



3RD GLOBAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL FORUM ON WILDERNESS 2-3 OCTOBER 2013

Nature Conservation in a Changing World: Transboundary and Public-Private Partnerships for Land and Seascape Approaches to Ecosystem Conservation

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

OVERVIEW

For the third time in the history of the World Wilderness Congress (WWC), a special forum designed for government officials from national agencies, regional authorities, cities, and tribal/Indigenous communities preceded the WWC Gathering (plenary) and Global Forum (working sessions). The two-day Global Intergovernmental Forum on Wilderness (GIFW) was held at the University of Salamanca in Spain on 2-3 October 2013, with a field trip to Tajo-Tejo International Park on the Spain-Portugal border sponsored by the Provincial Government of Extremadura on 7 October 2013. The GIFW was hosted by the Spanish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and the Environment (MAGRAMA) and The WILD Foundation, and co-chaired by the Director-General of Quality & Environmental Assessment & Natural Environment (MAGRAMA), the Associate Chief of the US Forest Service, and the Assistant Director for National Landscape Conservation System & Community Partnerships of the US Bureau of Land Management.¹

The GIFW produced an exchange of knowledge and experiences related to the conservation of wilderness and wild nature and solutions derived through public-private partnerships and transboundary relationships. Facing all participant countries are common challenges of climate change, urban and rural development, legacy disturbances (impacts on the natural environment from past generations), invasive species, predator loss and recovery, and current constraints on financial resources for conservation as well as short-term political cycles impeding long-term planning and implementation of effective conservation measures.

¹ Because of the US government shutdown situation occurring at the time of WILD10, the US co-chairs were unable to participate in the event, although worked hard on the planning. Also, Miguel Aymerich Huyghues-Despointes, Deputy Director for Nature at MAGRAMA stepped in for MAGRAMA Co-Chair Guillermina Yanguas Montero to moderate the sessions of the GIFW in person.



Vance Martin, Co-Chair of WILD10, Alfonso Fernández Mañueco, Mayor of Salamanca (Spain), Miguel Aymerich Huyghues-Despointes, Deputy Director for Nature, MAGRAMA (Spain), and Julie Anton Randall, WILD (delivering message prepared by GIFW Co-Chair Mary Wagner) open the GIFW on 2 October 2013.

Over 60 government and Indigenous leaders and representatives from 17 countries around the world engaged in a combination of plenary presentations and roundtable dialogue. Presenters utilized high-quality visuals and stories of stakeholder engagement to bring their messages to life. Their efforts informed and stimulated lively debate exploring primary factors stressing and causing the decline of wild nature, chances for recovery, and common solutions to conservation challenges. In summary by topic:

CLIMATE CHANGE CONCLUSIONS

Common Challenges – Countries all must endure extreme weather, flooding, drought, and the negative effects on species due to modified ecosystem conditions. Species must adapt, often by moving to habitats where their food sources and accustomed climatic conditions exist. Mountain species are in a particularly perilous situation, as temperatures warm on the mountain tops - usually the coldest spots in the country – and species cannot climb any higher to adapt. Meanwhile in warmer areas, alien invasive species are taking over, crowding out or consuming the local plants and animals.

The public sector is forced to address climate change impacts that are unexpected and expensive, while government budgets are being downsized and financial resources available for mitigation and adaptation are on the decline across most governments. In other words, the ability of government to address climate change impacts is decreasing while the scale of the problem is increasing. The terms of political leaders are short relative to the long-term vision, planning, and investment of financial resources necessary to manage for climate change impacts on wild nature. Sea level rise will take place over 50-100 years, which combined with flooding from storms will cause conditions that must be addressed with foresight and strategic planning extended beyond political terms as well as geographical boundaries.

GIFW Solutions – The GIFW delegates acknowledged that cutting carbon dioxide emissions is essential to reducing climate change impact on wild nature, and without this, it seems only monitoring and documenting the demise of nature are the tasks at hand. However, they recognized three measures within their control:

1. Develop and implement conservation policies and practices focused on generating resilience to climate change effects. Consider the value of connectivity between habitats to allow for climactic adaptation, but also pinpoint the status of individual species and network to protect them.
2. Use modeling and digitalization studies as powerful tools for demonstrating predicted climate change responses under different management scenarios. Encourage policy-makers to visualize the effects of their decisions beyond their terms in office. Take a regional approach, combining the interests of several governments. Include solutions found in measures promoting ecosystem and species resilience, and consider the fact that solutions themselves must be adaptable as conditions change.
3. Convince public constituencies to take climate change seriously by exposing them to documentation of the realities of storm effects and temperature change on wildlife as well as human habitats. As more people move from more natural settings in the countryside to urban environments immersed in a built environment, find ways to connect people with nature. Educate the public that a difference can be made now.

Exemplary Strategies Recommended in Plenary Presentations –

- The Spanish National Climate Change Adaptation Plan (PNACC)
- Iran Tribes – plan for migration of pastoralists from degraded areas.



