



# The Quivira Coalition

*Education, Innovation, Restoration... One Acre at a Time*

## Collaboration in Our Backyard: Lessons from Community-Based Collaboration in the West

By Whitney Tilt, Sonoran Institute

The West has a rich history of fighting over its natural resources with timber harvest rates, water allocations, range stocking levels, and other use-related issues becoming flash points. In the beginning, loggers, miners, and ranchers traditionally controlled the allocation decisions. In the last 30 years, however, other advocates have enjoyed a greater and greater say in how grass, wood, and water are managed. Flush with a feeling of empowerment or stung with a sense of lost opportunity, these factions have proven time and time again their commitment to fight, rather than settle, with lobbying trips to Washington DC or capturing media attention by brandishing shovels or chaining themselves to trees.

To many observers, the lasting legacy of three decades of skirmishes over management of natural resources is stalemate characterized by mostly procedural battles, lawsuits that are seldom decided on the merits of the case, and the zero-sum game of lobbying (Chrislip 2000, Snow 2001). Simply put, victory in the natural resource arena has become increasingly

difficult to declare. Lost in this swirl of heat and smoke is a sense of community and the associated principle of stewardship.

Settlers to the West faced many hardships. While nature's challenges were met with individual hard work and personal courage, most settlers

discovered long-term tenure on the land required a little assistance from one's neighbors. Ranchers helped each other round up cattle off the open range, and farmers helped neighboring farmers harvest wheat before the Mormon crickets did.

Over time, this 'neighboring' evolved into social custom (Decker 2001). In recent years, with a growing population of people "from away," the cohesiveness once represented by 'neighboring' has fractured against a growing population, native and newly minted Westerners alike, who believe that they don't need, nor are they indebted to, the larger community.

Robert Putnam (2000) warns that the nation's stock of social capital (the fabric of our connection with each other) has plummeted, impoverishing both communities and their citizens. Coupled with federally mandated reforms on the western landscape, this loss of social capital has led to a growing sense that stewardship of the land is someone else's responsibility.

*This is the second in our series "Reaching Across Fences" – which examines the challenges and opportunities of cooperative management in the West. In this issue we examine the environmental benefits of collaboration. Over the past decade or so, there has been a rapid proliferation of collaborative efforts around the region. What have they achieved?*



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# The View From Here

It wasn't collaboration, but I took it as a sign of progress nonetheless.

As some of you might have read in Range magazine recently, last fall I accepted an invitation to speak at the annual RangeNet Conference, hosted this year by Forest Guardians. The purpose of RangeNet is to convene various activists and organizations working to end public lands ranching.

They wanted me to debate George Wuerthner, author of "Welfare Ranching." I declined at first, telling them that I considered "the debate to be over." I proposed a presentation instead. Mr. Wuerthner could follow.

They agreed, so I wrote a new talk, entitled "The Four Reasons Why We're Looking at the Grazing Debate in the Rear-View Mirror." It included a long photo essay on various types of grazed landscapes – some healthy, some not – including a shot of overgrazing by bison.

To my surprise, as a way of rebuttal Mr. Wuerthner asked to use my slide show. He literally went through it again, slide by slide, arguing for the elimination of cattle grazing. It was an odd feeling, to say the least.

My second surprise came when he began to agree with some of my arguments. "If you believe cattle should be on public land, then a lot of what Courtney is telling you is right," he said. "But we don't believe there should be ANY cattle on our land!" Big applause.

My third surprise was how civilly everyone behaved. The organizers allowed The Quivira Coalition to have a table in the back of the room all day– manned by Sheryl, and our intrepid volunteers Tarry Pesole and Priscilla Stollenwerk. People were polite. Of the 75 attendees (not 150 as reported in Range), quite a few shook my hand. A few others, like Jon Marvel, grumbled audibly – but that's ok.

I took that as a sign of progress too.

*Courtney*

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# Profile in Good Stewardship: Environmental Defense

Why would a national environmental organization, a charter member of The Green Group, based in Washington, D.C., with 300,000 members, a staff of 250, and a storied history of successful litigation, turn to collaboration to achieve its goals?

Because it works.

For an organization that pioneered the lawsuit as a tool of environmental protection, the metamorphosis of Environmental Defense (ED) into a charter member of the collaborative movement is both remarkable and illustrative of the changing times.

“For many years our unofficial motto was ‘Sue the Bastards,’” said Michael Bean, a lawyer and chair of the Wildlife Program for ED. “Today our official motto is ‘Finding the Ways that Work.’ It reflects an increasing pragmatism within the organization.”

In the mid-1960s, a group of scientists concerned over the use of DDT on Long Island, NY, decided on a novel strategy to combat environmental degradation: they hired a lawyer. They lost the battle, but won the war: in 1972 the federal government banned DDT in the United States (though it is still widely used across the globe).

Emboldened, they formed ED and set out to demonstrate the utility of the lawsuit in achieving environmental protection. They were highly successful. Today, some would argue, lawsuits are THE tool of choice for environmental activists.

But not for ED anymore.

“The lawsuit is a great hammer if every problem is a nail,” said Bean. “However, we’ve come to realize that lasting solutions to environmental problems require a different approach. A lawsuit, for example, isn’t very useful for fixing global climate change. To do that you need to work cooperatively with people.”

This change within ED came as a result of another innovation: adding economists

(Ray Ng)



Tim Sullivan and Vickie Patton.

to their teams of scientists and lawyers. A conservation strategy based on positive economic incentives – as well as removing disincentives for landowners – began to take shape as an alternative to confrontation.

“It caused a significant cultural change within the organization,” said Bean.

ED hasn’t laid down the tool of litigation entirely, preferring to use it for specific purposes, such as cleaning up dirty air. But far more frequently, it employs the tool of collaboration – and for good reason: it gets results.

