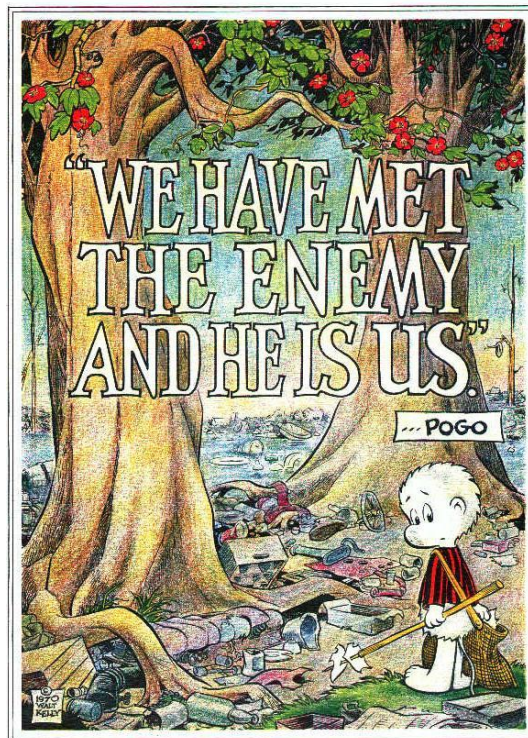


## **A Tuning Fork for Conservation**

**A Presentation to Simsbury, CT Land Trust**

**By Amos S. Eno, President  
Resources First Foundation**



Living in Maine, I am given to using tidal metaphors. And today in the world of conservation the tide is changing, public funds for the long cherished environmental agenda of public land acquisition are running out with the ebbing tides at both the federal and state levels. The choice facing us, is do we try to swim against the tide, or go with it and realign our objectives? Having spent my life by the ocean, being respectful of the forces of nature, I am throwing my lot with the tide. It is high time for a conservation realignment.

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We need a Tuning Fork to guide our Conservation realignment. Why a tuning fork? Because it has two prongs. And I believe in simplicity, balance, resonance and equanimity. My two prongs are: **first** we need a Marshal plan for our federal domestic conservation infrastructure. Our National Parks, Forests and Refuges and BLM lands are falling apart; houses, trails, camping facilities, the whole building infrastructure of our conservation lands lies in disrepair and is trodden down. The maintenance backlog stands at \$30 billion. Why not put people to work rather than buying more federal land. Let us fix our existing investment portfolio of conservation lands. **Second**, our most productive agriculture and forest lands in the US still reside in private ownership. We face a generational cliff in the next decade as a majority of land owners are between ages 60 and 70 plus. The US needs a national policy to keep these productive landscapes working and to facilitate intergenerational transfer of these working landscapes. To do so, as part of our grand tax simplification, we need to approve the Gerlach-Thompson bill pending in the house and eliminate the estate tax.

1. **2012 State of the Environment:** I graduated from college in 1972, and that following November embarked on what became a 40 year career in conservation. As a child of the 60s, an adolescent of both the Viet-Nam war and the Civil Rights movement (my Princeton thesis was on Malcolm X and the Black Panthers), I gravitated to the environment through the Scylla of failing all my post grad boards, and the Charybdis of being a birdwatcher and my Dad serving on the board of National Audubon Society and facing non-remunerative career prospect. If you are familiar with environmental literature you know, we are annually inundated with State of the Environment reports-Lester Brown has made a distinguished career of such ecotomes, and Tom Lovejoy hatches some state of ecotopia with consuming regularity. But if one dares to take a critical look at the state of the environmental movement and its most cherished totems-why Katie bar the door; hell hath no fury worse than environmentalists in high dungeon. Victorian preachers inveighing on morality are no contest - Baptist ministers haranguing our sinning ways are lollipops by comparison! Soooo, following my favorite maxim from Sam Houston: "Do right, risk the consequences," Let's have some fun and poke a camel's nose under that mellifluous green tent. There you will find a corporeal edifice that is quite as flatulent and as out of shape as the general American populace, and just as given to the intellectual consumption of the equivalent of chicken-fried fast food shoveled down the open gullet of popular gullibility.

