

A New Vision for Watershed Management

Or
The Conservation Journey

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The Conservation Journey

"WHEN WE SEE LAND
AS A COMMUNITY
TO WHICH WE BELONG,
WE MAY BEGIN TO USE IT
WITH LOVE AND RESPECT"

ALDO LEOPOLD
1887 - 1948

Seeking harmony between
the land and people.

The Conservation Journey

In a Context of:
Globalization, Information Age, Climate Change,
Recession, Market Volatility, Political Polarization



Stuck in a Rut

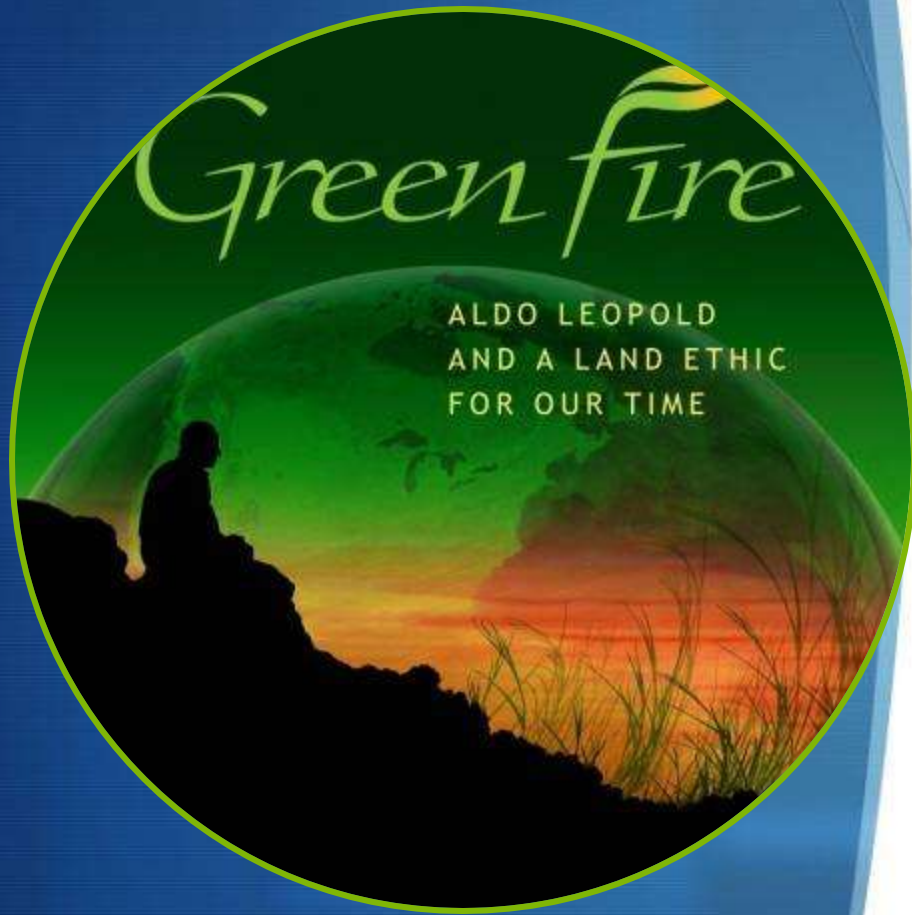
- ◆ There is no uniform or standardized pathway to conservation
- ◆ There is no fast and easy conservation journey
- ◆ More dollars does not mean more conservation



My Thesis



- ◆ Over-invested in cost-share payments & administrative structures
- ◆ Under-invested in quantity and support for local conservation professionals

