what I was looking for
 - c. Too much – shorten the session please
 - d. Coverage was just right
 - e. Good amount of coverage for getting started... but give me more!

3. General comments or elaborations (what did you like the most? The least?)

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CCC RETREAT 2018 – Thursday (Day 2) EVALUATIONS

Session 4: Collaborative Research & Fact Finding (Robin)

1. Rate the usefulness of this session's training for your project specifically (likelihood it will affect how you approach/conduct your project) (1-5)

2. Rate the level of information coverage (you can circle more than one if appropriate):
 - a. This was not a topic of great interest or need for me to begin with
 - b. I thought this would be useful, but it just wasn't what I was looking for
 - c. Too much – shorten the session please
 - d. Coverage was just right
 - e. Good amount of coverage for getting started... but give me more!

3. General comments or elaborations (what did you like the most? The least?)

Session 5: Making Project Media Products (Wes)

1. Rate the usefulness of this session's training for your project specifically (likelihood it will affect how you approach/conduct your project) (1-5)

2. Rate the level of information coverage (you can circle more than one if appropriate):
 - a. This was not a topic of great interest or need for me to begin with
 - b. I thought this would be useful, but it just wasn't what I was looking for
 - c. Too much – shorten the session please
 - d. Coverage was just right
 - e. Good amount of coverage for getting started... but give me more!

3. General comments or elaborations (what did you like the most? The least?)

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CCC RETREAT 2018 – Thursday (Day 2) EVALUATIONS

Session 6: Building Partnerships (Rox and Heather)

1. Rate the usefulness of this session's training for your project specifically (likelihood it will affect how you approach/conduct your project) (1-5)

2. Rate the level of information coverage (you can circle more than one if appropriate):
 - a. This was not a topic of great interest or need for me to begin with
 - b. I thought this would be useful, but it just wasn't what I was looking for
 - c. Too much – shorten the session please
 - d. Coverage was just right
 - e. Good amount of coverage for getting started... but give me more!

3. General comments or elaborations (what did you like the most? The least?)

Session 7: Open Discussion – Interorganizational Collaboration/Cross-Cultural Learning (group)

General Comments:

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CCC RETREAT 2018 – Friday (Day 3) EVALUATION

Session 8: Facilitating the Collaborative Process (Carrie)

1. Rate the usefulness of this session's training for your project specifically (likelihood it will affect how you approach/conduct your project) (1-5)

2. Rate the level of information coverage (you can circle more than one if appropriate):
 - a. This was not a topic of great interest or need for me to begin with
 - b. I thought this would be useful, but it just wasn't what I was looking for c.
Too much – shorten the session please
 - d. Coverage was just right
 - e. Good amount of coverage for getting started... but give me more!

3. General comments or elaborations (what did you like the most? The least?)

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CCC RETREAT 2018 - SUMMATIVE EVALUATIONS

1. How effective do you feel the social/networking/team-building outcomes of the retreat were?
Please discuss your thoughts.
2. How effective were we in delivering the content and information throughout the retreat?
3. If you had to choose 1-3 favorite and/or most useful session(s), which would they be and why?
4. What are your ideas for future trainings? (things we missed, should expand upon, or drop)
5. Anything else you'd like to comment on?

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THE GREAT AWAKENING: TRANSITIONING FROM TOP-DOWN TO BOTTOM-UP CONSERVATION

RICHARD L. KNIGHT

When asked if I am pessimistic or optimistic about the future, my answer is always the same: If you look at the science that describes what is happening on Earth and aren't pessimistic, you don't have the data. Yet, if you meet the people in this unnamed movement and aren't optimistic, you haven't got a heart. Paul Hawken (2007)

In northern Colorado, sitting at one end of a 160-mile-long swath of runaway sprawl, the future looks quite different today than it did a decade earlier. Until the 1990s, northern Colorado was heading in the same direction as the rest of Colorado's Front Range (Knight 1997). At the peak of land conversion, Colorado was losing the size of Rocky Mountain National Park in farm and ranch land every year. That is, we were swapping farm and forest land for exurbs stretching as far as the eye could see and the mind could fathom. Interstate 25 was called "main street," and towns from Colorado Springs to Fort Collins were referred to as "neighborhoods," Colorado was well on its way to copying the trajectory of Atlanta, Georgia, and Southern California.

Little appreciated at this time was the realization that people in northern Colorado's Larimer County were not slumbering through this latest wave of exurban sprawl. In the late 1980s, people and organizations began to organize to ensure their watershed would not look like the rest of the Colorado Front Range, sliced and diced by endless residential and commercial developments, city-to-city annexing wars, increasing air pollution, traffic congestion, and rising levels of crime.