Part One, A Matter of Credibility, and luster lost

2. By 1985, I had not lost either my idealism or my commitment to conservation, but I could see the environmental movement was running into a political headwall. As respected Washington Post correspondent T.R. Reid wrote in a front page article entitled **Private Money, Public Trust**, (Nov.1978):" Public interest lobbyists...by becoming commonplace, have lost their cachet. Today, no matter how noble the organization they represent, they are just lobbyists. They take their place in line with everyone else... The growing awareness that public interest lobbyists-and he specifically cited the environmental movement-were at bottom, simply lobbyists with no fair claim to higher moral standing than other members of the species. That recognition has contributed to a decline in public interest in Congress". Sadly the reputations of both the environmental movement and Congress have been in a state of degrading declination ever since.

3. In 1995 Mark Dowie published **Losing Ground**, American Environmentalism at the Close of the Twentieth Century (MIT Press). It was a withering critique of mainstream environmental organizations. In his introduction he wrote:" American environmental history can be divided into three waves. The first began with the conservationist/preservationist impulse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and coincided with the closing of the frontier. The second wave came in the brief era of environmental legislation that began in the mid- 1960s and was abruptly halted by the Reagan administration in the 1980s. The third wave was a relatively fruitless attempt at conciliation between conservative environmentalists and corporate polluters is with us as we approach the mid -1990s...A fourth wave is coming, as it builds, the polite, ineffectual white gentleman's club that defined American environmentalism for a hundred years will shrink into historical irrelevance or become an effective player in the new movement....."(p.8). He got the historical irrelevance right. Today every poll accentuates the environmental movements' political irrelevancy, and every time Al Gore expostulates his gibberish, the polls go down further. What happened? "During the high -flying eighties," Dowie wrote, "instead of creating endowments, mainstream organizations created institutions. They continued a 1970s trend toward adding programs and expanding staffs." (This is what I saw at National Audubon 1980-86, as I watched Presidents Russ Peterson and Peter Berle take Audubon into population control, agriculture, anti -nukes and spend through a \$34million endowment.) "They spent more effort and resources on developing entrepreneurial and organizational

skills than on environmental issues. The unfortunate end result is a bland, bureaucratic reform movement devoid of passion or charismatic leadership and hell-bent reform", (p.61.)

Through the rest of his book Dowie paints a number of accurate critiques ( I'll cite five) pinning the tail on the environmental donkey and distributing pearls of wisdom like Atalanta trying to outrun Hippomenes dropping his golden apples.

(1) Quoting Ed Marston of High Country News (p.68). "Environmental CEOs (mid 1980s) are gearing up to fight last decades' battles with last decades' weapons, on last decades' battlefields."

(2) On p.83 he notes:"All movements bred antitheses... few have stimulated such virulent antagonism against themselves as American environmentalism, which, by its very nature, threatens the most sacred institution in our culture-**private property**." I'll come back to this point because it underlines the importance of Land Trusts in the future.

(3) (p. 134) quoting Lois Gibbs of Citizens Clearing House for Hazardous Wastes (CCHW), who declared: "Our aim is to change the discussion within the boardrooms of major corporations. That's where we will win ultimately, not in government agencies or Congress." I maintain and one of my major theses is: Lois is right, and she won! She and her peers successfully changed corporate values across America.

(4) p. 194 Dowie observes: "the environmental lobby has failed to accept the critical fact about lobbying Congress: appropriations are as important, if not more important, than authorizations." I'll not dwell on this except to observe it is absolutely true and in my 20 year career at National Audubon and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, I proved this point in spades and it is the only reason NFWF grew and prospered on my watch.

(5) On p. 206 as the book winds to a conclusion, Dowie states that the American environmental movement has outlasted other (reform) movements, partly because of the anti-environmental policies of the Reagan administration, which enabled sclerotic organizations to expand membership and hold on for another 10 years..." That's about all they did, hold on. To turn pages of the next chapter let's go to Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus' **Death of Environmentalism**, 2004.