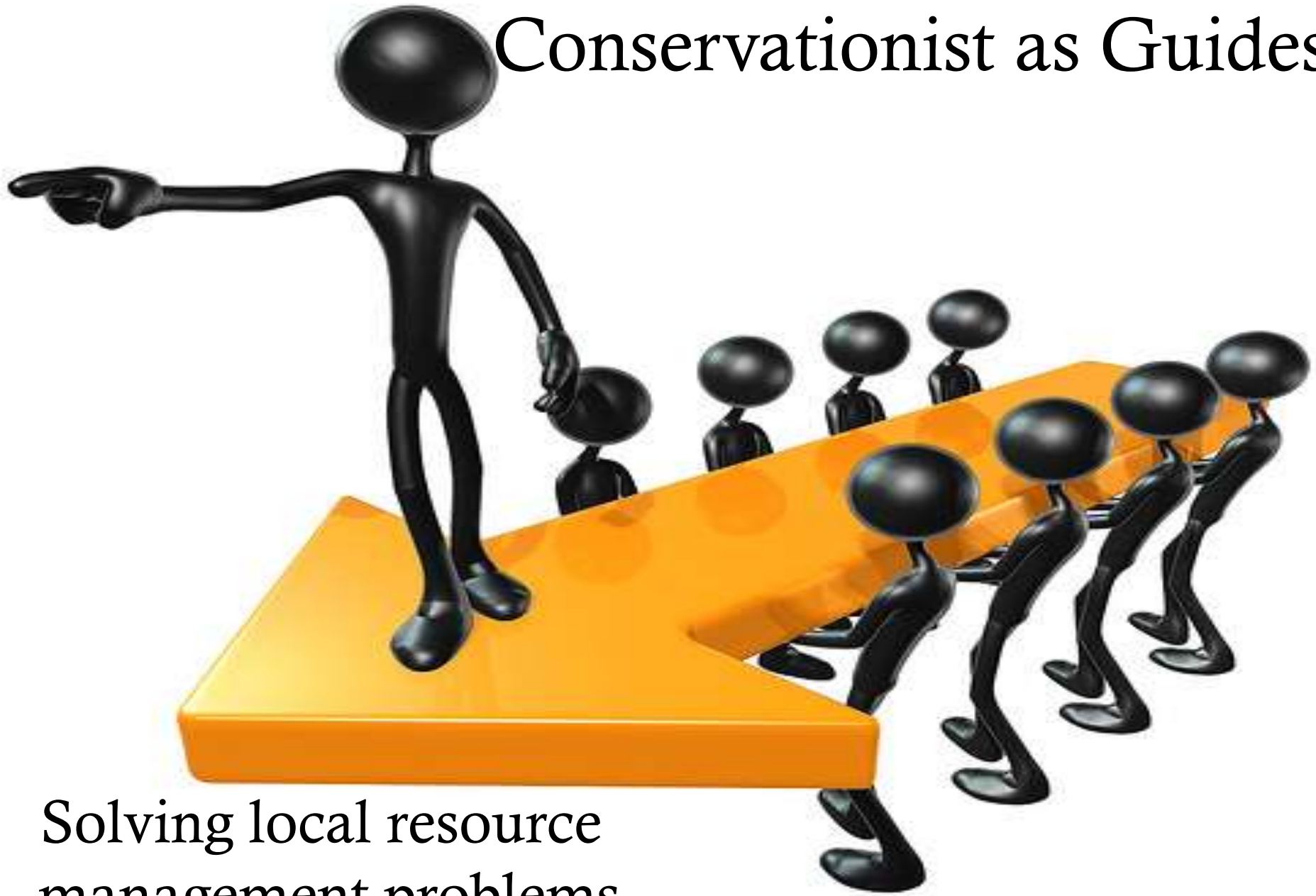


“ ... the important thing is not to achieve, but to strive.”

Getting Out of the Rut

- ◆ “I firmly believe that seeking this state of harmony with the land must be driven by imagination, creativity, innovation, and, dare I say, even a sense of adventure.”

Conservationist as Guides



Solving local resource
management problems

Conservationists as Guides

- ◆ Success based on experience, training, imagination and creativity.
- ◆ Diversity in landscapes and people challenge any standardized approach.
- ◆ We need a large cadre of conservation guides.

Conservation and Education

Education

- ◆ Years to assess success
- ◆ Budgets & parents can be barriers
- ◆ Mandated activities

Conservation

- ◆ Years to assess success
- ◆ Desk jockeys
- ◆ Tenant farmers

Conservation and Education Reward Systems

Education

- Local school boards
- Bureaucratic responsibilities
- Student test scores

Conservation

- Local authorities
- Bureaucratic responsibilities
- National/state programs

Conservationist as Guide



- ◆ Earn title as conservationist
- ◆ Giving landuser knowledge, skills to practice conservation
- ◆ Participating in formal conservation program does not advance conservation journey for landuser