Northern Colorado had a different vision. Its residents refused to believe that its watershed was like any other place, to be treated as just another piece of real estate, where developers and elected officials conspired to turn once-productive working land into deficit-spiraling urbs, whether exurb or suburb.

Organizing around the Laramie Foothills Group, with city and county residents passing sales taxes to help conserve open spaces, a remarkable consortium of rural and urban constituencies coalesced to ensure that land beyond city limits stayed open and productive, rather than developed and running red deficits on county and city ledgers (Knight 2002).

Beginning slow, taking baby steps in order to go fast, there were years of gatherings, meetings on the land, in private homes and city buildings, over coffee, and over beer. Asking questions, crossing political ideologies to focus on what brought us together, people began to see commonalities rather than differences. Everyone wanted to live in a prosperous watershed, where both the land and the human communities did well, where producers and consumers of food could meet locally, where open space, whether private or public, was conserved rather than developed. Some worried

that it was already too late, that we had squandered what an American writer saw when she penned these words atop Pikes Peak looking out over the Colorado Front Range:

*O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee.*

Katharine Lee Bates, a young English professor at Wellesley College, gazing out over the Colorado Front Range was bewitched by the beauty of what she saw as well as by a swelling patriotism and love of country. Over a century later, it was the beauty of working wildlands in a still largely intact watershed that compelled people in northern Colorado to come together and find a middle way.

Little by little progress was made, a ranch conserved here, an agricultural working group formed there, an invasive-weed cooperative started, a place-based education program organized in the rural schools, city and county open space programs working together, ranch families beginning to see that their urban cousins genuinely cared about their livelihoods, localvores in towns who wanted to know where their food came from and were tired of subsidizing developers. The time seemed ripe for a unifying event. It happened in 2003.

Due to several large ranches being placed on the market or their owners seeing the wisdom of placing conservation easements on their land, and some risk-prone individuals working for city and county governments, a progressive land trust, and an international conservation organization, forces converged to protect an east-west swath of land nearly 22 miles wide and 20 miles deep. Residents of Larimer County woke up one day and realized that the northern part of the Colorado Front Range would never be the same again. The future that spread out

before its residents now held intact the promise of rural and urban communities coming together over locally produced food on locally conserved open spaces.

Someone else awoke that morning with what must have been a surprise. For the forest supervisor of the Roosevelt National Forest looked east to his Pawnee National Grasslands and west to his Canyon-Lakes District and realized that his forests and plains were now connected by an east-west swath of conserved land!

Updating this story of how people in a watershed took their destiny into their own hands serves as an introduction to a new way of doing conservation. For, truth be told, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) was not involved in this immense conservation effort. Indeed, the only entity from the federal government that did play a vital role was the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This agency has always worked with private landowners; its employees have learned that to be successful one must focus on listening and show due respect. There is little room for a top-down approach when working with private landowners who control approximately two-thirds of our country. The USFS, on the other hand, has traditionally taken a top-down, almost militaristic approach to managing its public land, an approach that doesn't resonate well with Americans (Knight and Meffe 1997).

Today, watersheds across the country are increasingly self-organizing, with citizen-based groups coming together and finding ways to make where they live, work, play, and worship healthier, both conserving land and water but also strengthening economies (Knight and White 2009). Is this Balkanization of the U.S. a long-term trend? No one is sure, but one thing seems apparent: Watershed-based conservation is the approach that meets with the greatest buy-in and success, while the traditional federal and state approach of top-down control languishes.

On the other hand, federal involvement in this project—NRCS—was due largely to one

individual, the local NRCS field representative. He had developed trust with landowners over the decades, and they, in turn, knew they could work with him. Using federal programs, he repeatedly found support for conservation activities that benefited the land while also helping the bottom line.

Indeed, one might say that what happened in northern Colorado was due mostly to individuals, not organizations. There was no reason why the USFS could not have played a contributing role in what happened, or, for that matter, someone from the Colorado Division of Wildlife, or the local soil and water conservation district. All three, after all, either managed large landholdings in the watershed, or were involved with producers. Instead, during this period of time, none had personnel that cared to work collaboratively. Instead, it fell to someone from The Nature Conservancy (an organization not universally well-received by rural communities), NRCS, city and county employees, and ranch families to develop the trust to move forward.