4. Shellenberger and Nordhaus' superb paper is subtitled" Global Warming Politics in a Post-environmental World"; note the emphasis on post-environmental, and yes, of course they have been

sorely pilloried for their intellectual promiscuity of challenging the fatted calf of environmentalists. Their core thesis is a modernized summation of TR Reid's observation twenty years before: "Our thesis is this: the environmental community's narrow definition of its self-interest leads to a kind of policy literalism that undermines its power.... What the environmental movement needs more than anything else right now is to take a collective step back to rethink everything... Today environmentalism is just another special interest.(p.8)" On the next page they really nail it: "The arrogance here is that environmentalists ask, not what we can do for non-environmental constituencies, but what non-environmental constituencies can do for environmentalists, and as a community environmentalists suffer from a bad case of group think...(p. 12). Scrubbing the environmental belch stack for solutions is a little like rubbing Aladdin's Genie lamp, but they give it the college try." The marriage BETWEEN VISION, VALUES, AND POLICY HAS PROVED ELUSIVE FOR ENVIRONMENTALISTS. Our authors quote Van Jones of the Apollo project:" the first wave of environmentalism was framed around conservation and the second around regulation. We believe the third wave will be framed around **investment**" (p.28). UhHuh, finally something I can agree with. More on this anon... Shellenberger and Nordhaus conclude that:" In absence of a bold vision and a reconsideration of the problem, environmental leaders are effectively giving the "I have a nightmare speech." You know the drill, Al Gore and all his miniature acolytes from NRDC attaching every weather event to their global warming, agenda driven Jeremiads. As I noted earlier, this is Chicken Little, daily fried for gullible consumption. Part of the problem is wallowing in redundancy, the environmental community does not know what the problem is, much less how to solve it.

#### Part Two: Problem Analysis, Smash a few Totems

Before I set off like Monty Python in search of the Holy Grail to smash totems of environmental idolatry to the sound of clacking coconuts, allow me to present a glimmer of the positive to go with this noir narrative. Despite all the foregoing criticism on the environmental movements' loss of credibility, political ineffectiveness, burgeoning bureaucracies, and deminimus return on investment for its program agendas (such as the \$600 million invested in trying to pass climate legislation earlier in this administration), there is something that nobody in the environmental movement ever tells you- largely because in moving forward they need to perpetuate and conjure new crises every year to fill their coffers. Nonetheless behind their tactical ineptitude, THEY HAVE SUCCEEDED beyond their

wildest dreams. Let's take a poll. How many people here this afternoon consider themselves environmentalists? Hands Up! Or at least hold a deep and abiding concern for the natural environment in mind and heart? In America today the vast amount of people respect the environment-there has been a fundamental value change since the 1970s-people have changed their lifestyles and perspectives from the suburban housewife to the Fortune 100 corporate CEO. People not only espouse a concern but have modified behavior patterns that would have been unheard of 30 years ago. So in terms of changing American and world-wide societal values, the environmental movement WON! Touchdown! Canon shot, balloons released??? What did we learn from our victory? Nada. As Freeman Dyson observed: "Unfortunately, people learn from defeat more than they learn from victory." So let us return to environmental failures. I'll cite three which represent the most hallowed totems of the environmental movement.

**First, public land acquisition.** Do we need it? I don't think so. Since the early 70s the favorite environmental program of the national environmental groups (The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, Ducks Unlimited, Wilderness Society, Sierra Club, the Conservation fund) is the Land and Water Conservation Fund, (LWCF, hereafter), authorized at \$900 million per year, subject to annual Congressional appropriations, which are never adequate in the minds of the environmental community. Today roughly 28% of the US is in public estate of the National Park Service (174 million acres), National Wildlife Refuge System (89 million acres), National Forest System (192 million acres), and BLM lands (247 million acres) for a total of 605 million acres in the federal conservation establishment. These four land management agencies host a land based infrastructure that is falling down, literally! The Operations and Maintenance backlog for these agencies sits between \$25-30 billion dollars!!! As I wrote this the *Washington Post* ran a front page story 19 August 2012, headlined "National Parks Face Severe Funding Crunch." Of course this is NPS playing the usual Washington monument stunt to game larger budget allocations. The article notes: "after more than a decade of scrimping and deferring maintenance and construction projects-and absorbing a 6 percent budget cut in the past two years-the signs of strain are beginning to surface at National Parks across the country...Blue Ridge Parkway has a \$385million backlog, mainly in road maintenance..."Actually this has been going on for more than 25 years as the agencies and their environmental acolytes like NPCA, TNC and TPL have pushed for more and more acquisition, while the infrastructure is falling down.

