

The Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Conservation

From Uncommon to Common Ground

In keeping with the deconstructionist movement that has swept broadly across college and university campuses, substantive changes rippled through the environmental community in the 1990s. Of these, perhaps the most significant was the appearance of a set of high-profile critiques questioning the very foundations of environmental thought and practice from the vantage point of the end of the 20th century. Led by William Cronon and his now well-known debunking of the American wilderness idea, these arguments generated more than a few sparks across a wide range of scholarly and professional fields associated with natural resources and the environment (Cronon 1996). Indeed, Cronon's and others' work seemed to issue an indirect, yet provocative challenge to scholars and practitioners engaged in the study and management of human-environment relationships.

Although the revisionist papers appearing in Cronon's oft-cited collection *Uncommon Ground* were focused more on coming to terms with the consequences of the cultural mediation of our knowledge of nature and models of ecological change in post-war environmentalism, Cronon's own dismantling of the meanings and images associated with the American wilderness idea suggested that the earlier conservation movement was also implicated in the broader critique. In particular, Cronon singled out the nature-romanticism of Henry David Thoreau and John Muir, and the primitivism of Frederick Jackson Turner, as examples of how American thinking about wilderness had been saddled with utopian myths that represented a flight from lived human history and an escape from the hard problems presented by modern urban and industrial life (Cronon 1996). If Cronon was right, it meant that our thinking about wilderness had been at best intellectu-

ally lazy in its acquiescence to these wrongheaded ideas about our place in the world. At worst, it had been morally irresponsible, especially in its neglect of urban and rural conditions and the men and women who toiled in the fields and in the factories away from an idyllic and imaginary "pristine" nature.

Cronon's criticism of the wilderness concept, and, more generally, the deconstructivist assessment of the commitments and strategies of late-20th-century environmentalism, are now part of the conservation canon. They have been joined by a growing and broadly sympathetic literature, including further interdisciplinary critiques of the wilderness idea (Callicott and Nelson 1998), attempts to demystify significant contemporary conservation concepts such as that of "biodiversity" (Takacs 1996), and projects exploring the historically neglected dimensions of class, culture, and authority in the management of parks

and wildlife (Warren 1997; Spence 1999; Jacoby 2001). For the most part, we believe this critical turn has provided a useful service. It has, for example, exposed the previously unreflective presuppositions of contemporary environmentalism, holding traditional and widely accepted interpretations of concepts such as wilderness and biodiversity up to the fire of critical scrutiny. Even though the academic and popular environmental community's response to Cronon and his followers has been at times overly defensive and less constructive than we might have liked, these critiques have nonetheless stimulated an important and potentially transformative debate about the conceptual foundations of conservation as we move into the first decades of the 21st century.

Yet, it is also true that these penetrating criticisms of modern American environmentalism have issued an undeniable challenge to those who would defend the "classical" conservation tradition—the period running roughly from George Perkins Marsh to Aldo Leopold (and perhaps to the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*)—as practically viable and intellectually relevant in the new "deconstructivist era." After all, the mostly unquestioned realism about nature during this time and the nascent, "modernist" ecological understandings of the era's principal thinkers would seem to make the tradition a prime candidate for systematic debunking and demythologizing. Nevertheless, we believed that there was still much of value in the tradition, even if we also conceded its very real philosophical and scientific limitations as a template to guide current and future conservation thought and practice. How, we wondered, should we go about reading the conservation tradition in this new, highly charged, and seriously self-conscious academic

environment? How shall we "reconstruct" conservation?

"Practical Intelligence" and "Intelligent Practice"

To address this matter, we decided to do what academics do best when faced with an intellectual crisis: we organized a symposium. In this we were also following the model established by Cronon and his colleagues, given that the papers appearing in his *Uncommon Ground* began their lives in a seminar held at the University of California–Irvine in the early 1990s. For our project, we wanted to create an appropriate forum in which both the scholarly and practitioner communities could come together and attempt to fill the deconstructionist void. We believed it was important to bring these two groups into an open dialogue with each other, and we hoped that the opportunity for increased traffic between the theory and practice of conservation would help achieve a balance of "intelligent practice" and "practical intelligence" at the symposium.