## Safe Harbor

Although Environmental Defense works across the spectrum of conservation, one of its longstanding concerns has been the protection and recovery of endangered species. Unlike many other national organizations, however, ED chose to focus its efforts on private land – where, in fact, the fate of many species hangs in the balance.

But working on private land in America meant devising new conservation strategies, or else risk running into the buzzsaw of private property rights. Pragmatically,

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# Environmental Defense

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ED knew early that confrontation wasn't the answer.

In the 1990s, Michael Bean led ED in developing an innovative, voluntary process for the protection of endangered species on private land called Safe Harbor agreements.

(Glen Mills, Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept.)



Northern Aplomado Falcon.

Working with the US Fish & Wildlife Service (not Congress), Bean and others created a legal document by which landowners would be shielded from regulatory action if they undertook voluntary action to assist a species in crisis.

For example, if a baseline wildlife survey determined that, let's say, five acres of suitable habitat occupied by endangered, federally-listed toads on a particular property, then the landowner could enter into a formal agreement with the Fish & Wildlife Service that said if he or she created or restored additional habitat for the toads over time, he or she would NOT be subjected to a corresponding increase in federal regulation.

If the landowner reduced the amount of habitat to less than five acres, however, there might be action. But the point of Safe Harbor is to provide positive incentive for positive action: do the right thing for the toad and you'll be protected.

When Safe Harbor came into existence officially many environmental organizations greeted it with a mixture of skepticism and hostility. Over time, resistance has dwindled – and for a straightforward reason: it works. To date, nearly three hundred landowners have Safe Harbor agreements in place, representing over three MILLION acres of private land. Most of the agreements are in the Southeast and Texas, where a great deal of attention has been focused on the red-cockaded woodpecker and the northern alpomado falcon.

Safe Harbor agreements exist in less than half the states, but more are on the way. They are employed by organizations as diverse as The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, and The Peregrine Fund.

As a new tool of conservation, Safe Harbor demonstrates what can be achieved when the incentives are voluntary, positive, and results-based.

(Andrea M. Teti)



Bog Turtle.

## Back From The Brink

In 2004, Environmental Defense launched another conservation campaign aimed at endangered species and private land. Called

'Back From The Brink,' its goal is to encourage landowners to explore a wide range of incentive-based tools, many of them provided by the federal government through existing programs.

Whereas the Safe Harbor program is opportunistic in a sense, focusing on indi-

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vidual landowners, the 'Brink' campaign focuses on the species themselves – fifteen, to be specific, across the nation (three in the Southwest are the northern alpomado falcon, the Utah prairie dog, and the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher).

ED understands the link between conservation and sustainable agricultural practices. For example, one of the 'Brink' species, the Bog Turtle, which is found in the

we are trying to do with this campaign, make people aware of their options.”

At the same time as ED is trying to steer money into the pockets of good land stewards, it is also trying to bend agricultural policy to meet conservation objectives.

“We’re trying to divert more public money into conservation while lowering the temperature overall on endangered species,” said Sullivan. “That’s why we’ve

## Environmental Defense

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(Ed Schmall)



Participants of a landowner workshop near Ft. Morgan, Colorado on July 26, 2004.

dairy country of the Northeast, benefits from careful grazing by cattle, which keeps the meadows open and relatively free of encroachment by woody vegetation.

“The idea is to reward private landowners for taking on public responsibilities,” said Tim Sullivan, ED’s Rocky Mountain Director. “That means getting ranchers and farmers involved in programs that literally put money in their pocket for activities that benefit endangered species.”

Many of these federal programs, Sullivan noted, are agricultural, such as the Farm Bill, which has a major title called the Conservation Security Program that pays landowners for agricultural practices that restore or maintain wildlife habitat.

“The Farm Bill has huge potential to help farmers and ranchers achieve conservation goals,” said Sullivan, “but many aren’t aware of its benefits. That’s what

made such a big investment in the Farm Bill. We feel it has the potential to have a huge impact on conservation in this country.”

ED may be the only member of the Green Group putting so much emphasis on the Farm Bill and other agricultural programs, though they may not be the only ones for long. They may, in fact, be riding the first wave of an emerging trend.

While ED may not fit the stereotype of a local, community-based, or watershed collaborative group, its support of the collaborative process demonstrates how diverse the collaborative movement has become in a short period of time. And ED’s commitment to cooperative ventures with private landowners also demonstrates the chief attraction of collaboration: It works.



# Restoring Comanche Creek

by Courtney White

One of the criticisms often leveled at collaborative conservation is that it doesn't get 'results'— that it is a 'feel-good' process only, yielding few benefits for the land.

I heard this complaint first-hand two years ago when I spoke about our work to a group of academics who study collaborative conservation professionally. Supportive of the movement generally, they convened to discuss which 'metrics' were most appropriate to quantify the environmental benefits of collaboration. I noted that no one challenged the belief that collaborative conservation must be held to a higher, and more skeptical, standard than those activities conducted by traditional environmental groups.

It was taken for granted that the burden of proof rested with the collaborative

what one did when one worked to heal land.

My list was rather lengthy. Still, I knew the skepticism would persist despite an increasing number of success stories from around the region. The collaborative movement would remain on the defensive, demonstrating, I believed, the stubbornness of an environmental paradigm that considers advocacy and litigation as more 'productive' for land and wildlife.

The meeting of academics ended inconclusively and the question of quantifying the effects of collaboration on the "back forty," which was Aldo Leopold's metric for progress, has been on my mind ever since. I'll try to address it here by looking through the lens of a restoration project we've coordinated in a remote watershed in northern New Mexico.



Panoramic view of Comanche creek looking north from Fernandez creek, October 2001.

(Photos by Tamara Gadzia)

movement to prove the skeptics wrong.

