

**Remarks as Prepared for Delivery
for the Honorable Lynn Scarlett
Garden Club
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Aldo Leopold, the visionary 20th century conservationist, eloquently imagined a Nation of citizen stewards. Environmental progress, he urged, ultimately resides in the efforts of all of us to apply a caring hand to the landscape. It resides in our own actions in our backyards, at our places of work, on our farms and ranches, and in our communities.

Yet, over 30 years ago, on the first Earth Day, many who yearned for environmental progress turned toward Washington, D.C. to fulfill their environmental aspirations.

Earth Day was a wake up call—an appeal to Americans that all was not well with our air, our water, and our lands. The wake up call of that first Earth Day led to an unfurling of the Nation’s banner environmental statutes. Over the next several years, we saw Congress enact the:

- Clean Air Act
- Clean Water Act
- National Environmental Policy Act
- Safe Drinking Water Act
- Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
- Endangered Species Act, and
- Many more.

Much effort and environmental focus turned to these Federal regulatory tools. Those aspiring for a better environmental future pinned their hopes on the regulatory foundations set forth in these tools. Their implementation became a proxy for measuring environmental progress. And, indeed, some environmental successes did result.

These regulations have helped us achieve environmental progress—the air is cleaner, waters no longer catch fire as pollutants ignite, the bald eagle once again soars across America.

But building our environmental futures from this regulatory foundation also generated high conflict, high unintended consequences, and sometimes high costs. This foundation created an adversarial context destined to put some on the offensive and others in a defensive posture. The top-down prescriptions from Washington often meant higher costs for achieving goals than might have been possible through engaging the innovative spirit of environmental entrepreneurs on farms and in factories.

Over the past 30 years what went largely unnoticed as many pinned their environmental hopes on regulatory actions from Washington was the upwelling of citizen stewards across America. Step by step, slowly but surely, Aldo Leopold's dream of a Nation of citizen stewards began to emerge. Individuals, alone and together, on farms and in factories, in backyards and in neighborhoods, began to restore riparian habitat, replant native grasses, or innovate to prevent pollution. These citizen stewards began applying healing hands to the landscape.

Consider, for example, wetlands. Our wetlands regulations result in a net protection of about 20,000 acres of wetlands each year. By contrast, through citizen stewardship, we protect over 100,000 acres each year. If we count the restoration, creation, and maintenance of wetlands on our wildlife refuges, that figure jumps to nearly 2 million acres each year. The big action lies in these quiet, on-the-ground protections that occur through partnerships and cooperative environmental investments. Yet the laser beam of public scrutiny has centered on regulatory action as the test of success.

At the dawn of this 21st Century, Aldo Leopold's dream of a Nation of citizen stewards is gathering momentum and holds infinite possibilities.

At Interior, we are seeking to nurture these possibilities.

Join me, for a few moments, on a virtual tour—a tour that will bring into view conservation entrepreneurs in action.

Let us start in New England, at the Ducktrap River in Maine. The river is one of 8 rivers with Atlantic salmon still present. It cuts through many jurisdictions and across many plots of private land. It traverses woods used by hunters, recreationists, and hikers. Along its course lies an occasional gravel pit. In places, the river's waters and banks are muddied by erosion.

Those yearning to conserve the many values of this river faced—as we so often do—complex challenges.

- How could they restore and maintain habitat?
- How could they stitch together so many pieces of landscape quilt?
- How could they protect salmon while maintaining thriving communities and the enjoyment and use of the river?

The community responded to these challenges by creating the Ducktrap Coalition, a coalition of 26 partners, including conservationists, farmers, a local snowmobile association, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and many others. The Coalition began unpacking problems into bite-size chunks. They applied new technologies to mitigate erosion. They rehabilitated gravel pits, transforming them into vernal pools. They created an education partnership with the snowmobile association to maintain recreation opportunities on trails least subject to environmental impacts. They used conservation easements to achieve enduring protections.

This partnership is bringing miles of restoration to the river. It has generated permanent protections of lands and waters, blended with continued community use. It has generated data and monitoring by volunteers, recognizing that the true test of conservation resides in the results achieved and sustained.

Now let us head south to Pennsylvania and a place outside of Pittsburgh called Buffalo Creek. There, dozens of farmers are fencing off over 100 miles of streams and riparian areas. They are planting native warm spring grasses. They are installing owl boxes, wood duck boxes, and even bat boxes.