Our primary task was an ambitious one: to assess the meaning and relevance of our conservation inheritance in the 21st century, and to chart a course for revising the conventional narratives and accounts of the tradition so that a "usable past" might be uncovered that could inform present and future conservation efforts. In the fall of 2001, then, we organized and held an invited, interdisciplinary symposium in Vermont focused on the challenges of "reconstructing" conservation thought and practice in the wake of the earlier deconstructive efforts. The symposium participants were a select group of leading academics and professionals nationally and internationally known for their work in conservation scholarship or the practice of conservation in local com-

munities and on the landscape. They approached our project's goals with great intellectual seriousness and creativity, and their energy held steady over the nearly five full days of plenaries, panels, and roundtable discussions. This enthusiastic response suggested to us that we had managed to start a conversation not only compelling in its conceptual scope and orientation, but also timely in its asking of hard questions of the conservation tradition regarding its role as a guide for a new age's relationship with its environment.

“Duelling Dualisms” and the Search for a “Radical Center”

By taking part in this project, symposium participants were not only stepping into the breach with regard to the tensions that have marked the deconstructivist debate over wilderness and conservation, they were also entering a larger and, we think, ultimately more important discussion about the proper course of future conservation scholarship and action. This larger discussion, however, has also been marked by considerable academic and professional debate and divisiveness in recent years. Any careful survey of the scholarly and popular literature in conservation, for example, will reveal a host of conceptual and methodological polarizations that have worked to divide individuals and “camps” within the diverse fields of conservation thought and practice. A representative list of these oppositional elements, or “duelling dualisms,” might include the following:

- Conservation versus preservation
- Conservationism versus environmentalism
- Anthropocentrism versus bio- or ecocentrism
- Instrumental value versus intrinsic value

- Utility versus aesthetics
- Efficiency versus equity
- Nature as construct versus nature as essence
- Moral pluralism versus moral monism
- Urban/rural environmentalism versus wilderness environmentalism
- Eastern (U.S.) versus western (U.S.) perspectives
- Regional focus versus national focus
- Working/cultural landscapes versus pristine nature
- Stewardship versus “hands off” management policies
- Grassroots action versus centralized approaches
- Citizen environmentalism versus expert/bureaucratic environmentalism
- Models of ecological disturbance versus models of ecological order
- Conservation theory versus conservation practice

Some of these tensions are captured in the aforementioned deconstructivist critique, though many speak to additional commitments and goals that are debated in academic and professional conservation circles. Of course, this list is by no means exhaustive. We also do not wish to suggest that a subscription to one or more of the commitments on the left or the right entails an endorsement of all the claims and tenets on that side of the aisle. But we do believe this list captures some of the major philosophical and strategic disagreements within conservationism, both past and present. And though some of these divisions seem to be slowly disappearing, or at least moving toward some degree of conceptual compatibility (e.g., the debate over equilibrium-based and “disturbance-based” ecological models), others remain firmly in place and even appear to have deepened in recent years (e.g., anthropocentrism

versus bio- or ecocentrism, the constructivist–essentialist debate).

We know that many of our participants probably believed they had a stake in one or more of these debates at the symposium, yet we were struck by the degree to which they attempted to move beyond these imposed categories and their entailments. Even when it was apparent that some of the presenters were interested in working along one side of an argument, for example, they sought to develop complementary rather than adversarial projects, or they worked to shore up weaknesses and fill conceptual holes in the conservationist literature. This is not to say that the divisions represented in the foregoing list were somehow magically erased in Vermont, nor to suggest that many of these opposing ideas do not provide a useful way of thinking about some of the real tensions in our understanding of conservation thought and practice. We only point out here that our participants were not beholden to “either–or” logic in the framing of their discussions and proposals for reconstruction. This independence was probably best demonstrated by the numerous pleas for philosophical compatibility and tactical cooperation at the symposium and by the participants’ awareness of the need to move beyond rigid ideological logjams and the constraints of historically entrenched positions and arguments in their respective fields. In the words of one of our symposium participants, we were all committed to the search for an inclusive “radical center.”

Principles for Reconstructing Conservation

Symposium papers (which are gathered in the book, *Reconstructing Conservation: Finding Common Ground*; Minter and Manning 2003) chart a wide-ranging but unbroken

course through the fields of history, philosophy, political theory, sociology, anthropology, conservation biology, economics, and the applied professions engaged in conservation practice. Clearly, our authors have much to say about the shape and substance of a reformed conservationism, and they have provided an impressive pool of ideas to draw from in our efforts to move forward with the larger project of reconstructing conservation. They have responded to the original challenge of providing a thoughtful assessment of the current theoretical and methodological trends in conservation thought and practice, and they have also given us a clear-eyed appraisal of earlier conservation traditions and their bearing on present and future work.

