

Conclusions

Chapter 10

Large Scale Conservation in the Common Interest: Conclusions and Recommendations

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INTRODUCTION

All large scale conservation projects have context specific goals for both biophysical and social targets. However, we have argued that there are three fundamental goals that should be addressed by all large scale conservation projects. First, participants should strive to find solutions that are in the common interest. Common interest outcomes are the only ones likely to be sustained by the community. This is always a difficult task since it requires integrating and accommodating mutually dependent interests that grow out of diverse and complex personal and cultural histories. While it will not be possible to accommodate the interests of all participants in all cases, more enduring solutions are likely to be found if all participants are dealt with respectfully, fairly, and the validity of appropriate multiple interests is addressed. Second, participants should seek solutions that are both biophysically and socially sustainable. Whereas sustainability has proven difficult to define precisely, we have argued that sustainable solutions should maintain the potential of a system to persist or improve its functioning and the human benefits derived from that system over time. Finally, and most importantly, we believe that there can be no higher goal than human dignity. Large scale conservation cannot be achieved without sustainable, healthy societies grounded in human dignity for all people.

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We described the major types of large scale conservation—parks and protected areas, ecosystem management, integrated conservation and development, ecoregional planning, transboundary conservation, and adaptive governance. Factors driving the adoption of these approaches include a rapidly growing appreciation on the part of many world citizens that we are not living sustainably, that we must transition as quickly as possible towards sustainability, and that we must redouble our efforts to achieve human dignity for all. Another conditioning factor is that needed systems of governance and institutions to support this transition are being organized at local (e.g., community-based) to global scales (e.g., focus on global change). Finally, leadership to accelerate these constitutive trends and conditions is evident, but in short supply at present. We concluded that, with the exception of adaptive governance, all the above approaches to large scale conservation are just modern variations on single and multiple use management, and remain guided by the doctrine of positivism and scientific management. We need to transition to effective, contextual learning approaches (e.g., adaptive governance) guided by skilled, democratic leaders and enlightened citizenry.

The case studies in this volume illustrate that the fundamental challenge in developing and implementing projects that not only achieve large scale conservation objectives but also support a commonwealth of human dignity is to move beyond traditional approaches rooted solely in scientific management and adopt approaches that take into account social and decision processes through which values are developed and allocated. The complexity of our social systems becomes more apparent when the target of conservation involves multiple land owners, crosses jurisdictional boundaries, or involves large, diverse communities of interest (e.g., the world community). Consequently, in addition to the biophysical complexities that manifest when conservation projects are scaled up (e.g., metapopulations, successional dynamics, interrelationships between different ecosystems), scaling up conservation projects also reinforces the need to take human social and decision processes explicitly and systematically into account. Again, this fact argues for a flexible interdisciplinary approach.

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In order to address this fundamental challenge, students and practitioners need a conceptual model and analytic framework for understanding problems in particular cases. The legacy of the Enlightenment has been the rise of the modern university and a profusion of disciplines that specialize in narrow fields of inquiry, but lack an integrative framework to move beyond disciplinary boundaries. To be sure, disciplinary specialization has yielded many benefits not only in the field of conservation but also in the overall human enterprise. For example, knowledge of

behavioral ecology has led to the successful reintroduction and subsequent maintenance of wolves in the Yellowstone ecosystem. Advances in remote sensing technology have enhanced our understanding of the scale and consequences of deforestation. Social survey methods have resulted in a better understanding of the societal values placed on ecosystems. Environmental economics is allowing us to calculate the economic value of ecosystem services. And yet, problems in large scale conservation persist and grow because whatever the disciplines used, each suffers from blind spots that cause important contextual aspects of the situation to be overlooked and therefore not integrated into the picture as a whole or into a solution. In cases in which disciplinary scientists work strictly within disciplinary or even multidisciplinary frameworks, partial solutions are advanced that, and in retrospect, often prove themselves to have missed key contextual elements.

Our recommended strategy to address this overall challenge is to adopt an interdisciplinary model, such as the one presented in Part I, for understanding problems and as used in adaptive governance. This model was described based on watching successful problem solvers address complex messy problems. The model requires analyzing not only the biophysical/resource component of conservation problems, but also the human value and social dynamics and institutional processes at play, at the same time. Practitioners who use this model will have a better understanding of the problems that arise in large scale conservation projects and what to do about them in rational, political, and moral ways.

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This model is what allowed the authors to identify the problems described in the cases presented in Part II. These three rapid appraisals were informed by an interdisciplinary approach. First, Cherney et al. (Chapter 4) analyzed the goals, values, symbols, and decision making trends among participants in the Connecticut River Watershed. Their analysis identified several key challenges that included a fragmented decision-making arena, a lack of goal clarity, and narrow problems definitions bounded by the doctrine of scientific management. Second, Meany et al. (Chapter 5) used the interdisciplinary framework to understand the social and decision process challenges faced by participants in sharing water resources on the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming. After collecting a detailed inventory of social and decision process indicators, four alternatives were offered to help participants shift the policy process towards common interest outcomes.

Finally, Newsome et al. (Chapter 6) described the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem where researchers directly observed and appraised social and decision processes related to the management and policy of this complex, large ecosystem. They were interested in harvesting the lessons of experience. They found a pervasive lack of

respect felt by many people in the arena, regardless of the issue at hand. They identified obstacles to the achievement of a common interest outcome. And they attributed problems to an overreliance on the single and multiple use paradigm based on scientific management and its modern incarnations (e.g., ecosystem management, bioregional planning, transboundary approach). The authors focused specifically on improving the functions of decision making and offer three recommendations to learn from and improve current patterns of decision making—first, learn from ongoing practice-based, prototyping experiences, second, create new arenas for community-based participation, and third, use the adaptive governance framework to problem solving.

Once problems have been identified, the next step is to take concrete actions to solve the problem as recommended in the three cases in Part II. Traditionally trained resource managers tend to frame issues as technical problems and consequently undervalue the importance of process and governance dimensions. This often prevents them from articulating the common interest let alone finding and implementing common interest solutions. Practitioners working within an already defined system (e.g., single and multiple use management) have trouble recognizing when it is possible and sometime necessary to change the norms and rules for making decisions. Consequently, they focus their efforts on dealing with technical issues when attention should be focused on constitutive issues.

Part III illustrates several educational tools for interdisciplinary problem solving that will help practitioners move more successfully toward solving conservation problems in the common interest. For example, Chapter 8 details an experience in using workshops for integrated problem solving. Chapter 9 explains how to identify, adapt, and disseminate best practices. And Chapter 10 offers diverse methods for teaching interdisciplinary problem solving and the leadership skills that are necessary to adroitly and successfully integrate disparate interests into common interest solutions. The focus in Part III is on practical education and real world solutions.

In closing, we hope the challenges presented by large scale conservation will lead participants towards an intense disciplinary, problem oriented, contextual, and multimethod approach in the common interest. This approach to large scale conservation explicitly attends to social and decision processes, is premised on the belief that common interest solutions should be sought, and prioritizes sustainable human dignity for people in healthy environments over other considerations. Adopting an adaptive governance approach will lead to durable solutions that are sustainable both environmentally and socially.