

Integrative Conservation

Steps Toward a Practice of Stewardship-based Community Development

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Obligations have no meaning without conscience, and the problem we face is the extension of the social conscience from people to land. No important change in ethics was ever accomplished without an internal change in our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, affections, and convictions. ... In our attempt to make conservation easy, we have made it trivial.

- Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic"

When Jerry Rogers asked me to lunch on a blustery day in November 2008 to recount the origins and founding ambitions of Commonweal Conservancy, I expected that a loosely structured conversation might satisfy his curiosity and the planning responsibilities of the Second Century National Park Service Commission. But his interests proved more far-reaching than a mealtime chat could properly address, and his questions prompted me to revisit the philosophies that give context to the work of Commonweal Conservancy. My hope is that the Park Service will find value in Commonweal's unorthodox conservation-based community development work and the journey that has informed it.

Through five years of painstaking design charrettes, planning meetings, community organizing, politicking, and fundraising—the daily machinations of moving forward land conservation and community development work—the prescient voices that formed the foundation of our organization had settled into memory's substratum. What a gift, then, to retrace Commonweal's early steps and glean renewed inspiration and understanding from the words of Aldo Leopold, William Cronon, Jane Jacobs, and many others. I was reminded of the deep value in connecting our practice with a lineage of thought and application—and of the importance of considering our national environmental history in speculating about its future.

The American environmental movement is grounded in sacred values: forbearance, awe, and humility. Born of the meditations of transcendentalists, the eloquent prose of practitioners, and the warrior-spirit of politicians and citizen activists, it is a movement inspired by a profound love of place and the conviction that we are responsible for the future, as well as the present.¹

¹ Transcendentalists such as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and John Muir; professional practitioners like Gifford Pinchot and Aldo Leopold; politicians such as Theodore Roosevelt, Robert Marshall, Stewart Udall; and scientists and citizen activists like Lois Gibbs, Rachel Carson, and David Brower.

Notwithstanding the generosity of its ethics and the passion of its poetry, however, contemporary American environmentalism has struggled with disjointed paradigms regarding the utility and sanctity of the nation's wild lands and vast open spaces. With common practice, its language and imagery have actively separated the social from the ecological realm—reinforcing a core tenet of the movement's ideology that nature is an unspoiled world entirely separate and apart from human activity.

In *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, environmental historian William Cronon speaks to the confusion sustained by this dualistic perspective, which places nature as a mystical realm “away” and “out there”—somewhere physically and spiritually beyond the destructive influences of humankind and civilization.² According to Cronon, this intellectual and philosophical framework has aided and abetted a consumerist value orientation among environmentalists: Scenery and natural history are *consumed* by members of the leisure class and *defended against* the production class (i.e., loggers, miners, ranchers) who are perceived to threaten the quality and integrity of their consumption experience.

Commonweal Conservancy was founded in 2003 to challenge the ambiguity inherent in the practice of consumerist conservation. Moved by Leopold's appeal to nurture a land ethic of wisdom, respect, and wonder for the planet, Commonweal Conservancy is championing an integrative practice of landscape-scale conservation and ecologically resilient community making. Our work to date has been focused on a 13,500-acre conservation-based community development initiative in northern New Mexico called the Galisteo Basin Preserve. By our alchemic explorations, Commonweal seeks to nurture a culture of stewardship and a spirit of belonging among people and the land they call home. In our way, we are exploring a new branch of American environmentalism that is based on both a paradigm shift and the study of those who have defined the movement to this point.

From Transcendentalist to Transactionalist—Institutionalizing the Movement

Capitalizing on the urgency and opportunity of a preservationist-oriented environmentalism, conservation organizations like the Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, The Audubon Society, National Resource Defense Council, Greenpeace, Earth First, and others attracted vast philanthropic wealth and hundreds of thousands of loyal members during the 1970s and 1980s. Inspired by the movement's fiery rhetoric, audacious lawsuits, and charismatic political leadership, the American public and its government advanced bold policy initiatives to regulate and finance the protection of forests, deserts, mountains, rivers, and oceans.

² In a 1990 *New York Times* article, Michael Pollan makes a similar claim, contending that nature has long been viewed as “a kind of metaphysical absolute against which we can judge messy, contingent culture.”