As the group debated competing metrics, I pulled out a pen and made a list of the tangible environmental benefits of our collaborative projects. I didn't pick a metric, I just made a list: dirt moved, roads repaired, willows protected, grass grown. We had been careful to document our work through various monitoring methodologies—not to prove the skeptics wrong. It is just

## A Troubled Creek

Four summers ago, I received a phone call from Dick Neuman, then president of a fly-fishing organization called New Mexico Trout. For years his group had been contributing money and labor toward an effort to restore Comanche Creek, a tributary of the Rio Costilla, located in the western half of the Valle Vidal unit of the

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Carson National Forest.

The reason for their substantial investment of time and money was simple: they wanted to restore Comanche Creek to its former status as a prime cold-water stream for the native Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout – one of only two native trout in New Mexico. As Dick Neuman explained, while there were plenty of ‘Cuts’ in Comanche, the population as a whole was still struggling for survival.

(Frank Weissbarth)



Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout.

Accepting his invitation for a tour, I quickly learned why.

After nearly a century of hard use, a Wall Street corporation donated the 100,000-acre Valle Vidal unit to the Forest Service in 1983 for a substantial tax break. Much of the West’s recent history could be read into the condition of the land at the time of the transfer: massive overgrazing by 6,000 head of cattle (there are 850 permitted today), scars from heavy logging and road-building, and the ‘bleeding’ effects of a historic gold mining district.

After the purchase, a concerted and innovative effort was made on the part of the Forest Service, the grazing permittees, and various fly-fishing organizations to reverse this ‘Old West’ legacy. The grazing association hired a herder, the Forest Service and the trout groups pole-planted willows and cottonwoods along the creek and constructed a mile-long elk enclosure.

While these efforts helped, the creek and its fish population continued to struggle. The pole-planting, for instance, had failed. Dick Neuman called me because he was worried. Cutthroat Trout, he explained, like

cool, clear water with deep pools and overhanging brush – very little of which was in evidence on the creek that day.

He had an additional concern – his group wasn’t the only one worried about the plight of the Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout. A handful of environmental groups threatened to sue the federal government to get the fish listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Dick thought that a legal confrontation would be bad for the trout. He wanted to find another way instead.

(Tamara Gadzia)



Upstream view of the Middle Reach of Comanche creek, October 2001.

### **Pulling Together**

Fortunately, the Surface Water Quality Bureau of the New Mexico Environment Department – and by extension the US Environmental Protection Agency – was also worried about Comanche Creek. Excessive sediment movement, the presence of aluminum, and high water temperatures had landed the stream on the state’s 303d list for impairment – requiring action.

The New Mexico Game and Fish Department was worried too. If the Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout became listed under the ESA then the recovery effort, which they had guided for years, would be handed

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## **Comanche Creek**

*(con’t from page 6)*

**Learn more about those involved with the Comanche Creek Restoration:**

**New Mexico  
Environment  
Department – Surface  
Water Quality Bureau**

[www.nmenv.state.nm.us/  
swqb/index.html](http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swqb/index.html)

**New Mexico  
Department of Game  
and Fish**

[www.wildlife.state.nm.us/  
index.htm](http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/index.htm)

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# Comanche Creek

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**Learn more about those involved with the Comanche Creek Restoration:**

**New Mexico Trout:**  
[www.newmexicotrout.org](http://www.newmexicotrout.org)

**Truchas Chapter of Trout Unlimited:**  
<http://truchas-tu.org>

to the federal government.

This prospect worried the ranchers of the Valle Vidal Grazing Association too. So a dialogue began that resulted in an award from the EPA, under its 319 program (Clean Water Act), for a substantial, multi-year grant to restore a portion of Comanche Creek to health.

Partners included the US Forest Service, the NM Environment Department, NM Game & Fish, Trout Unlimited, NM Trout, the Valle Vidal Grazing Association, the Quivira Coalition, Amigos Bravos, the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps, the Taos Soil and Water Conservation District, and consultants Bill Zeedyk, Steve Carson, and Kirk Gadzia.

The grant identified two principle objectives: to address long-standing water quality concerns in Comanche Creek, and to accelerate the recovery of the watershed as a whole. Not surprisingly, the two are linked.

As part of the 319 application, the partners, now called the Comanche Creek Working Group, agreed to the following process:

- 1) Conduct an assessment in order to identify specific impairments
- 2) Conduct baseline monitoring and mapping
- 3) Identify and implement Best Management Practices
- 4) Conduct an educational program

According to the Working Group, the ul-

timate goal of this project is to improve the condition of the watershed to meet current water quality standards and to restore normal hydrologic function to Comanche and its tributaries. "Completely achieving this goal will likely take decades," they wrote in the grant. Over the next three years, however, we hope to establish the technical and organizational foundation for achieving this goal and to begin some on-the-ground restoration at Comanche Creek to maximize habitat for the Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout."

## What Was Done

Fortunately, there was already in place a strong legacy of restoration work in the watershed. Since the time of the acquisition, for example, the Forest Service recognized the problem of poor roads. Under the leadership of District Ranger Ron Thibedeau, over 350 miles of old logging roads have been closed and 'put to bed.' Additionally, conservation groups, including the Albuquerque Wildlife Federation and the Philmont Boy Scout Ranch, had completed numerous restoration projects over the years.

In fact, if the quantity of collaborative groups involved in a watershed were a metric, Comanche Creek would rank high.

In the summer of 2002, members of the Working Group conducted an assessment of the watershed. Their findings confirmed what long-time observers – Peter

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(Tamara Gadzia)



Bill Zeedyk describes the function of a vane during a Comanche Creek Riparian Restoration Workshop, July 2004.



Wilkinson of the Game and Fish Department and George Long of the Forest Service among others – had suspected.

The watershed suffered from three broad ills:

1) The legacy of historical misuse was evident in raw streambanks and overall poor hydrological function, which contributed to high sediment loads;

2) Poorly designed and maintained roads, including the main road, also contributed significantly to sediment transport; and

3) Spot overgrazing by cattle and elk were prohibiting the growth of shade-creating woody plants, such as willows and cottonwoods.