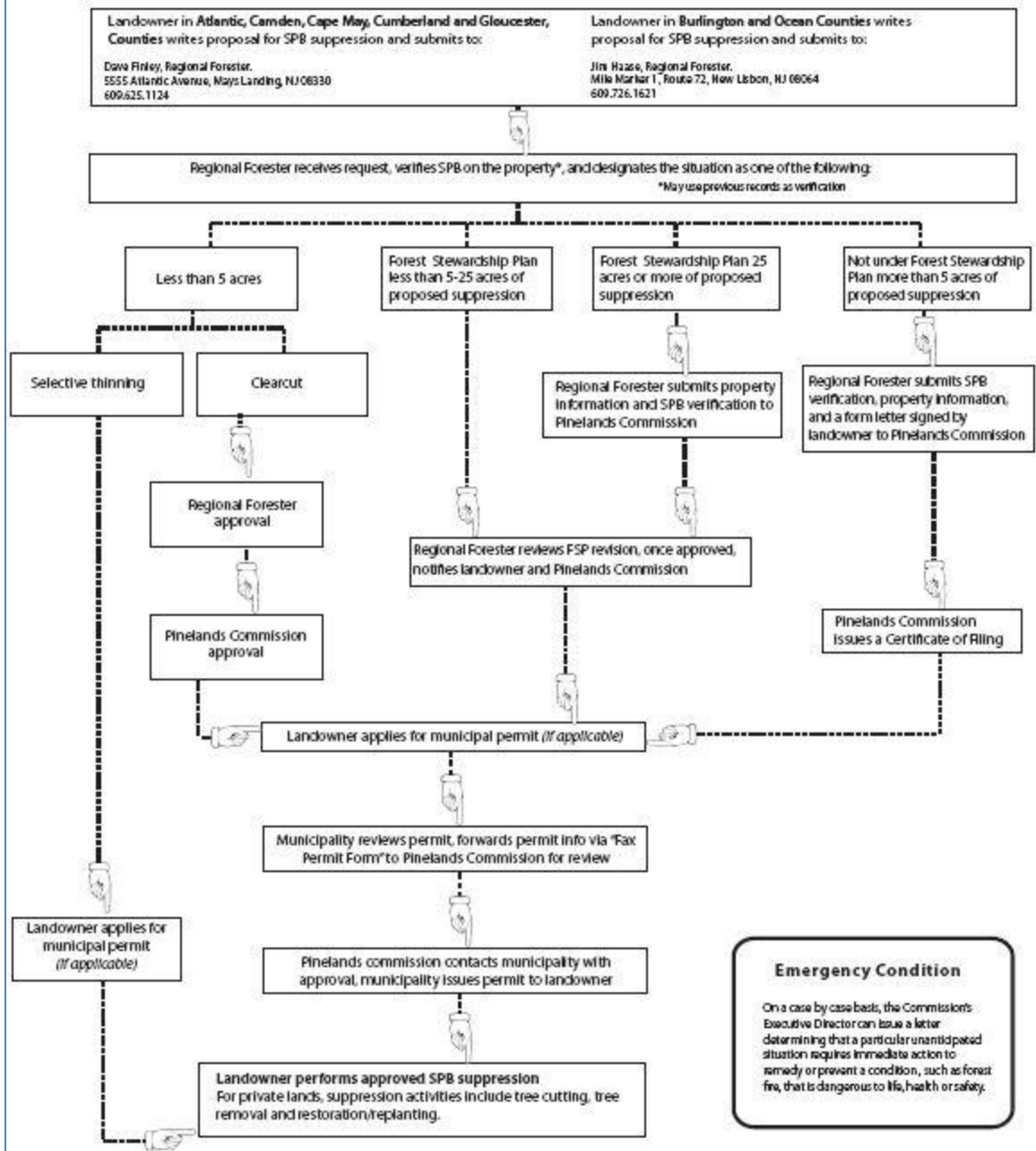
LWCF has become a trough for the federal agencies and environmental co-conspirators under the guise of preservation. As great Russian poet Pushkin said in his novella *Dubrosky*, "if there happens to be a trough, there will be pigs". Today most parks have foundations or Friends groups associated with them. For example I grew up next to Acadia NP on Mt. Desert Island. For twenty years the NPS was delinquent in keeping the carriage trails and hiking trails in repair. Finally Friends of Acadia was created to underwrite the necessary investment in trail upkeep because the host agency was clearly not up to the task. Comparable efforts are in place today from Yosemite to Grand Teton. Sooo, instead of trying to make LWCF a permanent \$900 million funding mechanism for real estate we do not need to add to the federal estate, as this Administration has made a priority for the last four years, I propose a federal conservation Marshal Plan to fix our maintenance backlog. How to fund it? In this day and age you have to provide a funding mechanism for any new initiative - it is called Pay-Fors in Congressional vernacular. I would recommend a national real estate surcharge of .050%; allocated .025% for sellers, .025% for buyers on all real estate transactions with disbursements split between the Feds and states for infrastructure rebuild. Comparable programs are in place in several states. Here in Connecticut, which has practically no federal land (only Weir Farm N.H.S., which I helped Senator Lieberman establish), Connecticut Forest and Parks is advocating a 1.5% real estate fee on buyers. Currently LWCF is funded from oil and gas receipts as the environmental movement likes making our energy industries the bogey men for all environmental ills. In my mind we ought to let the energy industry get on with making the U.S. energy independent, something the last six Presidents have failed to do. In today's world the biggest threat to our conservation infrastructure is sprawling development gobbling up farmlands and forest lands, particularly on the periphery of our burgeoning metroplexes. Why not dun the source of the problem, real estate development, and make them become the financiers of maintaining our extensive conservation infrastructure and help rebuild our sagging parks, refuges, forests and BLM lands and state lands as well? This program could also be a major provider of both construction jobs and youth employment for trails and facilities maintenance for the long term. Why not make conservation infrastructure maintenance a major employer and provider of jobs for rural America? As a bird hunter, I always like killing two birds with one shot!