Salamanca Mayor Alfonso Fernández Mañueco and Monaco Ambassador to Spain Patrick van Klaveren chat with a WILD10 youth delegate and Maria Feduchi, WILD10 Executive Director in La Plaza in Salamanca.

RURAL AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT CONCLUSIONS

Common Challenges – Infrastructure in modern cities is creating boundaries between humans and wild nature, blocking awareness of the human impact on wild nature and the need for conservation. The less privileged in particular lack access to nature. Younger generations are focused on sports as the way to get outside. Also, as development produces a greater built environment in both rural and urban settings, humans become used to artificial conditions of warmth and comfort – and a culture of taking less risk - and lose the aptitude for managing themselves in outdoor conditions.

With the increase of technology and social media, there is a trend away from community identity and associated common thinking, toward individuality. This makes it harder for people to recognize that wild nature is “the commons.”

GIFW Solutions –

1. Capture the power of personal experiences in nature, by offering children in particular direct experiences with plants and animals.
2. Utilize nature films and photos to compel people to understand and appreciate the wild nature that they do not see within their boundaries.
3. Engage the public by educating them about the ecosystem services provided by nature that are essential to meeting their basic needs.
4. Hold public meetings and dialogues among policy-makers in a nature setting (e.g. a forest). Encourage the generation of a community identity tied to nature conservation.

5. Enable the public to envision the consequences of the current path of human society (e.g. unsustainable population growth). Instill generational responsibility, considering Indigenous community viewpoints as tools.

Exemplary Strategies Recommended in Plenary Presentations –

- Ecological corridors to prevent and minimize the impacts of infrastructure (e.g. highways).
- Example from the Netherlands of urban development integrated with the conservation of wetland areas.

LEGACY DISTURBANCES CONCLUSIONS

Common Challenges – Energy development, overhunting, decrease in biodiversity, and the loss of community knowledge regarding ecosystem services are disturbances to the natural environment inherited from previous generations. Indigenous leaders also noted a reduction of tribal lands over generations that has resulted in less access to nature and negative impacts on the nature-associated traditions of Indigenous communities. Renewable energy development is impacting areas previously untouched by development, so species previously safe from development are now impacted.

Governments have sold natural resource rights to foreign entities, resulting in lost biodiversity and ecosystem decline for national citizens.

Indigenous communities are still losing access to local wild nature in violent ways, with governments sometimes involved or not able to control their territories.

In summary, nations have lost much of their “natural patrimony.” This has resulted in a loss of community self-reliance and local ecological knowledge. There is a “shift in baseline syndrome,” where public thinking is caught up in the present condition, and thus this becomes the new baseline by which to measure change – rather than accounting for legacy disturbances to the “natural patrimony.”

GIFW Solutions –

1. Empower the public to understand legacy disturbances in the context of natural patrimony. Use Indigenous knowledge to illustrate how living in harmony with wild nature used to be normal life. Counter shift-in-baseline syndrome.
2. Integrate the concept of natural patrimony – recognizing that wild nature belongs to all citizens (current and future generations included) who thereby have a responsibility to value and protect it.

Exemplary Strategies Recommended in Plenary Presentations –

- Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes (United States), activities linked to wildlife preservation in the Flathead Indian Reservation.
- Yawanawa Tribe (Brazil), maintaining traditions and indigenous way of life based on a deep respect for nature.

- Forest Preserves of Cook County – public-private partnership project (involving Chicago-area leaders representing the health, business, education, and conservation disciplines) with a Next Century Conservation Plan covering the next 100 years.

INVASIVE SPECIES CONCLUSIONS

Common Challenges – Non-native species are invading all countries by a variety of means, often as pets or for horticulture, agriculture or aquaculture (species that escape or are deliberately released into the wild) or in ship ballast water or other forms of indiscriminate release by transportation vehicles. National legislation is generally non-existent or relatively ineffective in addressing the problem of invasive species. Even when proper policies are in place, the costs of eradicating invasives are often so high that implementation is unfeasible. Yet invasive species are consuming native populations quickly and rampantly, and threaten balanced ecosystems, and this situation results in socioeconomic costs.

There is a need to educate the public about why and when invasives need to be eradicated. In some cases, alien species are the “new native,” and are accepted and woven into local community culture. Some species have only a benign impact; others cause major havoc and irreparable damage.