As counterpoint to the heart-rending appeals and combative policy-making style that these advocacy groups promoted, the land trust community drew sympathetic moderates and conservatives. Organizations like the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, the Big Sur Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and the Trust for Public Land (TPL) helped codify the rules of engagement for an emergent wing of the environmental movement known as conservation real estate. Mirroring the style, credentials, and business models of the dominant culture (i.e., academia, science, and business), the “transactionalists” facilitated the acquisition of wildlife habitat, open space, agricultural lands, and scenic vistas for the public trust and their private accounts. By distancing themselves from the rough and tumble realm of contentious courtrooms and congressional hearings, land trusts and their relations aspired to “broaden the base of environmental philanthropy” and secure donations or bargain sale purchases of environmentally significant properties as a “legacy for future generations.”³

Wresting control of environmentally significant properties from private landowners and developers, the transactionalists helped negotiate conservation land purchases and easements without threatening the values and tenets that underlie the American legal and financial system (e.g., private property rights, entrepreneurialism, capitalism). Leveraging their expertise and relationships with elected officials and philanthropists, the conservation real estate wing proved effective in securing billions of dollars from philanthropic and public treasuries for the acquisition of wildlife habitat and scenic and culturally significant landscapes. In the process, and in collaboration with their advocacy and law colleagues, organizations like TNC and TPL helped bridge the culture gap between environmental progressives and private property rights-defending conservatives.

Some of these organizations promoted community access to parks and open spaces, but most conservation groups pursued their work in a more proprietary fashion, keeping fragile landscapes safe from profit-seeking landowners, developers, or resource-extracting corporations—and from the general public. It was a practice of exclusionary conservation that drew criticism from social justice advocates, philanthropists, and economic development proponents during the late 1980s, and encouraged the pursuit of social welfare-serving conservation initiatives in the years that followed.

Growing Challenges & Humbling Epiphanies

In the latter part of the twentieth century, the leaders of the American environmental movement saw extraordinary success in hundreds of David-vs.-Goliath legal and regulatory battles and facilitated millions of acres of conservation land purchases. Even so, a number of conservation professionals and environmental activists were concerned about the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of their work. Perceiving a growing malaise among their philanthropic partners and political allies, a small cadre of

³ Self-affirming language, such as a “new class of conservation professionals” and the above quotes, is included in training materials for new recruits at institutions like TPL and TNC.

environmental leaders questioned whether the battle for the hearts and minds of Americans was actually being lost.

According to TPL President Will Rogers, “when we step back and critically evaluate our accomplishments during the past twenty-nine years, we can take pride in the thousands of special, threatened places that have been permanently protected by our work. This said, we have inadvertently come to adopt an approach to conservation more akin to emergency room medicine than a practice of preventative care healing.”⁴ With growing humility, even the lions of the movement’s transactionalist wing acknowledged that conservationists could not buy their way to safety.

Wilderness areas, open spaces, cultural landscapes, and agricultural lands were being converted into development at an accelerating pace. For many observers and activists, the legal victories, land acquisitions, and sweeping policy initiatives of the 1970s and 1980s had saved many scenic areas, nesting sites, and cultural resource properties, but had failed to thwart a larger and more devastating transformation of the American landscape.⁵ Sprawling suburban and exurban extensions accreted to large metropolitan areas and mid-size towns; box stores and strip malls not only replaced local businesses and open space, they drove people farther out of town centers.

Since the early 1990s, James Howard Kunstler, among other provocateurs, has proffered colorful critiques of the political, legal, and economic forces driving United States land use policy. In his writings and speeches, Kunstler suggests that America has been reduced to a “geography of nowhere”—a nation of socially dispiriting subdivisions, soulless shopping districts, and fortress-like schools and civic institutions. In the process, the forests, grasslands, deserts, and mountains that have long distinguished the American landscape as incomparably beautiful, ecologically complex, and spiritually sublime are being bulldozed flat, paved over, sanitized, and homogenized.

Strange Bedfellows—The Emergent Role of Place Making in Conservation

Kunstler’s frustration with the “business as usual” approach to real estate development has not been isolated. Beginning in the 1980s, reformist architects, land planners, and engineers known as New Urbanists brought energy and intelligence to the land-use debates regarding sprawl and open space conservation. In sharp contrast to the values and sensibilities of publicly-traded homebuilders and globally financed developers, the New Urbanists argued passionately and persuasively that locally focused community

⁴ Personal communication. Comments to senior TPL staff during a strategic planning retreat in San Francisco, California, in 2001.

⁵ Studies by the American Farmland Institute estimate that more than 18 million acres of agricultural land and open space were converted to development uses during the period 1996-2003. In western states like Colorado, rangeland conversion proceeded at a pace of 100,000 acres per year during the same period.

design could measurably improve people’s physical, emotional, and economic well-being—and the quality and health of civil society that supports them.

The New Urbanists promoted pedestrian-friendly street design, parks, town centers, public transit, mixed-income housing, and tightly regulated architectural standards, seeking to channel the financial and professional capabilities of the real estate development industry toward a practice of place-making—one that was engaging, sustaining, and respectful of society’s need for safe and attractive housing, locally-serving commerce, and civic involvement.

