

## Notes from Opening Remarks and Keynote Address

*Notes prepared by Sarah Ganong*

### Bill Labich's Opening Remarks

- Began with a quick "RCP Primer" on what we are, what we do, and why we're doing it for new RCPs and attendees
- History of the growth of the Network and Network Gatherings, which began in 2010
- Every year after a Gathering, it seems like the region gets smaller because everyone gets to know each other and get a feel for how to give/receive help from people they hadn't previously met
- Act as though your success depends upon your peers' success
- Introduced Gary Tabor—he's one of us!

### Gary Tabor's Keynote Address

#### ***Large Landscape Conservation: A Local and Global Imperative***

- He believes his previous work as a vet benefits his current work on the environment—interested in patterns of urbanization/suburbanization in North America
- Regarding large landscape conservation, he is driven by the fact that we are seeing such a large human footprint that we're changing ecological zones and functions of our entire planet
- Interested in combining social and environmental aspects that need to be maintained in an operating space between people and nature to help both survive—a previous solution was the National Park systems, but he doesn't think that's how nature works. **You can't put nature in a box**, even though that's the current pattern of our landscape
  - Pattern: square to polygon
- Processes, like fire regimes and pollination, are what conserve and protect nature—so that's what we should focus on! A major factor is having enough space for large creatures as the sentinels for landscape conservation success
  - Scale
- How much land is enough? How do we answer that question?
- RCPs began in New England and are travelling around the world. Australia, for example, is trying save eastern forests for water catchment. About 140 of these types of large landscape conservation initiatives exist globally. U.S. government involved beyond typical departments like Interior—including Defense.
- Maintaining economic sustainability while also protecting nature is important for large landscape conservation groups
- Understanding animal movement is in our DNA, which is why wildlife corridors have great traction (especially by government) as an idea. Need to remember that railroads, not just roads, impact migrating animals
- Need to make fences friendly—pronghorn can't get over fences, but different bottom rungs let them go under
- Can build roads with an ecological sense if we think about it correctly to help prevent some of the 1 million animal deaths on U.S. roads each year
- Cited the [Western Governors Association](#) wildlife corridor program and [Freedom to Roam \(Patagonia\)](#) as good examples
- How does our desire to conserve things over perpetuity work in a short-term democratic society/business world that we're currently operating in? What type of institutions can

successfully bridge this gap? Universities, as long-standing, enduring institutions, can play important role

- Day-to-day decisions are made by landowners, but we often focus our efforts only on federal legislation. Decisions can be easier at the smaller, landowner scale.
- Both the Civil Rights *and* Wilderness Acts were passed in 1964. How do we take connected effort and groups forward? We got a little off track in the 1970s with the institutionalized response of the Earth Day movement.
- National environmental funders that stitch the continent together at a large-scale simply don't exist. We're regionally focused, which makes the larger-scale conservation harder. Funders need to change their worldview and stitch pieces together
- We need to seek more solution-oriented science
- Networked communications, science, governance, society is change that is coming. As land conservationists, we're already the example with the RCP Network. **Now our networks need to start talking to networks in other regions too. Create a collective impact of networks of networks coming together.**
- Whole system conservation—we don't abandon any areas. Raise the ecological profile of *all* areas. Improving the ecology of cities, for instance, improves ecology of surrounding land. This happens with agriculture too.
- We need everyone at the table to protect both nature *and* culture.
- [Practitioner's Network for Large Landscape Conservation](#): over the next 100 years we can save Earth's ecological foundation, change inflection point of human population growth and consumption, change inflection point of carbon, and reach towards sustainable path and future.
- Conservation must be about protection for human and planetary health too, not just about saving things.