And herein lies an important lesson in conservation. There is no longer, indeed if there ever was, a straightforward recipe for effective conservation. Every watershed has different organizations and individuals, different environmental strengths and restraints, different sources of financial support, and different prevailing values among its landowners and those who benefit from open spaces. It is a fool's errand to search for a single approach that will work everywhere and every time. But there are some common ingredients found in all of these watershed initiatives.

Conservation for a new generation

Inspired by Aldo Leopold's writings, this new way of doing conservation is captured by the phrase, "Conservation occurs at the nexus of land use and land health. Therefore,

conservation that works is conservation that works well for both people and land. Actions that benefit one at the expense of the other are not conservation, they are something else. Healthy human communities coincide with healthy natural communities; the reverse seldom occurs" (Knight 2007). This new way of doing conservation is not opposed to human land uses, whether they be logging or outdoor recreation. What conservation is opposed to, however, are land uses that degrade the health of the land (in the Leopoldian sense of "land health," Callicott and Freyfogle 1999). Natural resource management in the twenty-first century is all about land health and prosperous human communities.

Historically, natural resource conservation was the result of federal initiatives with legislation passed, appropriations provided (hopefully), and the new programs implemented using a top-down approach (Nelson 1995). Today, we see conservation resulting from bottom-up initiatives that emanate from watersheds, with support from local governments, tax incentives, and financial support from private entities and nongovernmental organizations (Table 1). Institutions, agencies, universities, and practitioners are experimenting with new approaches to

Table 1. Contrasting approaches to conservation. These are best viewed as a continuum rather than hard and fast dichotomous categories.

Traditional Approaches	Emerging Approaches
Top-down	Bottom-up
Land use	Land health
Litigation	Cooperation
Federal monies and unfunded mandates	Economic incentives and private support
Public-land	Private-public land
Wilderness	Working wildlands and landscape linkages
Working within administrative boundaries	Working across administrative boundaries
Command and control	Adaptive management
Single species	Ecological processes and keystone species
Disciplinary focus	Meta-disciplinary approach
Technical expertise	Social capital

natural resource management. On the ground, practitioners are re-examining the role of institutions and agencies and trying new forms of governance. In universities, teachers and students are placing emphases on such topics as human dimensions and valuing ecosystem services, which traditionally had been slighted. The private sector, whether nongovernmental organizations or foundations with money to support conservation, are becoming important in shaping the landscape of conservation, separating conservation from a federal government increasingly limited by rising deficits. The traditional focus on wilderness protection is being augmented with the emerging idea of working wildlands, that is, keeping land private and productive while keeping human densities low, thereby maintaining their capacity to support biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Although there are many defining elements of this new strain of natural resources management, they all have in common the following essentials that revolve around land, people, institutions and organizations, ecology, and economics:

- Work across administrative boundaries rather than staying within them.
- Integrate social capital with ecological and economic dimensions.
- Encourage bottom-up participation rather than top-down initiatives.
- Acknowledge all biodiversity rather than simply economically valuable species.
- Emphasize economic incentives rather than federal appropriations and unfunded mandates.
- Lastly, this new approach to natural resources management is not exclusionary (rather than whatever the “highest-and-best-use” is at the moment). Translated, this means that all appropriate land uses are encouraged, but importantly, only to the degree that the land can sustainably accommodate those uses.

Empowered by these concepts, hundreds of attempts nationwide to reinvent natural resources management have been occurring at the watershed level (Yaffee et al. 1996). A defining component of most such efforts is that they are locally initiated and more bottom-up than top-down. Another component they all share is that few of them were initiated by federal agencies. Indeed, if one were to have a truly candid conversation about people and natural resources today in the United States, you would have to conclude that most federal, top-down efforts are increasingly sharing their “authority of the resource” with more local agencies (state, county, city) and nongovernmental organizations (and, interestingly, rediscovering the ideas of early progressive thinkers, such as Lewis Mumford [Minteer 2003]).

Just as ecosystem management has never been codified by our Congress, the attempts taking place across America to build healthy human and natural communities are, at best, only loosely structured by mandates from the Beltway. It is time to capture this entrepreneurial strain that is providing the momentum around natural resources management in today’s changing world. It is time to coalesce this vast amount of tinkering and experimentation into a coherent blue print for conservation that works. In other words, it is time to examine, now that top-down conservation is being increasingly shaped by local initiatives, whether this new model of conservation that is more regional and bottom-up in nature is compatible with our equally fast-shifting society and changing environment (Knight and White 2009).