While this practice was commendable for its social welfare ambitions and finely honed design sensibilities, many neo-traditional design professionals and developers pursued their work without notable care for the landforms, wildlife habitats, and waterways affected by their new communities. From the perspective of most environmentalists and neighborhood activists, the tight forms, formal geometry, and population density of new urbanist developments transformed native landscapes as quickly and dramatically as standard-issue suburban subdivisions.⁶

Fearing the loss of open space, wildlife habitat, and rural values from a “born again” sect of the development industry, the environmental community issued withering criticisms of new urbanist settlements. The narrow streets, tightly clustered neighborhoods, and referential architecture were lambasted as nostalgic and contrived. Compact, mixed-use development plans were judged to be an affront to the open space densities of suburban and exurban neighborhoods. Perhaps most infuriating to neo-traditional developers was the environmentalists’ condemnation of their work as sprawl—albeit of a more refined form and quality than the standard fare.

In response, many neo-traditional developers and planners reverted to the well-worn playbooks of their predecessors. Money and political influence allowed the New Urbanists to advance their proposals through the entitlement process with above-average success. Deriding conservationists as NIMBYs and CAVEs, among other colorful acronyms, neo-traditional developers chastised their opponents as myopic and paranoid.⁷ By their inability and/or unwillingness to address the fears and concerns of the environmentalists, a handful of place-making victories were won at the expense of context-sensitive community building.

Instead of broadening and deepening their shared interests and values—or even recognizing them—the development industry and the environmental community frequently competed to a point of stalemate. Rivalry among single-purpose groups for limited lands further compromised the promise of joint ventures, a pattern that

⁶ Seaside and Celebration, Florida, and Kentlands in Gaithersburg, Maryland, are examples of new urbanist communities that have been criticized for not gracefully responding to their environmental contexts.

⁷ NIMBY is an acronym for “not in my backyard,” whereas CAVE refers to “citizens against virtually everything.” In most cases, acronyms were used by the real estate development community in an attempt to deride and discount citizens and community members as ignorant, reactive, and irrelevant to public policy making.

undermined the needs of resource-strapped communities and didn't begin to address issues of affordable housing and public access. The failure to forge compromises and negotiate concessions resulted in a wide range of mutually beneficial environmental, social, political, and economic outcomes going unrealized.

Common Ground—Converging Purposes and Practices

Reflecting on twenty-five years of uneven accomplishment within the conservation and community development sectors, a number of academics, environmentalists, and social justice activists saw little to recommend as we neared a new millennium. They argued that conventional models of habitat conservation and open space protection, on one hand, and community development, on the other hand, would not effectively protect the health of the biosphere or sufficiently strengthen the social fabric of our towns and cities.⁸

What would be required instead is a wholesale transformation of the nation's economic and political culture; only this would ensure the survival of the human, animal, and plant communities that depend on a healthy, resilient, and highly functioning biosphere.

Acting on this call for a paradigm shift—and responding to Leopold's call for a land ethic to be expressed and nurtured among the nation's citizenry—an unsanctioned sect of the environmental community set out to forge alliances with farmers, ranchers, fishermen, developers, and social justice advocates to advance a comprehensive agenda of land conservation *and* social justice-serving public welfare.⁹

In the 1990s, Ecotrust founder Spencer Beebe became the most outspoken proponent of environmentally responsible community development. A refugee of TNC, where he served as a regional vice president, Beebe challenged the logic and efficacy of a “purchase the planet” approach to conservation.¹⁰ In a statement that many of his colleagues viewed as heretical, Beebe proclaimed, “[t]he old environmental movement is over. We need to move to a new era where we find synergy and sympathy between the

⁸ Robert Gottlieb, Thomas Powers, and Philip Shabecoff, among others.

⁹ According to Leopold, “[t]he land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.” He goes on to say that “a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it” (*A Sand County Almanac*, 204).