An Adventurous Idea

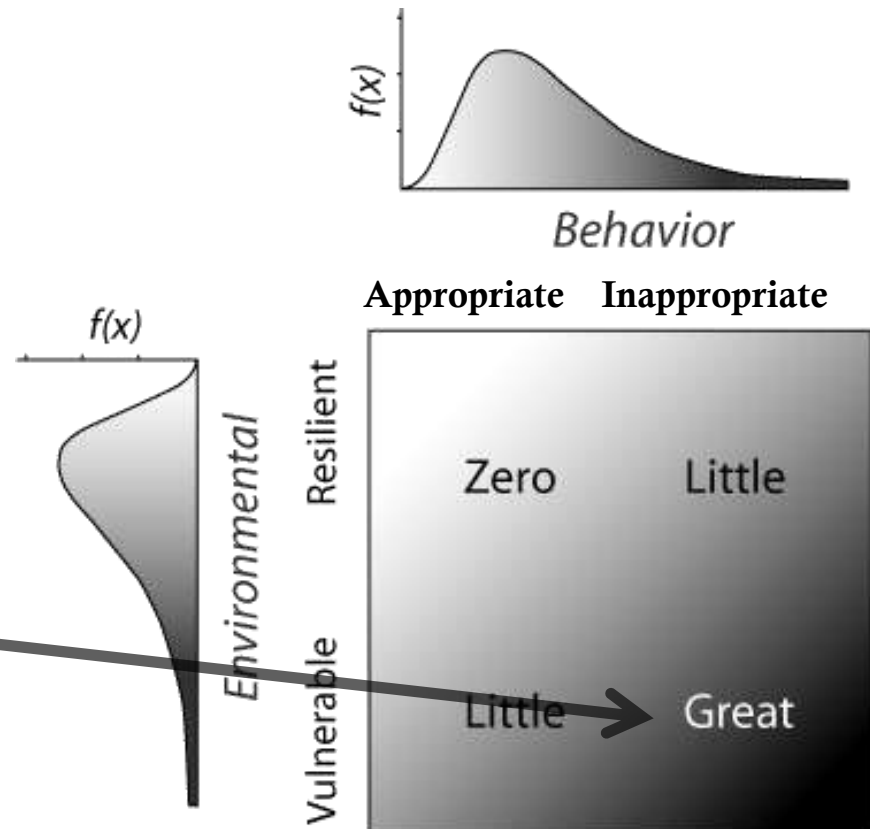
A photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, a dirt path runs through a field of green corn plants. To the left, there is a field of green grass. In the background, several tall, cylindrical farm silos are visible against a blue sky with light clouds. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

- Why not reward local conservation guides for empowering local land owners and managers to solve local resource management problems?

Disproportionality

A small proportion of all human behaviors account for a large proportion of environmental degradation.

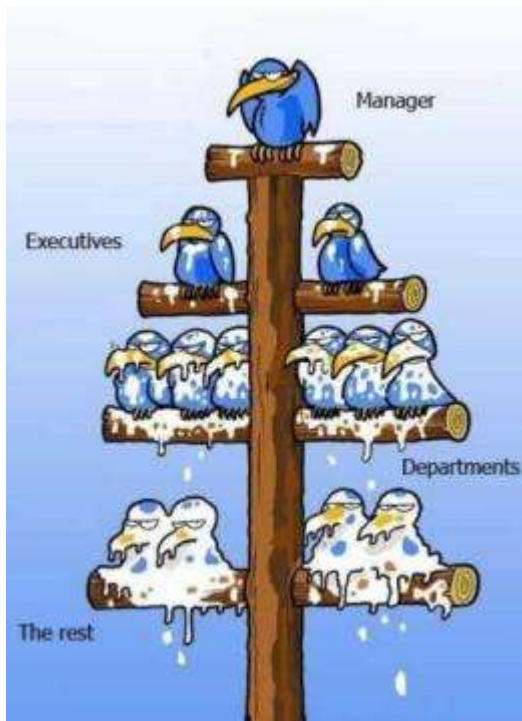
Inappropriate management actions in vulnerable places or times cause of majority of our agricultural NPS problems.



Challenges in Reward Systems

- ◆ We need to reward conservation guides for working with the ‘right’ landusers.
- ◆ Think of the debate regarding our educational systems ... why not conservation?
- ◆ There is a need to explore alternatives to top-down, paternalistic approaches.

Conservation Collaboration



Time for a transition



thinking



Conservation Collaboration

- ◆ Reward guides who build collaborative relations with those with greatest problems.
- ◆ Collaborating partners need to reach an agreement on what constitutes acceptable behavior by each party.

Customer versus Collaborator



- 🟢 Customers make transactions: collaborators help solve problems.
- 🟢 Farmers are professional problem-solvers.
- 🟢 Modern technology has become an end in itself rather than a means to an end.

Conservation Collaboration



- ◆ A guide who is rewarded for being curious, and has the ability to listen.
- ◆ Solutions are created based on the capability of the land user and local support systems.
- ◆ Solving local resource management issues and not managing programs becomes the mission of the conservation guide.

The Conservation Off Ramp

- ◆ There is a need to explore and experiment other approaches to conservation.
- ◆ We need a system where local conservation efforts are guided by imagination, creativity and innovation.

Orthodoxy Hinders the Conservation Journey

- “White-horse” environmentalists
- Panglossian bureaucrats
- Use imagery of family farm to advance cause
- Rejection of any form of conservation regulation

The Conservation Journey

- ◆ Practicing conservationists working with local landusers will develop the science of land health.
- ◆ Imagination, creativity and innovation must be pursued and rewarded.
- ◆ Conservation, like land, is not a commodity.

The Conservation Journey

- The retail market may not be the best model for designing conservation programs
- More emphasis on educational innovation guided by the science and art of conservation
- Let us exit the super highway and begin thousands of conservation journeys.

A surreal landscape featuring a large, green, textured planet or moon in the sky on the left. A dirt road with two tracks curves through a vast field of green and yellow plants towards the horizon. The sky is a mix of blue and green with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is dreamlike and vibrant.

Thank You