GIFW Solutions –

1. Take proactive, risk management approaches to prevent the introduction of unwanted invasive species. Rather than creating and relying on indexes of species not allowed for import (for which people will readily find a work-around), generate positive lists – of only those species allowed for import.
2. Introduce the concept of liability for the introducers of alien species, the principle of “polluter pays,” to help fund measures to eradicate harmful invasives. Explain reparation for liability (if found guilty) to counter costs-of-eradication arguments.
3. Improve communications by conservationists to the public – the scientific evidence of harm by invasives and demonstrations of effective eradication actions. Engage communities in understanding and participating in eradication.
4. Take into account the established local culture. Understand that in some places where invasives are abundant, they are integrated into the local culture. On the other hand, Indigenous communities may view the overtaking of native species as changing the spiritual connection species have with the land. Sometimes deliberately introduced species result in direct human-wildlife conflict where it did not previously exist.
5. Places where aliens prosper is often damaged ecosystems as opposed to wilderness which can be more resilient to their invasion. Conservation policy focused on protecting intact wild nature from the impact of invasive species is relatively cost-efficient.

PREDATORS

Common Challenges – Loss of predator habitat (both historic and recent) changes both natural predator behavior and ecosystem balance. As predator territories shrink, predators move into human inhabited areas in search of food and shelter. Instead of finding a traditional prey of wild game, predators target livestock, and human-wildlife conflict becomes commonplace – particularly as certain predators (e.g. coyotes) lose their fear of humans. Often the solution has been predator eradication, but results are loss of biodiversity and overabundance of prey species including large herbivores which can destroy ecosystem balance.

One practice is to pay indemnities to livestock breeders whose animals fall prey to a predator (e.g. wolf or bear) that conservationists aim to protect. This gets to be expensive and unsustainable, although it has worked.

Media hype is generally negative concerning predators. Stories encourage the public to fear and blame predators rather than understand and condone their role in the ecosystem.

GIFW Solutions –

Educate the public by equipping media with positive stories of how predators balance the herbivore populations, which have reproduced well beyond historic levels. Wild predators also consume overabundant species considered a health hazard for humans, like rats. Encourage respect for wild nature in the form of allowing predators to exist and thrive.

Support cause-related marketing efforts, where consumers can pay more for products from livestock that are raised with dogs that protect them from predators, for example – in other words, use consumerism to educate and gain support from people in relation to finding solutions to predator conflict with agriculture and ranching and/or the local community generally.



GIFW facilitators Isabel Lorenzo (MAGRAMA), Julie Anton Randall (The WILD Foundation), and Iñigo Araceli Gozalo Delgado (MAGRAMA) meet up at the famous façade above the portico of the Patio de las Escuelas, one of the most famous monuments at the University of Salamanca. [Not pictured: Austin Perez, WILD, also a GIFW facilitator]

SHORT-TERM POLITICAL CYCLES AND REDUCED FUNDING FOR CONSERVATION MEASURES

Common Challenges - Conservation agencies are unable to set and meet long-term goals in the context of relatively short political and funding cycles. Both time and financial resources are too tight to accomplish the measures necessary to address common wild nature conservation challenges of climate change, urban and rural development, legacy disturbances, invasive species, and predator recovery.

GIFW Solutions –

1. Link wilderness values to other societal priorities like human health, and align with (and gain cooperative funding from) the health care and insurance industries. Identify synergies between wild nature conservation and disaster (e.g. flooding) prevention and mitigation.
2. Shift the focus of policy discussions from costs of short-term conservation practices to benefits from long-term conservation policies.
3. Consider new fundraising mechanisms like payments for ecosystem services and special revenue from taxes on those who directly benefit economically from local wild nature.
4. Forge more transboundary conservation partnerships that can help areas endure the political transitions of one country while the other(s) are steady.
5. Allow for unabated wilderness recovery (nature reclaiming land and water on its own) rather than putting all efforts into major investments in conservation projects. Introduce a predator-prey balance when establishing new herbivore populations.
6. Focus on simple terminology such as “water,” rather than unfamiliar terms like “ecosystem services.”
7. Measure results of conservation policies, engender transparency, and establish clear accountability toward long term goals. Report accomplishments as “returns on investment.”
8. Build upon the best practices of government and Indigenous communities as financial resources are tightened. Rely on the GIFW network for policy ideas and adaptable methodologies.

Exemplary Transboundary and Public-Private Partnership from Plenary:

- Tajo-Tejo International Park (Portugal and Spain)
- Balkan Vulture Action Plan (Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania, Greece, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Ukraine (Crimea), Romania, and Turkey)

- Oulanka-Paanajarvi Transboundary Area – Great Northern European Wilderness Area, EUROPARC (Norway, Finland and Russia)
- North American MOU on Cooperation for Wilderness & Protected Areas Conservation (Canada, United States and Mexico)
- Wulgurukaba People of Australia

WHAT NEXT?

The GIFW will continue to build a network of government representatives started at the 8th WWC in Anchorage, Alaska in 2005. The WILD Foundation will facilitate this network to encourage ongoing sharing, mentoring, and partnering among GIFW participants. A global community of government officials, working collaboratively can help foster the development of more effective tools, methodologies, and policies despite declining public budgets, to address common conservation challenges.



Tajo-Tejo Transboundary Park, which straddles Spain and Portugal, was the site for the field trip for this World Wilderness Congress' government forum.