In other words, the chief causes of impairment to the habitat of the Cutthroat Trout were bad roads, eroding streambanks, and hungry grazers.

After the baseline monitoring and mapping were completed, the Working Group embarked on a three-pronged strategy to address these impairments.

**Bad Roads.** Bill Zeedyk and Steve Carson, with assistance from George Long, conducted an inventory of the roads and prioritized which needed attention first. They paid particular attention to the placement of culverts – a poorly placed culvert can quickly create a headcut uphill and cause erosion downslope.

Noting that society often treats water “as if it were a nuisance rather than a resource,” Bill Zeedyk pointed out how much water was being trapped in roadside ditches, thus starving downslope plants. This water also gathers a great deal of sediment as it picks up speed in long runs downhill. He proposed that many of these roads receive “rolling dips” so that water is allowed to flow again in their “microwatersheds.”

To date, twelve miles of road have been rehabilitated to reduce sediment sources in the upper watershed; some were restored to natural contours, some had rolling dips and waterbars installed. Two culverts were removed and one stream crossing was re-

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# Comanche Creek

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(Tamara Gadzia)



(Steve Carson)



(Tamara Gadzia)



(Tamara Gadzia)



(Tamara Gadzia)

*Upper Left:* La Belle creek headcut, September 2004. *Upper Right:* Springwagon creek headcut, June 2003. *Middle:* Cows grazing the meadows of Springwagon creek drainage, September 2004. *Lower Left:* Uplands baseline monitoring on Valle Vidal creek drainage, October 2001. *Lower Right:* Old culvert along a closed road of Springwagon creek.



# Comanche Creek

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**Learn more about those involved with the Comanche Creek Restoration:**

**The USFS – Carson National Forest**

[www.fs.fed.us/r3/carson/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/carson/)

**Rocky Mountain Youth Corp**

[www.youthcorps.org](http://www.youthcorps.org)

Gold creek road restoration.



2003

(Steve Carson)



2004

(Tamara Gadzia)

habilitated to restore natural floodplain banks and decrease sediment movement.

More road work is scheduled.

**Raw Streambanks.** Under the guidance and tutelage of Bill and Steve, volunteers and Working Group members constructed a total of 102 erosion control structures within the Comanche Creek watershed, including two rock divits, one headcut control structure, 53 one-rock dams, one plunge baffle, one plunge pool, nine rock baffles, two worm ditches, 26 Zuni rock bowls, and six vanes.

The purpose of these structures is to speed up natural recovery processes. Ero-

sion caused by historic overgrazing and logging resulted in the creek cutting down below its traditional flood plain. Over time, the creek began to heal itself by creating a new floodplain —“remeandering” itself to dissipate energy and drop sediment – but there were plenty of old “wounds” that had not healed. The goal of the restoration work was to “goose” the healing process along gently, “using nature to heal nature” as Bill Zeedyk likes to say.

**Hungry Grazers.** Although the cattle were controlled by a range rider, and the

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Installation of a log and fabric headcut structure on Holman creek meadow, September 2003



(Photos by Tamara Gadzia.)

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# Comanche Creek

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(Photos by Tamara Gadzia.)

*Top:* Installation of a vane along the lower reach of Comanche creek, Sept. 2003.

*Bottom:* Upstream view of 3 vanes along an eroding bank of Comanche creek, Sept. 2004.

grazing association employed a very broad rotational grazing system (eight pastures for the Valle Vidal unit), our monitoring showed that cattle-caused “hot spots” still existed in the riparian area. Additionally, a large elk herd grazed the upper watershed all summer.

Elk are very fond of young willows and cottonwood trees.

In the mid-1990s, the Forest Service experimented with a novel idea: create house-sized “mini-exclosures” around existing native willow clumps to protect them from grazing animals. This was in contrast to

the mile-long elk exclosure built in the 1980s on the creek which proved difficult to maintain.

The mini-exclosures were deemed a success. So the Working Group decided to build more. With the energetic assistance of the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps, which employs “at-risk” youth from the Taos area, over 50 mini-exclosures have been built so far on the lower stretch of Comanche – with more to come.

The goal is to protect the willows so they could grow and shade the water, thus

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# Comanche Creek

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reducing overall stream temperatures – a critical requirement for the fish.

Despite a stubborn drought, the exclosures are doing their job – and an additional benefit of small exclosures is that they do not impede elk migration in the watershed.

## Lessons Learned

Although it is too early to say any-

(Photos by Tamara Gadzia)



*Top Right:* Mini-elk exclosure installed in 1991 by New Mexico Game & Fish funded through a 319 EPA grant, September 2003.

*Middle & Bottom Left:* Mini-elk exclosures installed by New Mexico Trout and Trout Unlimited during volunteer work weekends 2001-2004.



torical positions —“Cattle Free in 2003” or “Cattle Galore in 2004” for instance – never entered the discussions. It was, instead, an effective exercise in the ‘radical center’ – where people talked about their common interests, rather than arguing their respective positions.

2) Diversity Matters. Everyone at the table looked at the world slightly differently and this created a very healthy creative energy that was reflected in the quantity and quality of the restoration work. Everyone’s ideas were taken seriously - and a great deal of learning took place as a result. There was disagreement at times, but the process was consensual and respectful.

3) Demand Accountability. The power of a collaborative group is the peer pressure it creates on individual members to be accountable for their actions and promises. Additionally, by creating a sense of ownership in a project, as well as a kinship with a piece of ground, each partner has a vested interest in success.

There are other lessons learned, including the value of simply getting outdoors and exercising one’s muscles in the service of the land. But what does Comanche Creek teach us about the roles of advocacy and collaboration?

What does it teach us about progress on the ‘back forty’?

The main lesson I learned is this: advocacy is a great tool for stopping bad things

thing with certainty, upland transects and riparian monitoring completed in 2004 by the Quivira Coalition, New Mexico Trout, the Forest Service, and the NM Environment Department indicate that the environmental progress in the watershed appears to

be meaningful.