Their achievements are palpable. Stream monitoring shows dramatic reductions of bacteria in water—a 1,000-fold reduction in the bacteria count. Stream banks now display dense shrubs and brush, bringing habitat for birds and shade cover for fish.

Buffalo Creek manifests another outcome: it is inspiring many to become citizen stewards. Farmers engage eagerly in conservation as partners and participants. Contrast this engagement to the response if, instead, we had extended a regulatory “stick” to require the stream fencing or grass planting.

The “stick” so often triggers a “hunkering down” and “door closing”—a “no, thank you,” to the Fish and Wildlife Service or other federal agency. The appeal for partnerships inspires, instead, citizens to engage in stewardship.

Now head west with me to Muddy Creek, Wyoming. The watershed of Muddy Creek encompasses an area of 500,000 acres—one quarter the size of Yellowstone—with a mixture of federal, state, local, and private landowners. Like the Ducktrap River in the east, erosion along stream banks and sedimentation undermine water quality in Muddy Creek. Invasive species jeopardize grasslands. It is also a place in which deep conflict had surfaced between environmental activists and ranchers, between miners and conservationists, between town and country.

Through the leadership of a few environmental entrepreneurs, a Coordinated Resource Management Plan has brought together 35 partners. Together, they are installing solar tensile fencing to protect areas from cattle and improve opportunities for rotation grazing. They have constructed spring-fed tire tanks to water cattle off stream. They have undertaken prescribed burning to remove invasive plants. They are reintroducing trout and improving habitat for other wildlife.

Let us end our virtual journey next door in Montana at the Stillwater Mine. There, a palladium mining operation worked with the community to craft a performance plan—a Good Neighbor Policy. The policy sets forth mining practices that move beyond regulatory requirements to reach for environmental excellence. The plan involves sharing of information, including the provision of funds to the community to monitor results.

These partnerships are all emblematic of what Secretary Norton calls the 4 C's—conservation through cooperation, communication, and consultation. These landscapes share several common themes. All involve partnerships; all involve shared experiences and communities working together across property boundaries, across interests, and across multiple challenges.

All of these partnerships also blend together the achievement of environmental results, thriving communities, and dynamic economies. They combine a mosaic of goals and values, bringing into play the many goals that enhance quality of life. They are achieving conservation goals, maintaining recreation opportunities, preserving cultures and community histories, and building thriving communities.

What we have underway with these—and other—experiences in cooperative conservation is an institutional discovery process. Underway in these efforts is a spontaneous search for answers to four institutional questions that have been dormant or side-stepped as our environmental focus has, instead, put so much hope in regulatory action by Washington's lawmakers and administrators.

First, how can we better foster innovation?

Consider Muddy Creek. There, an open-ended planning process gives rise to innovation and a constant search for solutions tailored to locale such as solar tensile fencing or off-spring tire tanks for cattle watering.

Second, how can we better tap local ideas and information so that chosen actions take into account the local knowledge of situation. Pulitzer prize-winning poet Wallace Stevens wrote that: “Perhaps real truth depends on a walk around the lake.” Citizen stewards have taken a “walk around the lake” metaphorically and, often, literally. They have walked this metaphoric and real lake in winter and summer; during floods and drought; in the day and at night.

Through this closeness to the land, these stewards have gained knowledge of time, place, and situation—the devilish details that make one location different from another and put boundaries on what’s doable. Citizen stewards have gained the sort of “on the ground, in the dirt, by the shore, everyday, nose-to-the-grindstone knowledge” that makes a difference in land management decisions. This familiarity of place gives rise to ideas for achieving environmental progress tailored to situation.

I remember a poignant example of this “local knowledge of place.” The El Dorado Refinery in Kansas faced a water treatment challenge. Regulators proposed that they invest millions of dollars in a new mechanical treatment facility. A biologist within the company, possessed of both the local knowledge of circumstance and his general expertise as a biologist, had an idea: why not build wetlands to purify the wastewater? Why not, he suggested, use Nature’s Capital rather than the prescribed mechanical treatment? Building on this insight, the company constructed wetlands that now provide a home for some 200 species, achieve purer water, and do so at costs a fraction of what the mechanical treatment facility would have required.

A third question lies behind this institutional discovery process: How can we inspire folks to join hands as citizen stewards? Incentives and inspiration—not threats of regulatory punishment—lie at the heart of Aldo Leopold’s vision of citizen stewards.