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that Beebe's appeal to approach the preservation of wildness through the preservation of working landscapes (i.e., farms, fishing communities, timbering communities) eventually found an audience among his TNC colleagues. Over the past twenty years, TNC has come to embrace community-based conservation as integral to its bio-regional conservation agenda. Similarly, groups like Conservation International, World Wildlife Fund, and many other international conservation organizations acknowledge that traditional communities and their traditional economic systems need to be actively engaged as partners to local and regional conservation initiatives.

built and the natural environments. We need to move from a strategy of defending bits and pieces of nature to recognizing the links between a healthy community and a healthy environment.”¹¹

Echoing Beebe’s call for a new era of *integrative conservation*, a number of academics, social scientists, writers, and environmental activists began to articulate the synergies in the complex relationships between people and nature. In *Lost Landscapes, Failed Economies*, Thomas Powers argues that we deface the lands and compromise the waters of our communities at our social, economic, and physical peril. Powers posits the challenge that as Americans, we need to create vital, healthy communities *while at the same time* protecting the scenic, habitat, and cultural resources that distinguish our towns and cities as unique and precious.¹²

In *The Eagle Bird: Mapping a New West*, Charles Wilkinson paraphrases Leopold’s plea for a wholesale transformation of the nation’s social and cultural values and priorities by urging the environmental community to cultivate an “ethic of place.” Wilkinson argues that non-urban environments, such as forests, meadows, and stream corridors, need to be protected and restored for their human and social—as well as their ecological—importance.

On the shoulders of two centuries of American environmental thought, a growing chorus of intellectuals, practitioners, and policy makers began to call for an increasingly subtle and mutually reinforcing practice of conservation-based community development and community-based conservation.

Bringing Theory to Practice—New Models for Land Stewardship

Although a handful of pioneering land trusts and developers undertook small-scale conservation development projects in the 1980s and 1990s, landscape-scale, mixed-use, integrative community development initiatives have found rare expression.¹³ Few nonprofit environmental or community development organizations—constrained by their IRS-sanctioned public benefit purposes, donor expectations, modest thresholds for risk-tolerance, and limited organizational capacities—have aspired to a practice of conservation-based community development. Under the cover of “maintaining a close business focus” and “leveraging their core competencies,” most conservation and

¹¹ Philip Shabecoff, *Earth Rising*, 55.

¹² Thomas Michael Power, *Lost Landscapes and Failed Economies: The search for a value of place*.

¹³ A notable exception is the work of the Chattahoochee Hill Country Alliance. Spearheaded by Steve Nygren, a group of private landowners banded together to craft a regional conservation plan for the Chattahoochee Watershed situated thirty miles west of Atlanta, Georgia. The proposed 40,000-acre conservation initiative includes a successful—and context-sensitive—New Urbanist-informed community known as Serenbe.

community development organizations have shunned the paradigm-shifting potential of stewardship-based community building.

This potential, though, is real and immediate. It has been carried forward by the collaborative conservation initiatives of groups like Ecotrust, the Conservation Fund, the Vermont Land Trust, and others. Notwithstanding our own nonprofit challenges, Commonweal Conservancy seeks to act on this potential and demonstrate the efficacy of integrating significant mixed-use, mixed-income community development with landscape-scale conservation.

Creating Commonweal Conservancy

Building on the accomplishments (and misadventures) that informed an eighteen-year career with TPL, I left my position as senior vice president and southwest regional director, took out a home equity loan, and joined with a handful of brave colleagues to create Santa Fe, New Mexico-based Commonweal Conservancy in 2003. The Galisteo Basin Preserve presented the proving ground for our aspirations, and Commonweal began with this geography and a colorful tapestry of public benefit goals that also anticipated future projects.

Commonweal Conservancy's nonprofit conservation-based community development work is designed to generate tangible social, economic, and environmental value for central city neighborhoods and rapidly growing suburban communities. We aim to acquire, protect, and restore:

- (i) culturally and historically significant properties and buildings;
- (ii) critical wildlife habitat, publicly accessible recreational resources, and open space; and
- (iii) environmentally degraded properties (e.g., brownfields) for redevelopment as community-serving facilities (e.g., affordable housing, schools, community healthcare).

In combination with our land conservation and restoration activities, Commonweal Conservancy works to bring forward:

- (i) new affordable housing, workforce housing, and other forms of mixed-income residential development;
- (ii) public parks, playgrounds, community gardens, plazas, and trails;
- (iii) new schools, libraries, and community centers;
- (iv) local-serving employment and economic development opportunities;
- (v) youth development projects;
- (vi) and public transportation facilities.

We are working to implement this admittedly ambitious set of objectives through the Galisteo Basin Preserve, a conservation-based community development initiative designed to protect and restore more than 13,000 acres of a deeply loved landscape known as the Galisteo Basin.

As proposed, more than ninety-six percent of the total Preserve will be protected open space, with the majority made publicly accessible via fifty miles of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails. The initial development phase includes 3,000 acres of publicly accessible open space; an additional 9,000 acres of open space will be protected through subsequent phases. In combination with adjoining public and private land holdings, the Preserve will help conserve more than 23,000 acres of wildlife habitat, cultural resource, open space, scenic, and recreational lands in central Santa Fe County.