In fact, according to Maryann McGraw, project coordinator for NMED, if present trends continue it is very likely that Comanche Creek will be “delisted”—i.e., taken off the 303d list of impaired stream reaches – which she calls a “substantial achievement.”

It is for these reasons that the EPA decided in 2004 to extend the project into a “second phase”— which will focus on the middle reach of Comanche Creek.

In the meantime, three lessons can be drawn from our experience:

1) Get Real. The Working Group targeted real problems and implemented practical and innovative solutions. Rhe-

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(Tamara Gadzia)



Quivira Coalition workshop participants, September 2003.

# Comanche Creek

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from happening, but it is a poor tool for encouraging restoration.

The metric for the confrontational approach could be measured in what does NOT happen. A good example is the current struggle to stop the eastern half of the Valle Vidal from being decimated by coalbed methane exploration.

Progress there will be measured by how many wells are NOT built.

But if I were a Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout, struggling for survival, I'd choose the collaborative process. I'd prefer the shade, the clear water, and the cooler temperatures produced by dialogue and exertion.

Those are the kind of metrics I could sink my teeth into.



## ☞ In Memory ☞



*Last fall, Christine Dougherty passed away after a long struggle with cancer. She was the Director of Conservation for New Mexico Trout. As a native New Mexican, Christine grew up appreciating and participating in all areas of conservation. She had an enormous respect and appreciation for the land and all it offered. She was an avid skier, backpacker, birdwatcher, nature lover, and fly fisher. She found*

*the Riparian Restoration Project, coordinated by the Quivira Coalition, on Comanche Creek in the Valle Vidal to be "utterly fascinating" and she was dedicated to it. She helped organize volunteers for the Comanche Creek project and set up a program of awards to help recognize other volunteers who also gave their time and energy to the Comanche Creek effort. Christine approached life with gusto, passion, and dedication. We will all miss her.*

**- New Mexico Trout**



# The Lost Tribe

by Dan Dagget

## An excerpt from The Gardeners of Eden: Rediscovering Our Importance to Nature

After I completed my book about ranchers and environmentalists working together—*Beyond the Rangeland Conflict, Toward a West That Works*—I was so impressed by the achievements of some of the ranchers I had written about that I continued to follow their efforts—visiting, photographing, monitoring. And I began to travel the West showing a collection of photos of the most incredible of their successes to anybody who would take the time to look.



Quivira Coalition workshop participants on the U Bar Ranch near Silver City, NM, October 2003.

In many cases, the response to my presentations was positive. Members of an activist vegetarian group wondered how they could support these good stewards without buying the steaks they produced. A member of another group, who saw my slide show and then visited some of those same projects firsthand, wrote back to the conference organizer: “You not only changed my mind, you changed my life.” As I write this I’ve done nearly two hundred presentations of this sort, from Fargo to Santa Barbara. The response to all of those presentations has been overwhelm-

ingly positive.

In the cases where my presentation could really have changed things, however, when my audience was the people who work for the groups that receive most of the billions we spend on environmental issues, I have been treated as if I was talking about something that they really didn’t want to hear about. It was as if I was a relic, a member of some Lost Tribe that they wished would stay lost.

This was true even when the people to whom I was making my presentation were involved in “saving” or “protecting” lands where the problems I was talking about were epidemic. Though they were able to do little if anything about these same problems, not one of them expressed any interest in trying the methods used by the members of the Lost Tribe.

I want to make it clear here that what I was showing these people was not chump change. Not only were these successes impressive solutions to serious problems that had stubbornly resisted solution, but they were solutions that were achieved in almost every case by people whom we normally think of as being at odds with one another (ranchers and environmentalists, vegetarians and meat producers).

In short, the solutions I was showing them were achieved by means that were collaborative rather than confrontative. That alone, in my opinion, should have piqued my listeners’ interest. In a world filled with confrontation and conflict, it would seem that a method that solves problems by bringing people together rather than by pitting them against one another should not have been passed over lightly.

On some occasions, I would press my case vigorously. Usually, I would do that when I knew the person I was talking to was familiar with what I was talking about.

I pressed especially hard with one individual whom I knew had seen some of

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these solutions in person. Before he got a job with a regional environmental organization, he had even participated in a collaborative group with people who used some of these methods. He listened but still gave me the Lost Tribe treatment.

"I'd like to help," he told me, "but, lately, I've become more interested in what the land can become if we leave it alone. I believe that's the only way we can truly heal the damage we've caused."

## Protect?

This, of course, is the essence of contemporary environmentalism—this assumption that the only way we can really heal the land is to protect it from impacts created by humans—to "leave it alone." This widely held assumption is why, when we talk of healing the land, we invariably talk of protecting it, of preserving it. It is why virtually every environmental organization has the word "protect" in its motto or mission statement.

This assumption—that the only way we can heal the land is to protect it—isn't just the domain of activists in the environmental trenches, it is so ingrained in our society's awareness of what we call "the environment" that most of us don't even think of it as an assumption. We think of it as a matter of fact, like gravity. That's why articles that deal with land issues treat the word "protecting" as having the same meaning as "healing" or "restoring." It is why those articles never explain how protecting the land will heal it, because those two concepts are considered by so many to be identical. It is why we never hear about the ill effects of protection, because there can't be any if protecting and restoring and healing are identical.

Needless to say, successes such as those created by the Lost Tribe appear to contradict this assumption. Those successes certainly seem to provide examples of actions by humans that benefit the land, that even outperform the Leave-It-Alone approach. In a society that prides itself on being realistic, results-oriented, and focused on the bottom line, one might as-

sume that results of the sort the Lost Tribe was achieving would be enough to change peoples' minds. Instead, all they served to do was to illustrate the power of a prejudice.