Despite the diversity of our authors and their subjects—academics and practitioners; multiple academic disciplines; wilderness, rural/agrarian, built environments; East and West; conservation icons and lesser known voices; domestic and international—we are struck by the degree to which the work of the symposium converged in a number of significant ways. This unity-amidst-diversity, or common ground, can be best demonstrated through a cataloguing of what we see as a set of emerging “principles for reconstruction” that issue from the symposium. While presented here as empirical claims about the structure and content of a revised conservationism in the academy and the professions, the principles also carry a significant normative weight. Taken together, we believe that they capture the symposium authors’ collective vision of the proper course of a reconstructed conservation for a new era of scholarship and practice. (The papers and quotes referenced below all appear in Minter and Manning 2003.)

1. A reconstructed conservation

will adopt an integrative understanding of nature and culture. Our symposium strongly endorsed a model of conservation that recognizes the importance of the linkages between natural and cultural systems. Much of this view may be attributed to our improved understanding, in recent years, of the history (and pre-history) of human modifications of the environment. As environmental philosopher J. Baird Callicott reminds us, no landscape is really free of anthropogenic effects. This is ratified by anthropologist Louis Vivanco in his statement that “recent archaeological, ethnohistoric, and ethnographic research have adequately proven that in important instances Western projections of unpeopled wilderness are in fact artifactual landscapes manipulated by the hands of people.” This conclusion is clearly supported by historian Richard Judd’s study of the Eastern conservation tradition of rural New Englanders: “The markers of eastern identity are more typically pastoral, distinctive not because of their natural *or* cultural attributes, but because these two are so inextricably combined.” Judd goes on to cite Henry David Thoreau in support of the linkages between nature and culture: “The eastern forest, with its legacy of disturbance and its explosive ecological succession, challenges the idea that nature and culture can be viewed as separate entities. Thoreau, for example, found the Maine woods authenticating in part because it invoked the lore of logging, hunting, guiding, exploring, and timber-surveying: it was a cultural, as much as natural place.”

The fusion of systems of human meaning and activity with the cycles and processes of the natural world also has a number of implications for our understanding of the boundaries of the larger conservation discussion,

one that challenges many of our previously held conceptual and professional categories. As historic preservationist Robert McCullough points out in his essay, if, as Cronon and others have suggested, nature is a cultural construction, then our conservation emphasis should be on cultural resources as much as natural resources, or, alternatively, on their intersection. In fact, McCullough suggests that “the goals are so closely parallel and the tasks so enormous that one wonders why cultural and natural resource protection have remained separate for so long.” Yet as Vivanco points out, the embrace of culture in conservation can be a very complicated move, especially when “culture” becomes inappropriately instrumentalized in the service of the conservationist agenda. “Thinking of culture as a mere tool to change behaviors,” he writes, “may undermine the very reason we might want to bring it to bear in conservation, which is for its ability to help focus attention on the highly specific and context-dependent processes and interactions that help determine why people relate with their natural surroundings in certain ways.”

2. A reconstructed conservation will be concerned with working and cultural landscapes as well as more “pristine” environments. Many of our symposium participants warned us (directly or indirectly) of the dangers of embracing a “wilderness first” view of conservation, one that discredits or ignores cultural and working landscapes in favor of an idealized “pristine” nature. The majority of our participants would presumably agree with the sentiments of conservation practitioners and National Park Service staffers Rolf Diamant, Glen Eugster, and Nora Mitchell, who suggest that the concept of cultural landscapes “gives value and legitimacy to peopled places, a fundamentally dif-

ferent perspective from nature conservation's traditional focus on wild areas....” In this sense, Judd’s account of the “long lived-in lands” of the Northeast offers a corrective to this wilderness bias in environmental history, as it elevates “peopled” and transformed landscapes into the conservationist geography. As he puts it, “the oscillations of deforestation and reforestation, depletion and renewal, settlement and abandonment, and pollution and recovery suggest reciprocity, rather than nature-as-victim.... One era’s ecological disaster becomes the next era’s textured landscape.” Jan Dizard, an environmental sociologist, is even more direct: “Undisturbed nature is an oxymoron.... Put another way, to argue that the undisturbed (by humans) is to be preferred to the disturbed is to court a serious and disabling teleology.” The “altered lands” perspective is also on display in environmental ethicist Paul Thompson’s portrait of the agrarian vision, one in which “human beings are hard at work in nature.” Thompson’s account shows us how this agricultural modification of the land also transforms individual character and community values, in the process establishing close ties between rural producers and their supporting environments.