In Arizona, along the Mexican border, a number of ranchers participate in the Malpai Borderland Group, which has created grassbanks that link conservation to enhanced ranching opportunities. Within the grassbank, grasslands flourish to provide prairie habitat for dozens of critters and plants. Yet the grassbank is also akin to an insurance policy: during times of drought or fire, participants can move their cows, temporarily, onto the

grassbank to assure their survival. This linkage of conservation with economic benefits is a natural lure for ranchers to participate.

There is a fourth question behind the institutional discovery process under way in the form of conservation partnerships: How can we generate more integrated, less piecemeal decisions?

The environmentalism of the past three decades, centered on a suite of issue-specific statutes, has, often, generated piecemeal decisions. Protection plans unfold for one species at a time; or air pollution plans take shape in isolation from plans to mitigate water pollution. The list of segregated and isolated decisions is long and pervasive.

Consider, by contrast, the Ducktrap River Coalition, where partners are putting all the pieces together in a set of coordinated landscape decisions.

Out of this institutional discovery process centered on cooperative conservation is emerging what President Bush has called a new environmentalism. With this new environmentalism come new challenges.

Before I turn to these challenges, I offer a caveat—a caveat about complexity. Recently, I read a wonderful novel, “Ahab’s Wife.” In it, the heroine reflects, “would that words were like music so we could play many strands at once.”

As I have painted this picture of a new environmentalism built upon partnerships and cooperation, no doubt many are thinking: “but, but, but...what about regulations, what about those who don’t play by the rules, what about the need to hold folks accountable for pollution?”

You are right to hold these doubts and concerns. Cooperative conservation must, of course, be part of suite of environmental tools. We do need some regulations as a “backstop”. At issue, however, is whether we lead with the “stick” or lead with cooperation and encouragement. At issue is the matter of emphasis, trend, and opportunity.

The old environmentalism of the past 30 years turned attention to Washington as the font of solutions. That old environmentalism had four characteristics—what might be called the 4 P’s. It used tools that emphasized punishment as the primary force to motivate environmental protection. It relied on prescription—a sort of “Washington knows best” perspective. It focused on process, with a “have a permit, pass go” test of environmental success. And it generated piecemeal decisions: one species at a time; air problems handled separately from water; and so on.

As we move forward in this 21st Century, it is time to turn the page to a new environmentalism that inspires a nation of citizen stewards. There is much untapped opportunity in partnerships and cooperation.

With these opportunities come three challenges.

First, if cooperative conservation is to succeed, build trust, and endure, we need better metrics for assessing success. Cooperative conservation is about achieving on-the-ground results—and that means we need to assess those results, not through the proxy of permits but through monitoring of outcomes.

Second, we need to invigorate the art of mediation. We need to cast aside habits of debate and rediscover the art of conversation. We need to find points of convergence amid contexts of conflict.

And, finally, we need new methods of governance—tools to help partnerships last. We need more interagency compacts like that now being used among federal, state, and nonprofit organizations in La Sonoita Partnership Plan in Arizona. We need to fulfill the real potential of the National Environmental Policy Act to generate meaningful participation in decisions and assist in building consensus management options for public lands and public projects. We need tools within the Endangered Species Act that inspire private stewards to protect species.

At Interior under the leadership of Secretary Norton, we are trying to advance a vision of citizen stewards. Our budget reflects that commitment. We have proposed, in 2004, over a half billion dollars for cooperative grant programs. And, across the administration, the President's budget includes over \$30 billion for environmental investments.

We are participating in an interagency effort to develop better environmental indicators, indicators necessary as the foundation for cooperative conservation with a focus on results.

Our regulatory vision centers on tools that inspire action through incentives. The President's Clear Skies legislative proposal builds on incentive-based tools of the 1990 Clean Air Act to achieve an anticipated reduction of 35 million tons in air emissions.

And we are encouraging environmental innovation—both institutional innovations like grassbanks and conservation easements as well as technological innovations in alternative energies, clean cars, and the infinity of other opportunities for lightening our environmental footprint through new ideas and practices.

Thirty years after the first Earth Day, it is time to broaden our vision and acknowledge that environmental success resides in on-the-ground results. Recently, I attended a conference at which a fellow participant said: "The test of commitment to an environmental ethic is how much punishment one is willing to mete out." I think that perspective is rather sad—it dwells on the darker side of human nature. It is time for a more aspirational vision centered on cooperative conservation. With such a vision, we can fulfill Aldo Leopold's vision, achieving a Nation of environmental stewards.