As I continued to run up against the brick wall of the Leave-It-Alone assumption, something that was very disturbing to me as an environmentalist became clear. I realized that no matter what results the members of the Lost Tribe were able to achieve—no matter how impressive they were—leaving the land alone would always be assumed to have worked better. This meant that results, no matter how dramatic, weren't going to be enough to bring about the paradigm shift necessary to add the methods of the Lost Tribe to the environmental toolbox, or even give them an unbiased trial.

This, in turn, convinced me of something that I still have trouble accepting, something that is very difficult, almost impossible, to communicate to anyone who considers him or herself to be a friend of the environment (which, by the way, includes just about everyone I know). This hard-to-accept, hard-to-communicate conclusion is that, within our most widely accepted way of thinking about the environment, the health of a piece of land or a collection of ecosystems is not a matter of its condition. It is purely a matter of how that land is managed. More specifically, it is purely a matter of the extent to which it is being left alone. What that means is, the Leave-It-Alone assumption has brought us to the absurdity that the actual condition of a piece of land is irrelevant to determining if it is healthy or not.

As extreme as this statement seems, it shouldn't come as a surprise. After all, you and I have been reading as much in the environmental literature for more than a century.

In his book, *Nature as Subject; Human Obligation and Natural Community*, environmental philosopher Eric Katz calls the idea that humans can restore natural environments to a degree of health and

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# Lost Tribe

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function equal to unmanaged habitat “The Big Lie” and describes it as arrogance.

Another environmental philosopher, Peter Elliot, writes that no matter how effective a human-created restoration is, it is a failure. That even if someone restores an area to exactly what it was before humans disturbed it, it is of less value than an otherwise identical area that had not been disturbed.

You don't need to look at the area in question in order to make that judgment. What could you see that would make it false?

Nothing.

What, I wondered, would Leave-It-Aloners say if some member of the Lost Tribe managed an area to a state of health and diversity that far outstripped a similar area that had been left alone? Would they still call this a failure? And if they did, what would that tell us about the Leave-It-Alone movement? An example wasn't hard to find.

## For The Birds

People familiar with The Quivira Coalition are also familiar with the U Bar Ranch, a working cattle ranch in southwestern New Mexico managed by David Ogilvie. On the U Bar, Ogilvie has managed a riparian area along the Gila River to such a state of health that it is home to

the largest known population of one endangered species (the southwestern willow flycatcher) and two threatened species—the common black hawk and spikedace (a fish).

Not only that the U Bar supports significant populations of several other rare species, some of which are candidates for listing. It is inhabited by the highest density of nesting songbirds known to exist anywhere in North America and it has one of the highest known ratios of native to nonnative fish in the Southwest.

As impressive as all that is, the real measure of the environmental value of Ogilvie's management is best revealed by comparing the flycatcher population of the U Bar's riparian habitat to two nearby preserves that combine to make up a comparable amount of similar habitat. In 2002, scientists counted 156 pairs of southwestern willow flycatchers on the U Bar. The two preserves had a combined total of zero!

When I mentioned this to a well-known environmental activist and author, he said he didn't view this as a success at all. He viewed it as equivalent to creating a garbage dump that attracted grizzly bears and calling that dump good bear habitat. (I assure you that the U Bar is no “garbage dump.” To decide for yourself, take a look at the accompanying photo.)

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On the U Bar, David Ogilvie has managed a riparian area along the Gila River to such a state of health that it is home to the largest known population of one endangered species (the southwestern willow flycatcher) and two threatened species—the common black hawk and spikedace (a fish).



(Tom Bean)

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Date Creek before switching to dormant season grazing by cattle.



Date Creek After. (Photos by Dan Dagget)

tion to its very core. Part of the core of the Leave It Alone assumption is the belief that, without humans the land would exist in a state of balance, of pristine health, of wilderness purity.

Take the Western Hemisphere, for instance. Virtually all history books and environmental writings tell us that before Columbus stumbled onto the scene, there were so few humans here that the land was a wilderness, an Eden of

biodiversity and balance. At the pinnacle of this western Eden was the Amazon, one of the most diverse habitats the planet has ever known. The Amazon, the story goes, existed in this state of pristine nature while it was populated by peoples who were too few and too primitive to significantly alter its condition.

Our environmental literature tells us that there are plenty of other examples of this; uncounted areas in the Americas and around the world that have remained natural and healthy because they have been unaffected or little affected by the hand of humanity. These icons of the Leave-It-Along approach allegedly serve as irrefutable evidence that the approach works and that it can work again.

I was thinking of how difficult it would be to challenge this assumption, and puzzling over how I might approach that challenge, when the fates provided me with an unexpected leg-up. That leg-up came in the form of a scandal. Our society loves a scandal, especially one in which the powerful and famous are shown not to be what they claim to be, and this one fit that mold exactly. The scandal came in the form of an article entitled "1491" in the *Atlantic Monthly*. The article reported that evidence of the handiwork of gardeners had been discovered in the most hallowed halls of Eden. *(to be continued...)*



## Lost Tribe

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**Editor's Note:**  
*Advance copies will be available from the author via Quivira in June.*

In other words, to proponents of the Leave-It-Along assumption, an area in which no endangered flycatchers choose to live is better habitat for that species, if that land was managed according to their prejudice, than an area that hosted the largest population anywhere.

From this it became laser clear to me that, in order to bring about the paradigm shift necessary to add the methods of the Lost Tribe to the contemporary environmental toolbox, or to shift the way most of us define land health from a matter of how the land is managed to a matter of land condition, it was going to take more than exceptional results, no matter how striking or how hopeful.

It was going to take something that would shake the Leave It Alone assump-



# The Far Horizon

by Courtney White

It is time to walk out of the wilderness and into the garden.

It is time, in other words, to change our metaphors. From Thoreau, meditating beside his pond, to Muir, climbing Yosemite Falls, to Aldo Leopold, Olaus Murie, David Brower and beyond, the dominant metaphor among naturalists and other defenders of nature has been the wilderness – officially defined in the Wilderness Act as a place—“untrammeled by man.”