The contemporary notion of “sense of place” and its inherent blending of nature and culture is at the heart of working and cultural landscapes as suggested by a number of symposium participants. Quoting the geographer E.C. Relph, environmental sociologist Patricia Stokowski writes that, “the relationship between community and place is a very powerful one in which each reinforces the identity of the other, and in which the landscape is very much an expression of communally held beliefs and values and of interpersonal involvements.” In the southern Appalachian context,

Judd suggests that “mountain people saw the forest not simply as board feet, but also as a living matrix of plants, animals, and shared memories,” and that their “folk knowledge in turn cultured a sense of ownership,” and ultimately a sense of stewardship. In the agrarian tradition, Thompson notes that peoples’ “actions shape and transform [nature] as surely as nature shapes and transforms them,” and that communities evolved in this way “will see no tension between conservation of wild nature and the duties of the steward.” Environmental philosopher Ben Minteer suggests that the origins of regional planning, as espoused by Lewis Mumford, Benton MacKaye, and others, may offer an appropriately expansive model of a reconstructed conservation: “The task of regional planning, according to Mumford, was ... more culturally and ecologically grounded than the approach taken by conservationists, which in his view merely attempted to protect wilderness areas from intrusion and sought to avoid the wasteful development of natural resources. Although he thought such a strategy was to be praised for protecting the rare and spectacular environments of the continent and for injecting efficiency measures into resource exploitation, he feared it was too limited in scope to serve as a guide for a true environmental ethic.” Building on their legacy, Minteer concludes that “a reconstructed conservation philosophy needs to address the complex whole of human experience in the environment, including the urban, the rural, and the wild.”

3. A reconstructed conservation will rely on a wider and more contextual reading of the conservation tradition. Several symposium authors suggested that we already have many of the intellectual tools and resources of a new framework for conservation

embedded in our history and culture; we need only to adopt a more expansive and more nuanced approach to the conservation tradition for these ideas and commitments to come into sharper focus. In his case for an “eastern” conservation history, for example, Judd writes that we must adopt a more regional and ethically textured understanding of the roots of the American conservation impulse, an interpretation that stands outside the conventional “western” environmental narrative. In his words, “plumbing the rhetoric of place in long-settled lands reveals a more nuanced set of motives behind the use of nature.” Similarly, in his attempt to recover the lost agrarian voice in conservationism, Thompson concludes that this tradition has been “so thoroughly neglected and forgotten that it is now possible to see it as something new, as an expansion of conservation thought that can play a significant role in its reconstruction.” Historian, conservation biologist, and Leopold scholar Curt Meine’s plea for another look at the “radical center” of the conservation vision of the Progressive Era, and Minter’s suggestion that we find a way to weave Lewis Mumford’s “pragmatic conservationism” into the intellectual histories of conservation philosophy, are further examples of this multivocal call for a contemporary rereading of conservation icons such as Thoreau, Marsh, Muir, Gifford Pinchot, and Leopold and for a revision and expansion of our received accounts of the tradition. “Any reconstructed conservationism of today,” concludes Minter, “especially one in search of a philosophical ‘usable past’ to inform and guide future thought and practice, could not ask for a greater intellectual inheritance.”

4. A reconstructed conservation will require long-range landscape stewardship and restoration efforts.

As geographer, historian, and Marsh biographer David Lowenthal writes, one of Marsh’s most enduring lessons is that “stewardship, indispensable for the common good now and in the future, needs to be ceaselessly nurtured.” Although Lowenthal finds in Marsh the notion that we need to take greater control of nature, he suggests that this celebration of human agency is checked by the frank acknowledgment of our ignorance regarding the long-term effects of our actions on the land. Yet despite this “imperfect knowledge,” Lowenthal concludes, following Marsh, that restorative actions designed to reverse severe human impacts are urgently needed and well-justified. In his essay on large-scale restoration projects, however, Dizard points out that such restorative activities may actually present formidable obstacles to effective conservation stewardship, barriers due in part to some restoration advocates’ absolutism about the “proper” methods and goals of environmentalism. Indeed, as we suggest below, a necessarily active and reconstructed conservation requires a pluralistic and robustly democratic context.