The Opportunity: The Village at the Galisteo Basin Preserve

To help underwrite the Preserve's conservation, restoration, and stewardship goals, a 965-home mixed-use, mixed-income village development is planned within a carefully sited 300-acre area. The Village proposal celebrates the traditional values and planning principles that distinguish many traditional northern New Mexico towns and villages. Tightly clustered and deeply respectful of the region's land and water, the Village is designed as a resource-efficient community that will include a wide range of residential, commercial, and civic land uses.

It is organized for easy pedestrian access among the neighborhoods, commercial center, and nearby transit hubs, and to take advantage of the Preserve's topography and landforms. Ridgelines, knolls, and meadows that frame the landscape will be preserved to separate neighborhoods and mitigate the effects of noise and light; the south-facing Village basin presents opportunities for broad views, passive solar gain and wind sheltering. Development will generously buffer the riparian corridors that bisect the development envelope and facilitate stormwater flows and shallow aquifer recharge.

The mixed-use plan is anchored by a general store, a café, artists' studios, a 400-student charter high school, a chapel, a post office, a business incubator, a fire station, play fields, and other recreational and cultural facilities. A combination of housing types and home sizes is planned to shelter a community of diverse needs, traditions, and financial capabilities. The Village's compact form, inter-connected travelways, parks, and community gardens intend to support a dynamic quality of social exchange.

Environmental protection and ecological stewardship are organizing principles of the Galisteo Basin Preserve. Accordingly, the Village plan reflects a rigorous analysis of the land's hydrologic, topographic, and ecological values and constraints. Buildings and infrastructure systems are designed to minimize community water use and fossil-fuel demand. Design standards are carefully drafted to encourage exciting architecture and an inviting town form. Green-building construction guidelines will ensure that structures are safe, healthy, and beautiful places for living, working, and learning.

Discovery, spirit, and diversity are other important values informing the Village design. To make real the community's commitment to learning, a dual-language, environmental

curriculum-oriented charter high school, an elementary school, and a pre-school are planned for the Village center and its neighborhoods. A non-denominational place of worship will provide a place for meditation, reverence, and fellowship, while trails and ridgeline overlooks create spaces for quiet reflection.

Finally, Village governance will be guided by a combination of nonprofit management entities that will oversee open space stewardship, utilities, and neighborhood facility responsibilities. A village-elected community council will mediate conflicts and coordinate cultural and recreational programming.

After three years of engaged public dialogue and meticulous community design, the Village master plan won Santa Fe County approval in 2007. We received county support in early 2009 for the Village's preliminary development plat—a proposal that includes 149 home sites and 37,500 square feet of educational, commercial, and civic land uses. In an effort to avoid the contentious experience of many neo-traditional developers, Commonweal has intentionally pursued its work in a highly transparent, inclusive, and community-directed manner. This process has ensured that public concerns regarding water, traffic, light pollution, access to open space, and community facilities have been fully vetted and respectfully addressed. In reward for this commitment to dialogue, the Galisteo Basin Preserve won master plan approval without a single statement of opposition—a quality of community support unprecedented in Santa Fe County.

By making careful study of the successes and missteps of the neo-traditional communities that have preceded Commonweal's effort, we believe we can visibly and powerfully demonstrate the Galisteo Basin Preserve's commitment to resource protection and ecological restoration. In combination with the Preserve's 13,000-acre conservation and restoration goals, the Village could offer an inspirational model for environmentally responsible community development. It may also lay the groundwork for a wider practice of active community land stewardship, responsive organizational culture, and effective public-private collaboration—functional elements that could be especially relevant for other land conservation, management, and community-building entities.

Cultivating a Stewardship Ethic

While acknowledging the fundamental value of setting aside critical scenic, cultural, wildlife habitat, and recreational lands for public use and professional management, Commonweal's staff and partners advocate an admittedly unconventional agenda—one that urges developers and conservation organizations to advance an active stewardship role for the residents, students, employees, and visitors of conservation-based community development initiatives.

Commonweal believes that the most meaningful conservation work involves the hands-on engagement of community members, and that cultivating this stewardship ethic is critical. Without it, business-as-usual conservation and development will continue to support Leopold's contention that easy conservation becomes trivial, and that there can be no external manifestation of a community land ethic without individual physical, intellectual, and emotional investments.

The creation of a stewardship community—as opposed to a conservation community—requires its members to develop a deep quality of understanding, responsibility, and commitment to natural resource conservation. The physical community plan can begin to facilitate this, but a stewardship culture is activated by engaging residents and visitors in activities such as plant and animal species inventories, grassland and riparian restoration initiatives, cultural resource conservation programs, energy and water modeling and monitoring, way finding, animal husbandry, trail maintenance, and interpretive education.

