

Notes on the Plenary Panel

Bringing Down the Silos: Cross Sector Collaboration for Greater Conservation Success

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Robert J. Liliholm: Academic Institutions as Conservation Catalysts

Emerging Networks

- Conservation Catalysts has members from around the world.
- ALPiNE formed January 2014, looking to harness the power of academic institutions in New England for conservation issues, strong connection with the RCP Network.
 - Connect, Collaborate, and Conserve
 - Goal is to catalyze the pace and scale of conservation across New England.
- Why ALPiNE?
 - We are beginning to see losses in forest cover in all six New England states, despite the gains of the previous century.
 - U.S. Forest Service is projecting large decreases in forestland.

New England's Assets

- Large number of academic institutions, including some of the oldest institutions in the country—Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, Brown, etc. Huge student/alumni/parent networks.
- “Birthplace of Land Conservation”
- Many schools have lands that they own and manage

Case Study on UMaine's Sustainability Solutions Initiatives

- Goal is to determine how landscapes will change through time, be proactive and protect lands in advance.
- Alternatives Futures Modeling – spatially explicit models that depict different future landscapes under various land use policies.
- Strategic conservation – what do we want to protect? Why? Where should we focus efforts? How? Who are the players? How do we ensure endurance? How do we measure success? (Acres is not enough as a measure)
- Models used to explore different scenarios were sprawl, conservation, population increases.
- Linking Knowledge to Action
 - Preserving Paradise – TV documentary
 - Website – Maine Futures Community Mapper – makes research accessible, maps to show different factors (conservation suitability, agricultural suitability, development potential, etc.) and outcomes.
 - These models and results can be applied elsewhere.
 - Mapper tool also allows us to identify which areas are valuable for development and NOT valuable for forestry, etc. – Very helpful to tell planners “yes” sometimes, rather than always telling them “no.”
- Students as Conservation Catalysts:
 - “Bay-to-Baxter Initiative” came from the students’ ideas and links Maine’s coastal tourism with natural resources/recreations/etc.
- Academia has a lot to offer

- Students and community engagement
- Place-based research, citizen science
- Institutional capacity

ALPiNE's next steps include mapping conservation assets, connecting students and educators to RCPs, institutionalizing conservation on campuses, etc.

Homework for Audience: Assess academic institutions in your area, ID key personnel, work with them! We've got a lot to do.

Passing laws that would make it difficult to develop prime agricultural land would meet resistance from farmers, etc. How do you get the people on board?

People really like maps – maps of current conditions vs. maps of likely conditions in 5-10 years are helpful, because people can realize “we don't want that to be our future.” Sometimes people we think will be adversaries will actually be allies. Developers don't like uncertainty – knowing where to stay away from can be helpful for them, too.

Stephanie Cooper: State Perspective: A View from Massachusetts

Objective – how does RCP network conservation look from a government perspective? What challenges must we overcome to achieve large landscape conservation?

EEA Programs

- 9 different grant programs, mostly municipally driven (Conservation Partnership Grant is specifically for land trusts)
- Urban parks are a priority
- Administer land tax credit
- Working Forest Initiative targets landowners in terms of due diligence, using woodland ambassadors, pays for forest management plans
- Partnerships are essential to success

Landscape Partnership Program

- Exemplifies cross-sector collaboration
- Program is for land areas of 500 contiguous acres or more
- 3 categories of applicants and need 2/3 to apply: non-profits, state agencies, local governments
- Flexible - doesn't have to be achieved in just one fiscal year
- Helps to expand previous programs by focusing on forest land
- Leyden Working Farms and Forest Conservation Partnership
 - Dairy farm (250 acres) – farm wasn't covered by current state agricultural land preservation programs, so neighbors began coming together to save the land and think about their own futures.
 - Multiple partners (towns, agencies, etc.) applied together to LPP program and received \$1 million grant to protect water supply, wildlife habitat, open space, many other values.
 - Conservation land tax credit was significant ingredient.
 - Leveraged additional funds from Open Space Institute and others.
- Spencer, Massachusetts
 - Sibley Farm - 350-acre former dairy farm along Rt. 9 was taken over by developer but Mass Audubon wanted to preserve it but traditional programs didn't quite fit.
 - MassAudubon went door-to-door, found property that could add to existing property, found more land that could connect to state land
 - Largest landscape partnership grant (\$1.9 million)
 - Lots of administrative/leadership support was essential.