Other authors illustrate the importance of conservation stewardship not only for taking care of the land for future generations, but for building social capital and shoring up the realm of civil society as well. Stokowski writes that “conservation must also be about building community, so that people will be more likely to value others as well as value places.” Based on their wide-ranging program of international work, international conservation practitioners Brent Mitchell and Jessica Brown enthusiastically observe that “one of the most exciting elements of stewardship work is that it often leads to advances in other social areas. Stewardship helps to build civil society by giving people opportunities

to participate in shaping their environment, and therefore their lives.”

5. A reconstructed conservation will have “land health” as one of its primary socioecological goals. The notion of health emerges from several of the essays as an important overlapping normative goal of conservation, suggesting the need to understand and maintain the linkages between the reproduction of ecological and cultural processes over time. The essays by Callicott and environmental legal theorist Eric Freyfogle discuss how this unifying concept played a large part in Leopold’s thinking about the aims of conservation—that is, a harmony between productive practices and ecological processes (or, as Dizard puts it, “land capable of sustaining a robust variety of living things, including humans”). And in the agrarian context, as Thompson notes, “productive practices that cannot be passed down from parent to child fail to represent a heritable way of life, which (for an agrarian) is to say that they are no way of life at all.”

More strategically, Meine sees the goal of land health as uniting a broad coalition of interests, professions, and citizens. In his view, it is an area in which “where people who care about land and communities and wild things and places, whatever their political stripe, may meet to make common cause.” We should also not be too concerned that we will continue to grope for empirical definitions of “land health” (definitions that might best be formulated at the community level). Ecological economists David Bengston and David Iverson note appropriate analogues between the case of conservation and normative notions of “human health” in medicine and “justice” in law. Perhaps, as Leopold anticipated in these matters of higher aspiration, it is as important to strive as to achieve.

6. A reconstructed conservation will be adaptive and open to multiple practices and objectives. It is clear that our authors do not subscribe to a rigid, “one size fits all” model of conservation. Instead, they describe in various ways a more flexible and adaptive approach to conserving the landscape. As Vivanco writes, “we need a conservationist culture based on dialogue—not domination—that is not about simply facilitating an exchange of wisdom in order to convert people to some predetermined expectations of what conservation ‘should be.’ This dialogue should also include a process of mutual enrichment in which the means and ends of conservation themselves are open to new contingencies and intercultural negotiations.” The specific practices of a reconstructed conservation will vary. Thompson’s agrarian conservationist, for example, “would endorse parks and museums that memorialize farms and farming ways of particular note, but would find it ultimately of greater importance to bring working farms into the conservation ideal. Activities, such as farmer’s markets and community supported agriculture, which connect those who do not farm with those who do, could come to be understood as productive conservation activities.” Many of the symposium papers also suggest that we must find ways to accommodate multiple social objectives (as well as ecological constraints) in framing significant conservation policies. As social scientist Robert Manning writes in his essay, variations in ecological conditions, cultural patterns, and institutional structure may lead to environmental policies and conservation models that vary across the natural and cultural landscape: “Diverse environmental values and ethics offer empirical support for a correspondingly ‘patchy’ natural and cultural landscape.” As Manning notes, the

U.S. public land system offers a model of such diversity in the conservation mission, with national forests displaying more utilitarian commitments and the national parks embodying more preservationist sentiments on the landscape. Likewise, Callicott's updating of the three "paradigms" of conservation philosophy in light of changes in ecological thought supports a multidimensional model of conservation action, as does conservation biologist Steven Trombulak's discussion of "dominant use" designations across a spectrum of land uses from intensive human development to ecological lands managed to promote biodiversity and landscape-level processes. Diamant, Eugster, and Mitchell's example of the National Park Service river conservation program provides a compelling illustration of how such a broad-based, multi-objective, and multivalue conservation program can meet with great success in practice. Further, it seems likely that conservation will continue to evolve, for, as Bengston and Iverson write, "the history of conservation in the United States is a history of responding to changing social, economic, political, technological and environmental conditions." In this respect, the *process* of conservation—its adaptive and open character—may be as important as the final product. The adaptive environmental and policy framework outlined by environmental philosopher Bryan Norton, a process informed by science but considered within a multivalue, democratic context, may be a particularly appropriate model for this larger project.

