

Land Conservation Partnerships



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WEEKS ACT SYMPOSIUM
YALE SCHOOL OF FORESTRY, JUNE 7, 2011**

Challenging Times



- **Large scale threats**
 - Population growth
 - Energy development
 - The need for additional agricultural production
 - Climate Change
- **Limited resources**
 - A struggling economy
 - Federal budget deficit is a long term problem
 - States are in financial trouble
 - Weak timber markets
 - Environment is taken for granted by younger people

From the Grass Roots: A Trend in Conservation



- Cooperative Conservation/Bush Administration
- America's Great Outdoors Listening Sessions
- Region-scale from the bottom up projects now gathering momentum
- Large Landscape Conservation—Lincoln Institute
- “All Lands” approach by USDA: Planning Rule
- Whole System Conservation at The Nature Conservancy—beyond portfolios of habitats: facing conservation reality

What Is a Whole System?



- A recognizable unifying ecological feature and includes human communities.
- Large enough to maintain resilience, sustain key ecological processes and services, and allow for movement of organisms within and through it.
- Includes conservation areas with high ecological integrity surrounded by a matrix of lands and waters that vary in quality but are important to conservation.
- Back to Aldo Leopold?

What Is Whole System Conservation?



- Includes the needs of people
- An emphasis on managing the matrix of land and water surrounding protected high value sites
- Works at multiple scales
- Manages for a permeable landscape
- Emphasizes ecosystem function and services rather than individual species—the stage not just the actors
- Whole systems ultimately become “self-maintaining”

Multiple Agencies Are Often Involved



- U.S. Department of Agriculture
 - Forest Service
 - NRCS
 - Farm Services Agency
- Department of the Interior
 - USFWS
 - BLM
 - National Park Service
 - Bureau of Reclamation
- NOAA
- Department of Defense
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- EPA
- And similar state agencies and non-profits

Some Key Programs



- Land and Water Conservation Fund and Forest Legacy
- National and state Public Lands Systems—parks, forests, refuges
- Cooperative Endangered Species Grants
- North American Wetlands Conservation Act
- Farm Bill Conservation Title Programs
- Water Resources Development Act continuing authority programs
- Conservation Tax Incentives (Federal and state)
- DOD base buffering program (REPI)
- Ecosystem scale mitigation
- NOAA restoration and land conservation programs
- EPA Clean Water Act Section 319, Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund Program, Watershed Protection Funds
- Superfund

Ingredients of Success for Whole Systems



- Operate at an ecosystem/watershed scale
- Take into account the needs of people and nature
- Recognize the importance of broad participation in planning but don't plan to death
- Use matching funds to leverage resources
- Achieve a new level of collaboration among agencies; increase flexibility of funding and program delivery
- Provide long term and consistent commitment of resources
- Use competitive processes
- Employ rigorous priority setting
- Use existing authorities wherever possible
- The right people involved over the long run, but, also,
- Actively encourage participation by the next generation

Key Factors for Launching This Approach



- Competitive Processes
- New Levels of Inter-agency cooperation and a more flexible approach
- Broader use of the mitigation hierarchy
- Reliable long term funding with some funds gathered for catalyst grants
- Advancing the state of the art—a network of practitioners inside and outside government

Competitive Processes for Selection of Sites



- The need for pilots: state of the art
- Need a prize—money, priority
- Drive alliances
- Select the best models
- Remove the victim factor
- Use limited resources most effectively
- Leverage other funding through matching
- Facilitate future evaluation
- Build political demand-the Forest Legacy affect

Criteria for Competitive Processes



- National significance
- Strong private-public partnerships around a landscape vision
- Leverage
- Local support
- Feasibility
- Connectivity
- Ability to adapt to climate change
- Geographic distribution

New Approaches To On-the-Ground Efficiency



- Modify agency grant procedures to facilitate geographic targeting
- Modify OMB processes to reward interagency coordination
- Multi-year or no year funding
- New mechanisms for inter-agency cooperative agreements including pooling of resources to achieve landscape goals
- Allow multi-agency environmental reviews
- Continue technical assistance
- Allow Federal funds to match other Federal funds
- Third party easements
- Empower local and regional Federal land managers
- Toward a more decentralized model of governance

Use of the Mitigation Hierarchy



- Use the avoid-minimize-compensate hierarchy consistently for infrastructure siting across all Federal agencies to shape the future of whole systems
- Use an ecosystem framework for the avoid-minimize-compensate decisions
- Better evaluate mitigation results as input for the next project
- Maintain the framework of environmental law

Reliable Funding



- Going in the wrong direction right now
- Function 300 at 1.26% of the Federal Budget
- Grown a total of 2% over 30 years
- Making LWCF a dedicated fund and expanding its uses; securing other dedicated sources
- Holding the Conservation Title steady but ensuring focused funding
- Permanent tax incentives
- State financing sources--Alabama

Advancing the State of the Art



- Lincoln Institute/University of Montana idea: a Land Trust Alliance-like organization
- Participation by Federal land managers
- Retaining technical assistance by Federal agencies
- Telling the story: publicizing pilot successes and failures (Char Miller)—the people speak

Where These Approaches Are Working



- Blackfoot Challenge and Rocky Mountain Front/
Crown of the Continent
- Northern Everglades
- Flint Hills
- Northern Sierra
- Northwest Florida Longleaf Pine
- Lower Hudson Valley

The Idea of Self-Maintaining Systems