Ken Elowe – North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative: Setting the Stage for Conservation Design and Delivery in the Northeast Region

- LCC fundamental objective is to define, design, and deliver landscapes that can sustain natural and cultural resources at levels desired by society.
- Natural resource boundaries often transcend state/political/property boundaries.
- Landscape cooperatives give context to conservation and fit efforts into a bigger picture.
- NALCC ranges from Maritimes down to Virginia (13 states plus Washington DC).
 - Mission is to give a forum for partners to come together to figure out what that landscape needs to look like, and what tools we need to get there, so that we can pass resources on to next generations.
 - Role of LCC is to facilitate this process on a scale that's beyond the reach of any one organization, and leverage our collective capabilities to do that.
- Major Challenge: How do we collectively bind our visions into a united message?
- Conservation Framework – seeks to answer important questions
 - What are we trying to achieve? How can we get there? Who will do what?
 - Articulating goals is very important – not enough to just say “we need more.” How much do we need? How much is enough?
 - Must translate scientific research into on-the-ground steps.
 - Evaluating success is essential – adaptive process – what works, what doesn't?
- Framework helps to bind us together in common vision.
- NALCC Overall Priorities:
 - Expedite delivery of the right actions to the right places.
 - Organize the information out there and make it available to decision-makers.
 - Help organizations learn about tools to advance conservation on this scale.
- Where are we now?
 - Partnership is 4 years old, very committed
 - Partners working together under conservation framework.
 - We want to make sure everything we're producing is actually helping on-the-ground actors make decisions.
 - We're going to continue doing science, but also working on conservation design. This is not science that should be put on a shelf. Must be translated into easily understood and usable patterns.
- Why landscape-level conservation? An interconnected, resilient network of lands and waterways has many benefits (clean water, storm protection, wildlife populations, etc.)
- LCC is a process and a product -- partners in process need to see themselves in product

Does NALCC coordinate with Rob's programs?

A gathering like this is a good way to make these connections. An LCC operates at regional scale, some of the other efforts are necessary to take the efforts to the ground. There's no redundancy, but it's necessary to stitch these levels together.

Do you see potential for creating a forest corridor in the Northeast?

NALCC could help with conservation planning to develop such a corridor. Climate projections are included in NALCC's work. It's going to take all of us to put it on the ground.

Prentice Zinn

The bad news: Cox Trust is winding down. The pace of conservation is still too slow, not enough to meet some of our goals.

RCPs are the key to speeding this up. The Cox Trust has worked with Emily Bateson and Bill Labich to make sure that Cox Trust benefits RCPs.

The good news: Launching TODAY - \$1 million dollar initiative to strengthen RCPs

- Cox Trust will contribute funds to cover transaction costs for donated lands and easements; help RCPs develop a pooled fund. Will be very competitive, and will probably favor organizations with solid landscape conservation designs.
- Catalyst Grant Program will give smaller grants ~\$20,000. Developing landscape conservation plans, landowner outreach, etc. Concrete projects that help you move up organizational development continuum, build capacity, move from Emerging to Conserving RCP.
- Still in development, more information coming soon.

What will this do?

- Speed up the pace of conserved land
- Increase the functional capacity of RCPs
- Create a bigger vision for conservation in our region, include allies beyond land trusts, and help to build political capital. Cross-sector collaboration is a form of political capital. Success should not be measured in simply dollars and acres.

Two Questions to Help Us Reach These Goals

- How do RCPs develop political imagination?
- How can we think of our conservation organizations as a political force?