**Second, Forest Fires, a national premeditated calamity.** Under President Teddy Roosevelt and his Forest service Chief, Gifford Pinchot, our nation set aside tens of millions of forest preserves,

mostly in the west, which now encompass 194 million acres nationwide. The intent was to prevent the wasteful harvest of forest lands that the timber barons of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had cut in the Eastern and Midwestern states as they moved west. Unfortunately in that era conservationists focused on human forest cutting and our ecological research was in its infancy, because most of our western forests are now known to be fire adapted ecosystems. Early on picking a mascot from President Roosevelt's Mississippi bear hunt, we implemented Smokey the Bear and nationwide policies for forest fire suppression. So our forests grew and grew and you add to the soup, our modern era law suits preventing the forest service from harvesting trees for the sake of spotted owls, salmon, a lengthy list of forest dependent critters, and urban recreationists who regard tree felling as unsightly, and what have you got? Overstocked forests choking on their own fuel loads and disease such as pine bark beetle that feast on unhealthy forests, such as half the state of Colorado today. And then what do you get, especially when we are in a decadal drought?? Fires! Our forests are burning, baby, burning! This year 42,933 wildfires burning 6.4 million acres. We have had more than 12 years of annual forest suppression costs exceeding \$1 billion. And it has nothing to do with Al Gore, Michael Man, and NRDC's latest ads attributing forest fires in Colorado to global warming. We have mismanaged, and not managed ,our forests properly for a century. And it is not just the west. The New Jersey Pine Barrens, representing 60% of N.J. are in the same condition due to environmental regulations, wherein it takes 7 consecutive permits to cut a tree, and NJ forests are also succumbing to pine bark beetle and other disease infestations.



# SPB Suppression within the Pinelands Private Lands Review Process



For the past decade the fire suppression budget of the Forest Service has dwarfed the entire management and research budget of the agency and been subject to emergency Congressional additions. It has averaged almost \$2 billion every year since 2000.