The way forward

To analyze the problem of conservation, the first thing to grasp is that government, no matter how good, can only do certain things.... Government can't bring to bear on small local matters that combination of solicitude, foresight, and skill which we call

husbandry. Husbandry watches no clock, knows no season of cessation, and for the most part is paid for in love, not dollars. Husbandry of somebody else's land is a contradiction in terms.... The second thing to grasp is that when we lay conservation in the lap of the government, it will always do the things it can, even though they are not the things that most need doing. Aldo Leopold (1942)

What Aldo Leopold was saying is that for conservation to work it has to begin at the interface between people and land. Here, where boots meet soil, conservation can best occur. You can be sure it is occurring when both the natural community, with its soil, water, plants, and animals, and the human community are growing healthier. You can also be sure that conservation is not occurring when the land grows poorer and people grow richer. This latter occurrence is best called exploitation; it surely is not conservation.

Leopold was making an important distinction when he was saying that government does what it can, not necessarily what it should. Leopold believed conservation was done best when landowners and those who benefit from healthy land are actually doing the conservation work. Is there a role for government in this type of conservation? Most assuredly, but state and federal agencies must approach this work with humility and eagerness to find common ground in work that benefits both people and land.

What happens when publics begin to assume that government is taking care of conservation for them and that they, the people, are no longer necessary in the land stewardship equation? If Leopold's prediction is true, that government does what it can, not what most needs being done, the answer may lie somewhere in the mix of land health deterioration. So today, agencies are still welcome at the table of collaborative conservation, but only as partners and catalysts, no longer as the authority figure (Cheng 2009).

Clearly, an answer to the vital question of healthy people-land relationships is elusive, but

surely its importance is not. Indeed, considering that planet earth, the only planet we will ever know, is finite and our populations, wants, and needs appear infinite, the future of our species is more critically dependent upon our connections to nature than perhaps even those with family, friends, god, or material acquisitions. The upshot of this logic is that people's relationships to land and its health results in happiness and health of people and that the greater the distance between people and land, the greater the likelihood that human communities and human economies will suffer (Diamond 2002). Leopold (1942) saw the future clearly when he wrote, "Culture is a state of awareness of the land's collective functioning. A culture premised on the destructive dominance of a single species can have but short duration."

If we assume for the moment that much government-inspired conservation falls short of its goals, then it is fair to ask the question: So who does conservation better? Leopold, did not straddle the fence on this issue. He clearly fell on the side of people-inspired conservation, stewardship that engaged people to reconnect with soil, water, plants, and animals, one acre at a time.

Summary and conclusion

There are many things the world needs right now, but there is nothing it needs more than healthy rural land supporting healthy rural communities, with the full awareness and commitment of those living in healthy cities. Wendell Berry (2003) captured this need clearly when he wrote: "The most tragic conflict in the history of conservation is that between environmentalists and the farmers and ranchers. It is tragic because it is unnecessary. There is no irresolvable conflict here, but the conflict that exists can be resolved only on the basis of a common understanding of good practice. Here again we need to study and foster working models: farms and ranches that are knowledgeably striving to bring economic

practice into line with ecological reality, and local food economies in which consumers conscientiously support the best land stewardship.”

Conservation in the eye of Wendell Berry is not about wilderness areas and recreationists, it is a much more inclusive picture that encompasses rural and urban communities, working wildlands, ecosystem services, biodiversity, food, and water. To understand this picture of conservation is to understand almost everything, that is, nothing has been left out.

This kind of conservation is best done when it is done locally, from the soil up, when it is watershed-based, and with the full involvement of local communities. And as Paul Hawken (2007) suggests in his book *Blessed Unrest*, this kind of conservation is gathering momentum. One sees it wherever one travels, hears stories from those involved in it from across the country, and knows it offers hope for a better future. It is not national news. Ideologically driven pundits haven't heard of it. People within the Beltway are unaware of it. But it is out there, clear-eyed and hard at work rediscovering the once-vibrant connections between rural and urban communities and the land upon which we all depend. These growing connections also make common sense in an age of peak oil, peak water, and peak food. They make health sense in an age of obesity, and they make ecological sense in an age of ecosystem services and biodiversity. As with all things of great import regarding people-land relations, let us leave the last word to Aldo Leopold (1946):

There must be some force behind conservation, more universal than profit, less awkward than government, less ephemeral than sport, something that reaches into all times and places where people live on land, something that brackets everything from rivers to raindrops, from whales to hummingbirds, from land-estates to window-boxes. I can see only one such force: a respect for land as an organism; a voluntary decency in land-use exercised by every citizen and every landowner out of a sense of love for and obligation to that great biota we call America.

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