



THE WILD CITIES™ PROJECT

Modeling a New Urban Relationship with Wild Nature

SUMMARY WORKING CONCEPT – 25 MAY 2013

The **WILD Cities™** Project is generating a new concept of urbanism where nature is highly valued, afforded space, and a conscious part of human life. In preparation for the 10th World Wilderness Congress (WILD10, October 2013 in Salamanca, Spain), The WILD Foundation (www.wild.org) is facilitating a network of urban areas that will develop and utilize a common set of **WILD Cities™** criteria and best practice guidelines related to nature protection as urban areas expand across the globe.

The **WILD Cities™** strategy is to prioritize the existence of wild nature for its role in providing irreplaceable life supporting services to urban dwellers – fresh air, clean water, biodiversity, productivity of local farms and fisheries, resilience to climate change effects, temperature control, and more – and quality of life derived from parks and recreational open space, educational opportunities, cultural and historic preservation, and city revenue and cost savings. **WILD Cities™** integrates Nature Needs Half™, a science-based, practical and aspirational vision of keeping at least 50% of the original ecosystem intact and interconnected in order to ensure the continued production of ecological services. This half can be a mosaic of wild nature in parks, forests, refuges, working lands, and waters managed with nature conservation as a primary value.

NEED FOR WILD CITIES – The world’s human population is growing rapidly and with it the proportion living in cities – for the first time in history, more than half reside in urban areas. In many countries, even more live in urban areas – for example, at least 77% of North Americans. Europe is experiencing significant abandonment of farmland, and the world over, people are leaving rural areas for presumed greater economic and social opportunities in cities. Resulting proliferation of development for industry, business, residence, and transportation is subsuming native forests, grasslands and wetlands, and ecosystem functions are being seriously degraded or lost completely. Most wildlife is shut out or forced to adapt to unnatural conditions as habitat vanishes. Environmental values are de-prioritized when governments and business seek immediate benefits from unsustainable development, striving to simply “keep the economy moving.” In our world, wild nature is becoming an abstraction, often experienced only virtually. This puts nature at great risk.

The growing global movement around the concept of “sustainable cities” – generally focused on energy use, architectural design, and urban food production – is commendable, but something more holistic is needed. WILD advocates for a broader focus on urban how wild nature makes possible the lives and lifestyles of urban dwellers, so they act, socially and financially to protect at least half.



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The watershed can demarcate the boundaries used to consider whether or not “half” is achieved, with “urban wildness”¹ defined as: (1) remnant wilderness (areas that have remained undeveloped); (2) remnants of agrarian, cultural and historic landscapes; (3) “horticulturally-shaped” urban green spaces (e.g. parks, gardens); (4) defunct urban infrastructure upon which wild nature has returned on its own (e.g. abandoned lots) or with human help (e.g. brown to green fields); and (5) protected areas, farms, ranches, forests, and freshwater and marine areas adjacent to cities where nature is predominant.

GOAL & OBJECTIVES – *WILD Cities™* will create a global network of cities, involving diverse professions and intercultural and intergenerational perspectives, which are committed to the principles of Nature Needs Half™. This working body, facilitated by WILD, will formulate common criteria defining a *WILD Cities™* and international guidelines for city planning. It will be capable of generating and sharing replicable models and methodologies, policies, and investments that ensure a place for wild nature while meeting the needs of urban dwellers. It will demonstrate citizen involvement and buy-in to render *WILD City™* measures plausible in policymaking and budget allocations.

WILD Cities™ aims to achieve: (1) continued and expanded ecosystem services to urban areas; (2) quantity and quality wildlife habitat and biodiversity within cities and the watershed; (3) enticing opportunities for recreation, and health and economic benefits from open and green spaces in the city confines and beyond; (4) educational opportunities; and (5) revenue generation (jobs, property values, tourism income) and public cost savings (avoiding environmental remediation and storm recovery) for cities.

Cross-cutting themes of *WILD City™* strategies are: (a) Managing wild landscapes and seascapes – looking at a city in the context of a watershed and introducing the concept of ecological connectivity; (b) Diversifying the constituency for wild nature to increase political and economic support among the diverse ethnic, age and income groups of the urban public; (c) Recognizing climate change impacts and need for building resilience – mitigation of storms, flooding and fires, and adaptation strategies offered by wild nature; (d) Collaborating with government and industry – public-private partnerships that access funding and meet public mandates, and engaging business to “green up” their urban impacts; and (e) Engaging young people – influencing their evolving identities/behaviors via more contact with nature and chances to lead initiatives.

WILD CITIES ACTIVITIES – WILD and partners² will:

1. Establish the *WILD Cities™* Coalition – Analyze characteristics of cities claimed or known to be “sustainable,” and catalog wild nature values by city to develop a matrix tool to foster outreach. Identify initial champions from the cities with an apparent commitment to the initial principles of *WILD Cities™* and engage them in planning for WILD10 and beyond.