7. A reconstructed conservation will embrace value pluralism. This endorsement of an integrated diversity of land use types and objectives is reinforced by many of the authors' advocacy of pluralism in environmental values. Bengston and Iverson, in

their defense of an evolving ecological economics against the traditional economic paradigm, argue that the latter is "inadequate to inform conservation thought and practice in the face of changed ecological and social contexts of the twenty-first century" because it is unable to comprehend and incorporate all the diverse values people hold for the environment, especially noninstrumental moral and spiritual values and the value of life-supporting ecological services and functions. This value pluralism toward nature (including nonmaterial and noncommodity values) is supported in the empirical investigations Manning presents in his paper, and in developing ecological science that, according to Callicott and Trombulak, recognizes "ecological services" (e.g., climate stabilization) as a natural resource as important as timber and other commodities, or more so. Such pluralism need not lead to political gridlock, however. Indeed, Norton's articulation of a "multi-criteria" approach to environmental valuation, one in which "good policies are marked by their robust performance over multiple criteria, which opens opportunities for win-win situations when one policy can support multiple values and goals," promises to offer a way out of the ideological logjams between intrinsic and instrumental values, conservation and preservation, and other rigid dualisms. In this way, according to Bengston and Iverson, "Natural resource planners, managers, and policy makers need to grasp and incorporate the full range of environmental values and learn to manage for multiple values rather than multiple uses."

8. A reconstructed conservation will promote community-based conservation strategies. One of the strongest points of consensus in the symposium is that the centralized, command-and-control conservation

approach is in many cases giving way to more grassroots and community-based conservation models. As Diamant, Eugster, and Mitchell write, "The emergence of community-based conservation has shifted the center of gravity from top-down management strategies toward more decentralized, localized, place-based approaches." An important consequence of this shift, one that Stokowski notes in her essay, is that it affords a more expanded conservation vision: "The emphasis on community-based conservation focuses attention on people as well as on nature, assumes that natural landscapes will not be privileged over historical and cultural settings, and draws its power from collaboration by local leaders and citizens."

This community-based conservationism is a theme picked up by many of our authors. Thompson, for example, notes that agrarian thought "holds great promise for the reconstruction of conservation and an empowering environmental philosophy emphasizing community-based practice." Minter's discussion of Mumford's approach to regional planning uncovers the latter's emphasis on the protection of human-scaled community values and institutions in the face of powerful metropolitan forces in the 1920s and 1930s. In her essay, environmental historian and Leopold biographer Susan Flader suggests that he would have approved of the new grassroots approaches: "As an inveterate organizer of local farmer-sportsmen groups and other grassroots efforts at land restoration, [Leopold] would be heartened by the myriad watershed partnerships, community farms and forests, land trusts, urban wilderness projects, and other community-based efforts that have been thriving in recent years." Leopold struggled professionally and personally with the tension between "scientist" and citi-

zen, and placed increasing emphasis and importance on the latter role as he matured. In a related manner, Freyfogle instructs conservationists to adopt a robust understanding and defense of community in the face of rampant moral individualism and the potential socially and ecologically corrosive effects of the market economy.

The international arena offers some of the most striking examples of successes and failures of conservation as it relates to community involvement. Vivanco writes that "as an applied concept, culture has become a key element in international development schemes, based on the recognition that local technologies and social institutions are often uniquely adaptive, and that programs succeed by building upon, not sweeping aside, local situations, needs, and traditions." Similarly, Mitchell and Brown caution us against "paper parks," and suggest that "managers of protected areas are turning instead to inclusive models, in which the interests of local communities are considered, resident populations are not displaced, and there is a high degree of local participation in planning and management of the protected area."

Like most dualisms in conservation and in public policy more generally, there is a productive middle ground to be found between local control and the legitimate interests of scientific experts, the regional and national context, and the financial aid and resources of centralized government. Conservation at any level should be informed by science, guided by larger-scale concerns about ecological health and integrity, and facilitated by government. As Stokowski observes, however, "newer participatory approaches reorient the work of conservation to local community settings and practices in which public resource protection and private development interests

intersect.” And on the front lines of conservation practice, Diamant, Eugster, and Mitchell like what they see: “Local initiative ... in partnership with government, has taken the form of land trusts, small watershed associations, greenway and trail groups, friends of parks, ‘Main Street’ organizations and heritage area coalitions.” Likewise, speaking as conservation practitioners, Mitchell and Brown conclude that “public agencies still have a role; it is just different, concerned more with guiding than with dictating, and it is especially concerned with carefully constructing institutional frameworks that grant genuine authority to appropriate community groups while ensuring that conservation efforts succeed in their primary objectives.”