| <b>Adjusted Obligations</b>                                    |                         |                       |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>USDA Forest Service &amp; DOI Bureau of Land Management</b> |                         |                       |
| 2000   | \$1,784,382,000         |                       |
| 2001   | \$1,177,994,000         |                       |
| 2002   | \$2,037,261,000         |                       |
| 2003   | \$1,581,611,000         |                       |
| 2004   | \$1,170,276,000         |                       |
| 2005   | \$1,106,831,000         |                       |
| 2006   | \$2,096,086,000         |                       |
| 2007   | \$1,967,706,000         |                       |
| 2008   | \$1,830,674,000         |                       |
| 2009   | \$1,353,520,000         |                       |
| 2010   | \$1,217,483,000         |                       |
| 2011   | \$1,911,220,000         |                       |
| 2012   | \$783,867,000           | [Forest Service Only] |
|  |                         |                       |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>\$20,018,911,000</b> |                       |

This year fires have burned 6.4 million acres, which is an increase from the 5 million acres average the last ten years. As Charles Mann's books (*1491*, and *1493*) and recent research makes clear pre-Columbian Amer-Indians burned forests throughout the eastern and western states far more extensively than was believed during the Pinchot/Roosevelt era, or even twenty years ago. The earth is a managed landscape today and was to a degree unrecognized even before the modern era. The Hudson River School of painters and John Muir's religious conservation musings, whose philosophy of pristine wilderness imbued so many early conservation initiatives, makes for a nice canvas and evocative eco Bibles, but a hellaciously, hot real world in the twenty-first century. As I write this, I see a news release that Malheur lumber, a subsidiary of Ochoco Lumber Co. in eastern Oregon in the heart of our overstocked, diseased forest lands, announced it will shut down its sawmill on 1 November '12 because they can't secure timber from Malheur National Forest. The Malheur shutdown marks the end of 75 continuous years of lumber manufacturing by the company. Gifford Pinchot would weep over this. Our forests, particularly in the west and NJ desperately need accelerated cutting and an aggressive program of prescribed burning to restore them to health. This too will provide thousands of

jobs across rural America. We need a concerted effort to re-open our lumber mills to process all the excess fuel accumulated over half a century of ecological mismanagement.

**Third**, now let's tackle the most sacred cow in the trinity of environmentalism: **Endangered Species**.

A word of full disclosure. I have worked on every endangered species amendment since 1973 and I set up many of the current endangered species programs still in place during my tenure in that FWS office 1977-1980. Today the endangered species program has become a travesty manipulated by organizations like the Center for Biological Diversity, using federal tax dollars, your dollars, to shut down virtually any and all land use across the vast expanse of federal estate. As famed Audubon and Fly Rod and Reel writer Ted Williams has noted: "Radical; green groups do exist, and they're engaged in an industry whose waste products are fish and wildlife"...the "Department of Justice shows over \$2million in taxpayer dollars have been paid out to the Center for Biological Diversity and their attorneys for cases between 2009-2012 (Fly Rod and Reel, 06/29/2012.)"Williams quotes a senior Obama official: "CBD has sued Interior more than all other groups combined. They've divested that agency of any control over Endangered Species Act priorities and caused a HUGE drain on resources"- that's a euphemism for dollars ,\$\$\$.These are the personal injury lawyers-ambulance chasers- of the environmental world, and they make John Edwards look truthful. But in the process of bilking American taxpayers, they have completely undermined the endangered species program, which is already undervalued for recovery success stories. We are now listing the lowest fila species: obscure plants, insects and marginal distribution reptiles, and what CBD is doing is starving recovery funding, jamming up the backlog by listing inconsequential species and halting all development on rural lands across America. When I ran NFWF I made over 100 grants to keep species off the endangered species list because once the bureaucracy takes over, progress goes out the window. For example in Maine over a decade ago they listed the Atlantic salmon, which is a joke because the entire stock of fish, with the exception of one tiny river, the Ducktrap, is made up of Canadian imports. Today we have 40 federal salmon biologists in Maine which is more than the number of fish in a number of our salmon rivers. I would recommend a five year moratorium on listings and transfer all listing funds to FWS' Partners For wildlife program which works with private land owners on riparian restoration, endangered species habitat protection, and environmental stewardship programs. Then you would see

some on the ground progress and lawyers would be relegated to court room cafeterias where they belong.

**Part Three: the future.** Bill Moyers once wrote: "Americans have never lingered long looking backward. We're a people of the future. The horizon compels our gaze, not landmarks littering the past. As my mother often said to me, "Be sure your headlights are brighter than your taillights." But something is always bumping me from behind, trying to get my attention." Obviously as a professional with 40 years of experience in the environmental field, I am more than irked by the decrepit record and current nature of the environmental movement bumping me from behind. But let's leave this litter pile for the next Bonfire of Vanities and look to the future.