2. Build *WILD Cities* Capacity – Design and deliver capacity-building workshops and strategic dialogue utilizing city models as educational tools and government programs (municipal,

¹ The first four defined by urban ecologist and landscape architect, Professor Ingo Kowarik of Berlin, Germany

² Some European cities identified through WILD Cities partnership with Deutsche Umwelthilfe (DUH) and other WILD10 collaborators such as The Wilderness Associazione Italiana (Italy), Wilderness Foundation (UK), Fundación Felix Rodriguez de la Fuente (Spain), World Wildlife Fund (WWF)–Danube and Carpathian (Romania), WWF Netherlands, and BioFrankfurt (Germany).



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state/provincial and national, e.g. US Urban Waters Federal Partnership) as resources. Include: (1) Designing Natural Areas for Delivery of Ecosystem Services – the full spectrum in an urban context; and (2) The Watershed as a Planning Unit for WILD Cities, using the coasts, lakes, rivers, creeks, wetlands and forests that connect cities to less developed areas of the ecosystem as indicators of urban effects on nature in a watershed. Integrate measures specifically targeting poor and underserved communities.

3. Develop and Model Public Outreach Tools – Maintain a web-based tool tied to the *WILD Cities™* matrix to enable urban dwellers to understand how much nature supports their cities, what more is needed, and the value of nature to their lifestyles. Explore and select tools to stimulate and assure stakeholder buy-in, including social media and cultural expressions of *WILD Cities™* values in recreation, exploration, art, dance, music, photography and film, and architecture. Others are: (1) National Geographic GeoStories (<http://www.geostories.org/portal>) platform that embeds place-based multimedia stories in websites and apps; (2) Project Noah (www.projectnoah.org) engaging “citizen scientists” using a purpose-built phone app and web community to collect images of nature; and (3) Connecting Nature Fragmented by Development Infrastructure: The I-70 Wild Byway – a model of a broad, vegetated wildlife bridge across the interstate, demonstrating mitigation of the “wall” effect that hampers biodiversity and weakens ecosystem resilience.

4. Pursue Wilder Aesthetics and Function – Innovations to emulate the patterns and tactics of nature to survive and regenerate, applied to development processes and products, from industry to architecture (e.g. saving materials by redesigning product shape, optimizing versus maximizing use of inputs, using energy efficiently, and generally allowing for adaptation and evolution.

5. Engage Youth & Young Professionals through CoalitionWILD – Foster community projects designed and carried out at the initiative of young people (e.g. stream cleanups, endangered species campaigns) and using social media, showcase student-led conservation success stories sparking new ideas for action.

6. Build upon Government & NGO Initiatives – European³, North American (i.e. NAWPA⁴), and other government agencies around the world that have programs to increase nature in urban areas and connect citizens to protected nature – “marketing” relevance to a demographically changing constituency (greater ethnic, cultural and age diversity). Pursue “WILD City™” criteria adoption by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and international, national and municipal organizations and agencies.

ABOUT WILD10 – The World Wilderness Congress (WWC), the longest-running international, public environmental program (since 1977), takes a strategic, multi-faceted approach to conservation, as organized by WILD with partners around the world. A collaborative process evolves projects that form the WWC core, complimented by events, extensive media coverage, launch of public and private

³ WILD10 partnerships are engaging all levels of government in the European Union (national, regional, municipal).

⁴ North American Committee on Cooperation for Wilderness & Protected Areas (NAWPA) Committee, launched at the 9th World Wilderness Congress by an MOU signed by public land management agencies of Mexico, Canada and the United States. Committee is composed of the heads of CONANP, Parks Canada, US Forest Service, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service. WILD serves as Facilitator (since 2009).



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sector initiatives, and associated gathering at the WWC convention itself. WILD10 (www.wild10.org; <http://vimeo.com/44409177>) will culminate in Salamanca, Spain, October 4-10, 2013, hosted by the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Environment, with WILD10 Honorary President, Her Majesty Queen Sofia of Spain. *WILD Cities™* results will reach a global delegate (1,500+ in person and 10,000 on-line), media, and public audience – that are shared by joining notable leaders of nations, indigenous peoples, NGOs and business on the WILD10 plenary platform. The Global Intergovernmental Forum on Wilderness (2-3 October) can involve municipal government officials.

GET INVOLVED! – WILD is planning each WILD Cities capacity-building workshop and associated strategic policy roundtable with the involvement, funding and in-kind support from a variety of partners, and also seeks “investors” in the WILD10 Delegate Scholarships Fund for Equity & Diversity to bring delegates to WILD10.



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