Of course, wilderness is more than a metaphor; it has been a fact of life from the very moment native and European colonists set foot in the New World. Over the centuries, North Americans responded to the presence of “wild” land around them with strong emotions: either to tame, cherish, or protect it.

Love it or hate it, wilderness became the principle yardstick by which we measured the natural world, and consequently, ourselves.

No more.

Obviously it's not 1491 any longer, but neither is it 1909, the date when an energetic young forester named Aldo Leopold began his first assignment with the fledgling Forest Service in the remote mountainous country of eastern Arizona. In 1909, the Apache National Forest WAS wilderness – the place, not coincidentally, where Leopold watched the “fierce green fire” die in the eyes of a wolf that had just been shot by his comrades, an event immortalized years later in his essay “Thinking Like a Mountain.”

But if Leopold could return to the Apache today, what would he think? After his initial shock, which would probably be profound, he might ask: where did the wilderness GO?

What would Aldo say about the state of the things in the American West today? Literally, what metaphors would he use? I



doubt he'd talk much about wilderness. Instead, I suspect Leopold would find hope in the emerging movement to revive damaged land, and damaged relationships, through restoration. After all, in the 1930s he led a pioneering program to restore native prairies near his home in Madison, Wisconsin – an effort that eventually gave birth to the science of restoration ecology.

Today, I think he'd employ the language of healing, of repairing and restoring. He'd also talk about humility, respect, and thoughtful action. I think he'd talk about wildness, but also about the knowledge of nature that comes with getting our hands dirty through weeding and growing things.

I think he might talk about gardens.

## Second Nature

The debate may be moot. I believe global warming is destined to make us all gardeners. That's because “nature” no longer exists outside of “culture” anywhere on the planet, requiring, if we are to maintain the things we value such as biodiversity, deliberate and methodical action.

The Earth is now ours to tend.

Thinking like a garden could be a positive development for a number of reasons: it removes a wedge between nature and culture that has become increasingly destructive; it encourages a meaningful

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*“Green fingers are the extensions of a verdant heart.” - Russell Page, master English gardener*

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reconnection between people and land through active participation in nature's rhythms and mysteries; and it detaches our concept of "wildness" from the anachronistic idea of "pristineness"—putting it in our hands, literally, to define in relation to our labor and goals.

Still, old metaphors die hard. The transition from "wilderness" to "garden" has been personally difficult, especially since much of my youth is intimately bound up with wilderness adventures. Recently, however, I felt an increasing friction between my traditional faith in wilderness and the practical reality of working with land and people.

Relief came recently in the form of a book entitled "Second Nature: a Gardener's Education" by Michael Pollan, a journalist and author of the recent bestseller "The Botany of Desire." His book hit home because he too struggled with this very 'American' conflict.

"Like most Americans out-of-doors, I was a child of Thoreau," Pollan writes. "But the ways of seeing nature I'd inherited from him, and the whole tradition of nature writing he inspired, seemed not to fit my experiences...Everybody wrote about how to be in nature, what sorts of perceptions to have, but nobody about how to act there. Yet the gardener, unlike the naturalist, has to, indeed wants to, act."

Thoreau, Pollan noted, was the last important American writer on nature to have anything to say about gardening. The famous naturalist planted a bean field near Walden Pond but got caught in the messy contradictions between his needs and his perceptions of nature's prerogatives. Eventually throwing down his hoe and forsaking his beans, Thoreau declared that he would "prefer the most dismal swamp to any garden."

This led, says Pollan, to the very American habit of seeing nature and culture as irreconcilably opposed - that whenever one gains, the other must lose. And it is this dichotomy that must now be overturned.

"We need, and now more than ever, to

learn how to use nature without damaging it," he wrote. "That probably can't be done as long as we continue to think of nature



and culture simply as antagonists. So how do we begin to find some middle ground between the two? To provide for our needs and desires without diminishing nature?"

To find an answer, he looks in his garden.

### Weeds

Pollan's educational curve was steep. He chose, initially, not to fence his new garden (he lived in Connecticut at the time), which resulted in an invasion of woodchucks, deer, and other hungry animals. But he also rejected his neighbors' response, which was to create, and constantly maintain, bright green lawns, which he considered a form of totalitarian rule over nature.

The trick, he decided, was to find a middle ground between these positions — and that is what a garden is — "a place that admits of both nature and human habitation."

"But a garden is not, as I had imagined, a harmonious compromise between the

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## Far Horizon

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two, nor is it stable," he writes, "from what I can see, it requires continual human intervention or else it will collapse. The question for the gardener – and in a way it's a question for all of us – is: What is the proper character of that intervention?"

His experience in the garden suggests that finding a good answer to that question is much more complicated than simply choosing between "raping the land or sealing it away in a preserve where no one can touch it" – both of which he considers to be dead ends.

"Gardening quickly teaches you to distrust all such absolutes," he writes. "Must we always shrink before our own power in nature? We are one of only a handful of creatures with the capacity to deliberately alter our environment. To simply renounce that power – isn't that in some sense to renounce our humanity? Our nature? And is that nature any less real than the nature we seem to think exists only out there?"

Take weeds, for instance. To Romantic writers, who often lived at a distance from nature, weeds were emblems of freedom and wildness, and weeding stood for another form of domination of nature by man.

Gardeners have a different perspective. They know weeds don't originate in the wild. They thrive, instead, in disturbed soil such as vacant lots, railroad sidings, and gardens. They know weeds are often non-native and exotic, and very often the creation of hybridization – evolving with one end in view: to thrive in ground that humans have disturbed.

"My weeds were no more natural than my garden plants," writes Pollan, "Those smug quotes in which naturalists like to coddle weeds were merely a conceit. My battles with weeds did not bespeak alienation from nature, or some irresponsible drive to dominate it."