9. A reconstructed conservation will rely on an engaged citizenry.

Directly linked with this turn to community-level conservation is the growing recognition of the relationship between conservation and citizen participation in conservation initiatives. Flader and Meine both find great inspiration for fostering individual initiative in conservation efforts in the thought and work of Leopold, who on both professional and personal fronts promoted various levels of citizen involvement in conservation. Minter’s account of Mumford’s civic model of regional planning suggests additional foundations of citizen participation in the earlier conservation tradition. Writing from their experience with the contemporary management scene, Mitchell and Brown, as well as Diamant, Eugster, and Mitchell, also observe how the central role of citizens in environmental stewardship builds much-needed social capital and bolsters civil society, suggesting that conservation and citizenship are in many respects mutually reinforcing. Contemporary communi-

ty-based conservation offers unlimited opportunities for all environmentally concerned citizens to become engaged: membership-based organizations, volunteer projects, informal consumerism, and the like.

10. A reconstructed conservation will engage questions of social justice. It is clear that conservation in the 21st century will need to be more attentive to fundamental concerns of justice in environmental protective efforts. From the practitioner’s perspective, Diamant, Eugster, and Mitchell note that such questions of social equity are indeed becoming more critical in discussions within the conservation professions. McCullough observes how the growing emphasis on community in conservation activities effectively opens the door for considerations of social issues related to community welfare, including housing, transportation, education, and social services. It is clear that issues of social justice are increasingly recognized as critical elements of the new landscape of conservation planning and goal setting. Vivanco’s account of the struggles surrounding conservation efforts in Latin America illustrates just how central issues of justice are in these negotiations: “For many peoples of the South, nature conservation exists at a crossroads. Will it represent domination by a new set of elites, in this case scientifically-trained natural resource administrators united with government or nongovernmental interests external to rural communities, or will conservation activists find ways to unite their struggles for nature with local struggles for equity, justice, and autonomy at the community level?” Mitchell and Brown provide one indirect response to this question in their essay, observing that the prospects for greater equity and accountability in international protected area management seem to be

improving in many cases. As they write, a new paradigm for the world's protected areas is emerging, one "based on inclusive approaches, partnerships, and linkages, in which protected areas are no longer planned against local people, but instead are planned with them." Meine's impassioned call for a revived Progressivism in conservation—one built around a "radical center" that appeals to all peoples and interests—offers the hope that conservationists can construct a more tolerant and inclusive community focused on shared goals rather than partisan values and preferences.

11. A reconstructed conservation will be politically inclusive and partnership-driven. In step with Meine's arguments, many symposium papers describe and defend a "big tent" approach to conservation, one characterized by multisector approaches, public-private partnerships, and new and creative relationships among organizations and institutions. Flader notes that Leopold anticipated (as he did many things) this collaborative model in the first half of the 20th century. One of the driving forces behind these shifts toward partnerships appears to be an increased concern with producing measurable, tangible results on the landscape. "It is more important to be successful in conservation than it is to be in charge," write Diamant, Eugster, and Mitchell, suggesting that meaningful collaboration focused on real outcomes is part of strong conservation leadership. As Mitchell and Brown point out, however (and as stated earlier), this shift toward cooperative models does not retreat from nor does it preclude the role of government in the conservation enterprise. There will always be conservation matters of scale or institutional complexity that require strong government leadership. The ecosystem-oriented and large-scale dimen-

sions of many emerging conservation activities work to stimulate organized cooperation among different parties, including government, as Bengston and Iverson, Mitchell and Brown, and Trombulak discuss in their papers. Furthermore, McCullough's essay demonstrates how the conceptual revelations about the cultural dimensions of conservation also play a part in this redrawing (and erasing) of divisions between the academic and professional fields involved in conservation efforts, and supporting his proposal to build "new green bridges of a collaborative nature" between the nature conservation and historic preservation communities.