As you can probably surmise by now, I haven't counted coup on a good idea out of the environmental movement since the late 1970s. I get most of my ideas from corporate America which is still nimbly innovative. For example, if you want to see innovation in energy consumption, look at the product lines of Dover, Eaton, Emerson and Honeywell corporations. However the most formative conservation lessons I learned were at the lap of several individuals in Africa where I have spent over 3 years travelling and observing. One of those individuals is David Western, and I commend his book, **In The Dust Of Kilimanjaro**, to one and all. He wrote: "The future, for conservationists, lies not in trench warfare fought by eco warriors (p.277)...In some cases breaking with the past is as difficult as embracing the future. Institutions in the developed world have become so atomized and bureaucratized ( Yessireee!!) that reintegrating their activities will be no less formidable than building up skills and institutions from scratch" (p.276). Western pioneered the strategy of working with native peoples, such as the Maasai, who abut conservation areas like Amboseli NP. He wrote of his Amboseli experience: "Disenfranchising the people controlling the fate of wildlife was no recipe for its survival". (p.100) "The ultimate solution rests on local custodianship-on people like the Maasai, who saved Amboseli's elephants and in whose hands the fate of an entire ecosystem resides... the concept of integrated conservation and development is catching on in Africa... in the process, conservation has shifted from protectionism to sustainable use. It might not be box-office stuff compared to saving the elephant, rhino, and whale, but local participation will save countless species and conserve entire ecosystems even if comparably few programs work." (p. 259). Western was in the forefront of western world conservation in recognizing that people were central to designing recipes for landscape

conservation. They have to be built into the equation from the ground up; you can't exclude them. This applies not only in the Third world, but in our world. As Western wrote: "For wildlife to survive in independent Africa, it must become an asset to the African first and foremost... the challenge ultimately lay in addressing the root causes of the conflict, in solving the problems facing the African farmer as well as wildlife (p.50)... The answer lay in putting humans back into the ecological picture, not denying their presence" (p.53). For the past decade my foundation , RFF, has been making grants to Wilderness Safaris Trust implementing just this kind of conservation, making local people the central pivots and beneficiaries of conservation design in southern Africa.

But even more importantly, RFF has designed the internet Nexus ([www.privatelandownernetwork.org](http://www.privatelandownernetwork.org)) to empower people, private land owners across America, who are the forgotten element of America's conservation heritage, to be the 21<sup>st</sup> century's leaders for conservation in the U.S. You see most people do not understand that after a century of conservation focused on buying public lands in the lower 48 states, 71% of America remains in private ownership. Those lands may not compete aesthetically with Yosemite's canyon walls, nor Yellowstone's geysers for visual amenities, but our private lands are the most biologically and ecologically productive landscapes in the nation. As Aldo Leopold observed in his **River of the Mother of God** essays: "the geography of conservation is such that most of the best land will always be held privately for agricultural production. The bulk of responsibility for conservation thus NECESSARILY devolves upon THE PRIVATE CUSTODIAN, especially the FARMER (p.22.)" Gifford Pinchot recognized this and he always promoted managed landscapes as a principal ingredient of the conservation recipe. In his **The Fight For Conservation**, he laid out his principles for conservation: 'The first great fact about conservation is that it stands for DEVELOPMENT.(p.42)'