Fostering a Responsive Organization

Among the more unusual aspects of Commonweal Conservancy is the fluidity with which our organization draws from entrepreneurial and traditional private-sector business models, as well as from the operating structures of the nonprofit realm. By nurturing a business culture that celebrates collaboration, exploration, risk-taking, and non-traditional decision-making, Commonweal eschews the business strategies that urge caution, limited focus, and narrowly defined objectives. Instead, the organization strives to maintain an open, inclusive, curious, and, according to many observers, Zen-like approach to business partnership and programming.¹⁴

While inherently a work in progress, Commonweal’s inquiry into land management best practices has encouraged us to adopt a creative approach to land ownership, resource inventory, education and interpretation, and land regeneration.¹⁵ One way Commonweal enacts the organizational values of inclusiveness and collaboration is to actively embrace public resource agencies, nonprofit organizations, community groups, and private individuals as partners to its stewardship program.

Engaging Partners and Co-conspirators

The openness with which Commonweal tries to achieve its goals invites comparison with the traditional children’s tale Stone Soup. The story begins with hungry travelers placing a couple of rocks in a cauldron of water and ends with a savory stew, the result of curious community members each contributing a tasty ingredient. The wide-reaching goals of the Galisteo Basin Preserve have encouraged this tendency of ours, and the outcome has been mutually enriching collaborations with a diverse cast of partners.

While many advocacy organizations discount or distrust the intentions and effectiveness of public land-management agencies, Commonweal has actively engaged public-sector partners in its work. The Santa Fe County Open Lands and Trails Program, for example, has been an important source of funding and a resource for planning for the Preserve’s

¹⁴ Among the Buddhist truths that inform the daily practice of Commonweal staff is the dictum: “Act with right intention. Let go of outcomes.”

¹⁵ Land regeneration refers to the practice of stabilizing and strengthening the hydrological, geophysical, and biological health of a discrete land parcel or region such that it is capable of effectively responding to the effects of climate change or other cataclysmic forces of nature. As compared to land restoration, regeneration refers to a quality of resiliency within a given ecological system that can support its capacity for continuous adaptation and sustained productivity.

internationally acclaimed cultural resources. As of this writing, this county program has committed more than \$5.5 million to land acquisitions within the Preserve and tens of thousands of dollars toward cultural resource surveys and planning. Santa Fe County's economic development and housing division has expressed interest in creating a pool of low-interest loans and grants to help underwrite a variety of agricultural, renewable energy, wastewater treatment, and sustainable technologies initiatives.

On the state level, Commonweal has engaged the New Mexico Division of Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources as a partner in a series of transferable conservation-easement tax credits. To date, the state has issued \$250,000 in transferable tax credits to Commonweal, with another \$250,000 anticipated in August 2009. Over the course of the next five years, an additional \$1.0 million in tax credit certificates could be available to offset a portion of our land investment expenses and help underwrite part of our land restoration planning and construction work. Separately, the New Mexico Environment Department has awarded more than \$75,000 in grant monies to Santa Fe-based Earth Works Institute to pursue riparian restoration projects near the proposed Village.

Collaborations with nonprofit resource-conservation organizations have included the Santa Fe Conservation Trust, Earth Works Institute, The Quivira Coalition, Wild Earth Guardians, the Santa Fe Raptor Center, Charter School 37, Santa Fe Mountain Center, Regensis Group, and others.

Within the community development and affordable housing realm, Commonweal has partnered with the Santa Fe Community Housing Trust, Homewise, Enterprise Community Partners, Local Energy, Regional Development Corporation, and the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority. Although the frequency and intensity of these collaborations vary, the diversity of perspective and the depth of knowledge that these institutions provide Commonweal ensure that our work is well grounded and forward-looking.

Private investors have also played an important role in the Galisteo Basin Preserve's viability. By attracting the attention and support of conservation-oriented investors, Commonweal has been able to effect the sale of discrete properties within the Preserve to landowners who commit to manage their properties for open space conservation and limited development.¹⁶

Commonweal uses private land sales to underwrite its conservation acquisition program, but this arrangement also cultivates a small network of community-based land stewards along the Preserve's boundaries. The effect is akin to Jane Jacob's recommendation to get "eyes upon the street" as a means of improving urban safety: The sale of discrete parcels to certain private parties can increase the number of "eyes and ears" overseeing

¹⁶ Since 2003, Commonweal's conservation buyer program has transacted five parcels to private buyers who agreed to manage those lands in conformance with strictly defined conservation standards. In most cases, landowners have agreed to work with Commonweal to overlay their properties with conservation easements, ensuring the land's permanent protection and oversight.