12. A reconstructed conservation will embrace its democratic traditions. Diamant, Eugster, and Mitchell write that "we will need a conservation community that is ethical, democratic and humanistic in the broadest sense...." We believe that one of the most significant conclusions to be drawn from symposium essays is that a reconstructed conservation needs to embody the democratic values and commitments found in the best parts of its intellectual inheritance. On this score, Flader and Minter suggest that Leopold and Mumford provide useful models for fashioning a democratic approach to conservation from the intellectual resources of the tradition. But this project is not as easy as it might seem. As political theorist Bob Pepperman Taylor points out, "A reconstructed oppositional conservationism, if such is to be found, must embrace the imperfections, even the modesty, of democratic political life." This democratic humility does not seem to have been demonstrated by Scott Nearing's conservationism, the subject of Taylor's essay. In fact, Taylor's conclusions about Nearing's stern moralizing and his failure to engage citizens in a broader, critical

form of conservationism stands as a lesson to those conservationists tempted by either a moral purism or an overzealous scientism in their work. In a related vein, Dizard's postmortem of the controversy surrounding the Chicago Wilderness Habitat Project suggests how the dogmatism of restorationists undercut their political objectives. "If the goal of environmentalists is to create as large a constituency as possible committed to environmental stewardship," Dizard writes, "the Chicago experience should be read more as a cautionary tale than as a model. The plain truth is that people resented being told that the nature they appreciated was bad and that they were ignorant and misguided. The Chicago restorationists came to sound suspiciously like evangelists who knew the one true path and who insisted that anyone rejecting that path was an enemy of the earth."

To avoid these unproductive situations, we might subscribe to Norton's model of environmental valuation and policy argument, which focuses not on a defense of specific environmental commitments but rather on "democratic procedures designed to achieve a reasonable balance among multiple, competing human values derived from, and attributed to, nature." This embrace of a democratic politics in environmental valuation and goal setting finds support in Stokowski's discussion of deliberative approaches in community planning and development, and also in Manning's paper, which concludes that "it may not be productive to advocate any particular environmental value or ethic as a universal principle to be applied across a spectrum of people, places, or environmental problems." Instead, Manning writes, "environmental problem-solving must be inclusive and democratic, not peremptory."

Conservation as Process

If our symposium is any indication, the conservation tradition is in very good hands during this deconstructivist moment of conceptual upheaval and skepticism in environmental thought. This does not mean, however, that our authors are at all complacent about the challenges presented by such criticisms. If the percussive force of the deconstructivist critique has not completely razed the foundations of conservation, it has certainly prompted many observers, including our writers, to reconsider the continuing appropriateness of the tradition for guiding our understandings of human-environment relationships and for shaping our practices on the landscape. But the message that emerges from these reconsiderations of conservation is, we believe, a hopeful one. For even if we agree that the deconstructivists have at times shown the environmentalist emperor to have no clothes (or at least to have a few holes in his socks), the emerging consensus of our symposium suggests that this by no means warrants a slippery, "anything goes" relativism toward the natural world; it certainly does not imply a self-defeating nihilism about our conservation goals and commitments. Rather, we believe our contributors have demonstrated that a properly reconstructed conservation, one that is *pluralistic* in its value dimensions, *community-oriented* in its goals and methods, *pragmatic* in its focus on conservation coalition-building and its acceptance of sociophysical change and human fallibility, and *inclusive* in its policy agenda and intellectual temperament, possesses the moral and political resources—and the conceptual robustness—to lead citizens and professionals onto healthier and more sustainable development paths in the coming decades.

In many respects, then, our symposium

sium may be read as attempts to cope with the increasing democratization of conservation thought and practice. From their rejection of privileged meanings, histories, and values regarding nature to their acceptance of multiple ways of knowing and prizing the landscape, from their elevation of citizens vis-à-vis experts in the responsibilities of conservation stewardship to the celebration of local community and grassroots action in environmental protection, our authors have provided many of the moral and empirical commitments of a more seriously democratic conservationism, one that draws its justification from the many converging arguments of a wide range of environmental fields, scholarly and

professional. In this, they are advancing not only the main tenets of a new view of conservation, but also some of the substantive content of a new generation's democratic values and commitments. It is our hope that this larger message—the faith in the capacity of citizens to respond intelligently and effectively to the evolving conservation challenge, and the accompanying judgment that this civic action is a critical part of a responsible conservationism in the 21st century—will continue to resonate from our symposium. In this sense, a reconstructed conservation in this new era will be as much process—open, inclusive, democratic, adaptive—as philosophy, policy, or product.

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Ben A. Minteer, School of Life Sciences, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85287; ben.minteer@asu.edu

Robert E. Manning, School of Natural Resources, 356 Aiken Center, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont 05405; Robert.Manning@uvm.edu