## **Part Four - Conclusion, Land Trusts, the Internet & Gerlach-Thompson: A Reason for Optimism**

As we move into an era of contracting funding for conservation at both the federal and state levels simultaneously, we shall witness a changing market for conservation both in terms of how it happens and where it happens. Public acquisition will recede with the outgoing tide of public financing. Those organizations like The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Lands and Conservation Fund that have thrived on their dependence of public conservation largesse as "rent seekers" will become less instrumental. Local land trusts used to be the effete province of the Nature Conservancy and trusts set up in rich suburban and vacation enclaves. Today we have progressed to the point of a highly localized land conservation marketplace, with over 1700 land trusts (Connecticut has 130 land trusts with just 169 towns). We probably have far too many for the market- servicing their designated geography. In the past decade we have seen the evolution of land-use specific trusts serving working landscapes such as Forest Trusts, and Agriculture, Cattleman and Ranch land trusts. Both Leopold and Pinchot would be proud and supportive of these developments, and Teddy Roosevelt would exclaim land trusts are : "A Bully Enterprise." Examples are the Willistown Trust in suburban Philadelphia to The Malpais Group in NM, AZ, and the Colorado Cattleman's Ag Land Trust, The Texas Ag Land Trust and California Rangeland Trust and New England Forestry Foundation. Simsbury Land trust has protected local farms: Tulmeadow and Rosedales, and Connecticut Farmland Trust is working with farmers on agricultural land easements. Why am I optimistic? Because many of these land trusts incorporate the philosophy of David Western, of building people into the conservation equation. They are localized, serving local needs and geographies-not top down national agendas concocted by environmental bureaucracies. Funds are raised locally and conservation design is much more democratized, and customized to local people and needs.

The Internet: provides an unprecedented opportunity to take conservation to the ground to individual land owners across the country, cutting out all the federal and state bureaucracies and other intermediaries, so land owners can go direct to their preferred sources of information and conservation service providers. RFF ([www.resourcesfirstfoundation.org](http://www.resourcesfirstfoundation.org)) has designed all our sites: PLN ([www.privatelandownernetwork.org](http://www.privatelandownernetwork.org)), CTC ([www.conservationtaxcenter.org](http://www.conservationtaxcenter.org)), and state sites ([www.stateconservation.org](http://www.stateconservation.org)) for Arkansas, California, Houston, Maine, and Mississippi in this fashion

so that a land owner, say in Oregon can seek local county and state advice and services, or alternatively go across the country to seek advice from Steve Small in Boston on tax deductibility of easements, all at the tip of his/her finger on their key board. As Tom Friedman has written in **The World Is Flat**: "the internet provides one and all with unprecedented information sources." In his **Hot, Flat, And Crowded**, Friedman puts his finger on another counter intuitive aspect of RFFs websites that account for their remarkable success and market uptake:" When it comes to implementing a green revolution, the more boring the work, the more revolutionary the impact. If it isn't boring it isn't green (p.268)." To some, RFF's work might seem boring, but it has become a trusted information platform for land owners across the country.

Gerlach-Thompson (HR 1964, S.339): This proposed extension of the tax deduction for conservation easements extends for two years the tax cuts first implemented by President Bush in the Pension Act of 2006. This legislative package has more co-sponsors in the House (310) than any other piece of legislation. It is bipartisan and has the strong support of Senate Finance Chair Max Baucus and his Republican counterpart Sen. Grassley of Iowa. It has the support of House Republican leadership Speaker Boehner and Majority Leader Cantor. Nothing I can think of will do more to keep family owned farms, forests and ranches intact and productive than this worthy piece of legislation, which hopefully will be included in the tax agenda of next month's lame duck Congress.

### **Stewardship**

We need an era and aura of stewardship. We need to acknowledge the preeminent role of mankind on our planet; we are a managed, manipulated ecosystem, and we need to endow our actions both morally, economically, and democratically with an ethos of stewardship, which in microcosm is what local land trusts are all about.

To conclude, let me go back to thwacking the tuning fork and borrow a quote from John G. Taft, CEO of the Royal Bank of Canada, whose brilliant book entitled **Stewardship** is about the tuning changes needed in our financial culture which are just as applicable to our environmental culture. He writes: "Leaving a Stewardship legacy requires that we see ourselves not just as individual actors in economic or social systems, but that we see ourselves as members of communities. It also requires that we define our purpose not in terms of self-interest [or environmental interest] alone, of 'what's in it for me?'[as Dowie wrote], but in terms of how we can serve others. Finally, our Stewardship legacy is

defined not just by how we serve others during our lifetimes, but by the impact of our actions on generations in the future” (Taft, Introduction p.xx). We need to make the world a better place than we found it, but we will only get there by working through local communities, as opposed to pushing national preconceived environmental agendas. Taft, quoting Peter Block, states: “There is humility in stewardship, it evokes images of service” (Taft, p. 27). We can certainly use more humility and more service in our approach to the environment.

Thank you



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