far-flung open spaces—conservation lands that might otherwise be at risk of misuse and abuse if left to the responsibilities of thinly spread government rangers and police.¹⁷

Creating Integrated Governance

In addition to working with adjoining landowners, Commonwealth is crafting a layered governance model to ensure the Preserve's long-term management and regeneration. It is a regulatory structure that engages the skills and resources of the federal, state, and county governments, as well as the conservation-easement monitoring capabilities of the Santa Fe Conservation Trust and a newly formed Galisteo Basin Preserve Community Stewardship Organization. By integrating the roles and responsibilities of governmental, nonprofit, and private institutions, Commonwealth seeks to ensure a comprehensive model of community stewardship and land regeneration.

The Preserve vision includes a commitment to protecting—and, in many cases, restoring and rejuvenating—the landscape's scenic, hydrological, cultural, wildlife habitat, plant, and soil resources. By its explicit value preferences and investment strategy as a conservation-serving landowner, Commonwealth will be the first line of defense in protecting the Preserve's natural resources.

Our work is also accountable to federal, state, and county governments and their land use and real estate development rules and regulations. Among other oversight responsibilities, the federal government ensures that the Preserve's land uses do not compromise the flow or quality of surface water across the landscape. Federal agencies also regulate air quality and soil erosion. The state of New Mexico oversees the protection of subsurface water resources from depletion and/or pollution. Similarly, the state regulates wastewater system design, management, and construction. Santa Fe County oversees land uses, development densities, and design standards.

Commonwealth has designated the Santa Fe Conservation Trust (SFCT) as the beneficiary of a series of conservation easements that will eventually overlay more than 13,000 acres of the Preserve. The terms of the conservation easements—the first of which was donated in September 2008—tightly constrain the scale and impact of development for infrastructure, buildings, roads, and trails. Although the easements will serve principally as a preservation tool (i.e., ensuring that the land form, riparian corridors, vegetation, cultural resources, and wildlife habitat are undisturbed), they will allow for restoration and rehabilitation initiatives to enhance the property's diversity and health.

As a complement to the regulatory authority of public agencies and the SFCT, Commonwealth is establishing a nonprofit Conservation Stewardship Organization (CSO) to ensure that a wide range of educational and regenerative land management initiatives will be adequately funded and effectively directed. As presently conceived, the CSO will be comprised of county-appointed representatives, Village residents, and members of the

¹⁷ In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jacobs highlights the roles of a neighborhood's shopkeepers, small business owners, parents, and passersby in monitoring its safety and adding to its vitality: “[T]here must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street” (45).

adjoining communities of Galisteo, Lamy, and Eldorado. The CSO will be funded through a perpetual real estate transfer assessment equal to one percent of the value of each property and home sale. At full build out, the real estate transfer fee is expected to generate more than \$350,000 annually to fund the CSO's operations and programs.

By leveraging the assessment fees with other cash donations, government appropriations, and donated labor and services, the CSO will coordinate regenerative planning and environmental education programs. It will also spearhead the design and development of recreational trails and oversee their long-term maintenance.

Rather than relegating land stewardship and environmental education responsibilities to a homeowners association—the standard approach for most developers and master planned communities—the layered governance structure of the CSO is designed to create a strong and sustaining foundation for the Preserve's long-term regeneration. It is intended to be the organizing force for community-based land restoration initiatives. In collaboration with other nonprofits and educational institutions, the CSO will also play a visible role in surveying and interpreting the biotic, cultural, hydrological, and physiographic attributes and artifacts that distinguish the Preserve as precious and unique. In this capacity, the CSO is integral to fostering a stewardship ethic at the Preserve.

By actively engaging residents and visitors in activities such as species inventories, cultural resource surveys, riparian and grassland restoration initiatives, trail building and repair, healthy building seminars, and astronomy lectures, the CSO will support a Preserve community that is highly effective and deeply knowledgeable about their responsibilities as healers and interpreters of their home place.

Implications for the National Park Service's Second Century

The relevance of Commonweal's work to the National Park Service's program priorities and stewardship responsibilities in the twenty-first century may be extrapolated from three areas of our emerging practice.

First, through its use of a community stewardship organization, Commonweal is championing a model of nongovernmental, community-directed and financed conservation planning and management that could complement the management needs and restoration ambitions of appropriate units of the National Park Service. By bringing new energy and resources to a Park unit's operations, a CSO could supplement the management responsibilities and inventorying capabilities of Park Service staff. Depending on its structure and membership, the CSO could also serve as a responsive and visible advocate for an affiliated Park unit—ensuring that funding for acquisition and operations effectively serves the agency's stewardship priorities and management goals.