In 5 years, Prentice wants to see maps of political relationships on office walls, not just maps of land. He wants the documentation of the people and power to be as good as the documentation on natural resources. Imagine coming back to the RCP Network Gathering in 5 years and seeing a group present on new ways to achieve municipal funding. We know conservation is good at the transactional stuff, but are they really good at being transformative? Land trusts play checkers, but RCPs can play chess. Large landscape conservation is all chess.

What thoughts do you have about how to leverage the generous \$1 million with the philanthropic network to make this bigger?

Right now we need to work on implementation, and then we're going to rely on the champion cases. We want to make this about the work that you're doing, not about a particular fund, because funds have a half-life.

Q&A on the Theme of Cross-Sector Collaboration

What about restoration? How does it fit with conservation?

- *Ken:* We often think about conservation as something that is set aside from society/shuts out people. But land management is a huge influence on the landscape. The articulation about what we're trying to achieve is important here too. Restoration is very expensive. How do we spend our limited conservation dollars where they are most needed? We're starting to get a better idea of which areas are best to focus on for the greatest effect. The landscape conservation design process is meant to address these questions. Once we know this we can figure out which areas are best for restoration.

- *Stephanie*: Massachusetts has a fund for water-based restoration, but as a state we need to do more and lead more by example. The way we talk about it is also important. Certain perspectives may benefit more from phrasing this as “asset management.” Protecting an investment is as important as obtaining that investment.
- *Rob*: Also important to think, “How can we avoid getting to the point where we need to restore habitat?” Educating people about the costs of restoration may be helpful for getting them to avoid resource degradation in the first place.

Can we use the model of today’s gathering to bring together funders to talk about how they can collaborate?

- *Prentice*: It’s frustrating to get environmental funders together. I prefer the projects on the ground that can then be built out, because it’s important to build a context that’s local. We want to knock on doors and meet people, and then build out.

How do you gain political capital? How do you get developers/realtors into the room and engaged in the process?

- *Prentice*: This is a question you need to answer yourself in your own political context. A cup of coffee, one-on-one conversations. Building relationships, starting at the smallest level possible (individual) and then leading up to groups.

Diversity in the conservation field is a major issue. In CT the political power is going to shift as demographics change, there’s going to be more political clout in urban areas.

- *Stephanie*: Heartily agree, and that’s one of the reasons why the MA government’s efforts are focused in cities. Building playgrounds, focusing on park equity, urban tree planting.
- *Rob*: Great point, and this is another reason why we should bring ALPiNE down to the high school level. We tend to focus on large landscapes, but efforts to make urban spaces more livable are crucial. Improving cities and making them more livable will also take some of the pressure off developing wildlands.

We need to guard against “collaboration fatigue.”

- *Ken*: Very important point. Many of our partners at the table want to be at the table but have already been stretched beyond their capabilities. This is all about personal relationships and trust. Go to someone and say “I know your constraints and responsibilities, tell me what would work for you, do we need to do something different for you, how would you like to be involved?”
- *Prentice*: We talk so much about collaboration, and the reality is that there’s a lot of fatigue and duplication, and it’s very taxing. But let’s put it in perspective – we’re fatigued because we’re out of shape! We’ve got old institutions and an organizational-centric approach rather than a network-approach. Our leadership models/structure for organization/governance models are all sort of out of date. We’re also trying to do too much as single organizations rather than focusing in what we’re good at, and this is also where the network comes in. “You’ve got to get used to being tired in a period of transition.”
- *Rob*: We’ve talked about this idea a lot because we’ve worked with people over the course of years. One thing that helps is working with students. They bring energy and enthusiasm, and they build linkages – people love students. There’s a ton of capacity out there to harness.
- *Audience member*: One way to combat fatigue is to change what’s in front of you. Please raise your hand if you’re a developer (no one), or a banker/lawyer (a few people). If you go to developers as a conservationist and say there’s still room for growth, they look at you like you have two heads, and then they start making connections. Seconding the cup-of-coffee idea again.