

NEWS RELEASE



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TRANSFORMATIVE NEW ERA OF LAND CONSERVATION IS UNDERWAY

New report documents enormous groundswell of people working together across communities and regions to save our imperiled natural and cultural landscapes

Boston, MA. — A national network of conservation organizations, landowners, community leaders, academics, and more have released a new report that is both a call to action to conserve our irreplaceable natural and cultural landscapes, and a celebration of how a transformative approach to conservation is gearing up to do just that.

“Conservation in America is changing,” said Julie Regan, Co-Chair of the [Network for Landscape Conservation](#) and Deputy Director of the [Tahoe Regional Planning Agency](#) in California/Nevada. “Land protection is no longer a top-down process, or just about national parks and other protected areas. Today, it’s about people in communities across the country working together to protect and connect our lands—from our cities to our wildest areas—because there are so many ecological, cultural, public health, and economic benefits intertwined on the landscapes we call home. We have entered an exciting era of epic collaboration.”

Network Co-Chair, Ernest Cook, Principal of Land/Water Associates in New England stated: “We know today that ‘nature versus people’ is a false dichotomy. We depend on our natural landscapes for clean air and water, climate resilience and mitigation, public health, recreation, food, fiber, jobs, overall community vitality, and sense of place. People across the country and continent are rising up and banding together to conserve these imperiled landscapes while we still have the chance. The potential for collective impact is extraordinary.”

The report, [Pathways Forward: Progress and Priorities in Landscape Conservation](#), captures the insights of 200 conservation leaders from the U.S., Canada, and Mexico who convened for two days last November in Shepherdstown, WV to strategize on the rapidly growing practice of conservation at the landscape scale. The report assesses the state of the field, showcases many innovative examples, and recommends ways to further advance this dynamic conservation approach. Key insights of the report include:

- A community-grounded, horizontal, and highly collaborative approach to conservation is on the rise. This is an enormous change from traditional top-down and narrowly focused approaches. People are increasingly collaborating across sectors and larger geographies, spanning both public and private lands. The report quotes a [2017 Network for Landscape Conservation \(NLC\) survey](#) of 132 landscape conservation initiatives across the country that confirmed the dramatic increase in such efforts over the last two decades:

“Nearly 90% of the initiatives surveyed have been founded since 1990, with 45% founded in the years since 2010. . . . The [survey results] also suggest that we are seeing a fundamental shift in how we approach conservation. . . . 75% of the initiatives surveyed identified as informal collaboratives.”

- Land conservation is no longer about piecemeal or “random acts of conservation.” Individual acts of conservation are being enriched by ecosystem-scale thinking—the scale at which nature and culture function. Escalating habitat loss and climate change is an urgent wake-up call. Recent forest fires, hurricane flooding, and water quality and quantity issues are all reminders that we need to operate at the ecosystem scale. The report outlines how the ability to plan at the necessary larger scale is “exploding” due to new science and planning tools.
- Conservation delivers economic and human health benefits in addition to environmental upsides. The report outlines how tree cover in areas throughout the globe improves water quality and public health as well as how healthy wetlands reduce the impacts of hurricanes and save hundreds of millions of dollars in storm damages.
- Land conservation, restoration, and management are critical for both climate resilience and mitigation. As noted in the report, “the only proven ‘technology’ for large-scale sequestration of greenhouse gases is land. . . .” The report cites a major new study that concludes natural climate solutions can provide up to 37% of the mitigation needed between now and 2030 to keep global temperature rise below 2 degrees and meet the Paris Climate Agreement—30% more than previously estimated.
- People are stepping forward to advance conservation that is more integrated with the many values we care about as a society. The report showcases a number of collaborative efforts across the country where groups are working to sustain local economies, enhance recreation, improve habitat connectivity, conserve cultural heritage, and more. As one conservation leader quoted in the report notes: “To successfully engage whole communities will require us to incorporate both social and cultural goals along with ecological targets into our planning if we are to conserve nature in the face of today’s unprecedented challenges.”
- The power of place: collaborative landscape conservation brings people together around the landscape they call home and their shared vision for its future. This approach is bridging divides, increasing civility in an increasingly fractured world, and dramatically increasing conservation of the natural and cultural landscapes we cannot live without.

According to Network for Landscape Conservation Coordinator, Emily Bateson: “Creating America’s national park system was a significant milestone in land conservation history. As was the growth of the land trust movement starting in the 1980s. Today, we are entering a new transformative era as we increasingly embrace community-grounded and science-informed conservation at the landscape scale. This phenomenon is sweeping across the country, continent, and globe, and represents our best chance to sustain the natural and cultural landscapes that in turn sustain us.”

[READ THE REPORT](#)

About the [Network for Landscape Conservation](#): Founded in 2011, the Network for Landscape Conservation (NLC) connects people to ideas and innovations—and to each other—in order to build a community of practice for the field of conservation at the landscape scale. This broad-based network includes more than 100 organizational partners and 2,000 practitioners, fulfilling a unique purpose as an umbrella network and hub of activity to advance the practice of landscape conservation. The Network is coordinated by a [30-person leadership team](#) in the nonprofit, private, public, academic, and philanthropic sectors in the U.S. and Canada and is fiscally sponsored by the [Center for Large Landscape Conservation](#) in Bozeman, Montana. The Network develops effective tools and strategies and advances best practices and policies to help people safeguard the landscapes that enable people and all of nature to thrive. www.landscapeconservation.org.