Secondly, Commonweal's approach to conservation-based community development could be used to buffer and protect the borderlands that adjoin proposed or existing Park Service units. In the highly acclaimed BBC television series *Planet Earth*, Jeffrey A. McNeely, chief scientist for The World Conservation Union, poses the question: How much of earth's surface should be set aside as preserves and refuges to sustain the earth's

diverse ecosystems? He suggests that the issue is not so much one of acreage and percentages. Instead, it is a matter of better managing the lands *surrounding* critical wildlife refuges and preserves so that their associated human uses do not compromise the health, productivity, and vitality of the protected areas.¹⁸

As an example of compatible borderland uses for the National Park Service, conservation-serving initiatives like the Galisteo Basin Preserve may hold good promise. Encouraging county and state governments to establish growth management policies and financial incentives for low-impact, habitat-respecting economic development in context-sensitive lands may reduce the demands on public land-acquisition funds while increasing the potential for community stewardship initiatives.

Third, and perhaps most significantly, Commonweal Conservancy takes powerful inspiration from Leopold's vision for a society well versed and passionately committed to the planet's protection and regeneration. By its landscape-scale conservation ambitions, collaborative approach to community engagement, physical design, and layered governance structure, the Galisteo Basin Preserve aspires to nurture a quality of mind, sensitivity of spirit, and clarity of voice among residents, students, workforce, and visitors. We hope this initiative can be transformative for the health and vitality of the land and water resources of our remarkable corner of the American Southwest. Ideally, it is also inspirational to communities beyond our region. Perhaps it is a step toward sparking the change of consciousness our planet needs—a life practice and land ethic based on loving respect for the material resources and organisms of the earth's biosphere.

Responding to a Rapidly Changing Economic Landscape

With the passage of the Land and Water Fund in 1965, lawmakers could have expected that \$500 million to \$1 billion in annual appropriations would have allowed the nation's coastlines, forests and deserts, critical wildlife habitats, and scenic and cultural resources to be timely and effectively protected. After forty-four years of under-funded appropriations, rapidly escalating property values, and, more recently, an economic crisis that threatens monumental deficits in the coming decade, the dream of forging a carefully connected, ecologically functional network of public lands is being aggressively challenged. Indeed, for many elected officials, natural resource professionals, and activists, it is a vision and policy ambition that may feel increasingly unattainable.

Given the dire financial condition of many states and local governments—along with the weakened fortunes of the philanthropic community—the prospects for large-scale publicly or philanthropically financed conservation appears similarly bleak. With the usual sources of conservation funding nearly bankrupt, how will land protection advocates create new resources for critical scenic, recreational, cultural, and habitat protection initiatives?

¹⁸ BBC, *Planet Earth*, volume five.

The answer is, unfortunately, not easily or quickly.

If conservation-guided nonprofit developers like Commonwealth Conservancy can weather the economic storms that threaten to engulf our audacious ambitions, then perhaps a private sector role in the preservation and restoration of significant landscapes will help advance *a small part* of the community-based conservation ambitions of a retooled, re-imagined National Park Service.

While an evolving model of stewardship-community development may be a step in the right direction, Commonwealth may be at too early a stage of its work to derive a conclusion. The time, skills, costs, and risks associated with this type of conservation-based development are substantial. The entrepreneurial verve and emotional fortitude that is daily demanded by this work is not for the faint of heart. This said, experiments matter.

Stories matter.

Change Your Mind, Change the World

My colleagues and I draw strength from Margaret Mead's conviction: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world."¹⁹ Step by step, we make our way with this encouragement in mind. As improbable as our journey has been, we continue to press forward along the path. Somehow, the path has seemed to rise to meet our footsteps.

To the degree that our work—in its entirety, or in its parts—offers information and inspiration to another for-profit, nonprofit, or public sector community development organization, our efforts will have been well directed. If our experience encourages environmental professionals and activists to think differently about the mutual dependencies of people and nature, then our work will have been well pursued.

While matters of public welfare, organizational learning, and improved environmental health may not compare with the financial drivers that motivate a majority of the real estate development industry, they are values of increasing importance to people longing for meaning and purpose in their lives. To the degree that Schumpeter-esque "creative destruction" forces flow from the current economic downturn and bring more light and priority to values of meaning, beauty, and relationship—and if those values inspire development proponents and environmental activists to think and act differently in their practice—then our journey will have been well traveled.

¹⁹ Mead's Institute for Intercultural Studies has never found the source for this oft-cited quote, although they say it accurately reflects her deeply held convictions about the importance of small groups in cultural innovation. Regardless, we are in good company in finding her sentiments inspirational for our own work.

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