Weeding is necessary; having changed nature irrevocably around the globe, hu-



mans are now obligated to tend to the consequences of our actions, which is to say, to garden.

"We have made so many changes in the land that some form of gardening has become unavoidable, even in those places we wish to preserve as monuments to our absence," Pollan writes. "Even Yellowstone, our country's greatest "wilderness" stands in need of careful management – it's too late to simply leave it alone...wolves, tourists, fires, elk, all need active management...Today, even Yellowstone must be 'gardened.'"

Weeding, and thus gardening, involves making informed choices in nature – to apply our intelligence and sweat to the earth. To weed is to bring culture to nature in a way that is mutually beneficial to both.

"Weeding is what will save places like Yellowstone," writes Pollan, "but only if we recognize that weeding is not just something we do to the land – only if we recognize the need to cultivate our own nature, too. For though we may be the earth's gardeners, we are also its weeds. And we won't get anywhere until we come to terms with this crucial ambiguity about our role – that we are at once the problem and the only possible solution to the problem."

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## In The Garden

Pollan's education has much to teach us about the usefulness of the garden as a metaphor for a new relationship to the natural world. Gardening, for instance, requires an intimate knowledge of a local landscape.

"Gardening is a painstaking exploration of place," he writes, "everything that happens in my garden – the thriving and dying of particular plants, the maraudings of various insects and other pests – teaches me to know this patch of land more intimately, its geology and microclimate, the particular ecology of its local weeds and animals and insects."

By working intimately with land, whether it is restoring a patch of native prairie or restoring a riparian area, "gardening" reverses our alienation from nature. By cultivating a 'green thumb,' work on the land restores an ancient relationship between humans and the natural world that is productive and spiritually uplifting.

Gardening is also a source of moral instruction as we seek a way to use nature without damaging it. Gardening can teach us about models of ecological responsibility, and can, in the process, be a form of redemption for our sins against nature.

Gardening also teaches us humility.

But perhaps most important of all, Pollan says, gardening teaches us forbearance – the very essence of culture.

"Conscience, ethical choice, memory, discrimination: it is these very human and decidedly unecological faculties that offer the planet its last best hope," he writes. "It is true that, historically, we've concentrated on exercising these faculties in the human rather than the natural estate, but that doesn't mean they cannot be exercised there. Indeed, this is the work that now needs to be done: to bring more culture to our conduct in nature, not less."

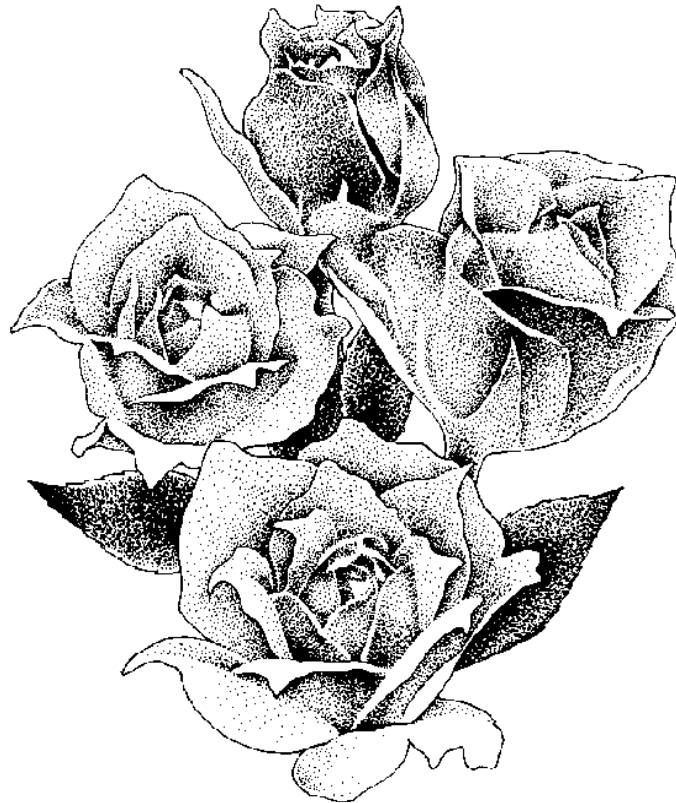
Aldo Leopold, of course, said much the same thing when he called for a 'land ethic.'

But what about Thoreau's "dismal swamp"? Should we forsake it? Not at all, says Pollan. But we must be pragmatic too

– which is another lesson learned from the garden.

"It is too late in the day – there are simply too many of us now— to follow Thoreau into the woods, to look to nature to somehow cure or undo culture," he writes. "As important as it is to have swamps, today it is probably more important to learn how to...satisfy culture without offending nature."

To find that satisfaction, he turns to the very symbol of a garden: the rose.



"The habit of bluntly opposing nature and culture has only gotten us into trouble, and we won't work ourselves free of this trouble until we have developed a more complicated and supple sense of how we fit into nature. I do not know what that sense might be, but I suspect that the rose, with its long, quirky history of give-and-take with man, can tutor it as well as, if not better than, Thoreau's unsullied swamp."

In other words, a rose by any other name, someone once wrote, smells just as sweet.



## Far Horizon

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# Collaboration in Our Backyard

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*All of the photos in this article are courtesy of Whitney Tilt and the Sonoran Institute.*

## The Age of Collaboration?

Over the past ten years, a growing number of efforts have emerged across the rural West where citizens and local governments negotiate their way through competing interests and obligations. David Chrislip (2000) notes that these efforts, energized by a frustration with divisiveness, are created by processes that seek common ground, build social capital, gain influence through inclusiveness, and create a constituency for change that can hold formal institutions accountable for action on their recommendations.

Instead of a winner takes all approach, communities begin looking to reconcile continued economic opportunity with conservation of natural resources.

Increasingly, warring parties discover reasons to work together, if only from simple exhaustion. "The ranchers know that if they are to continue to use the public's land, they need public support. The environmentalists recognize that if they want open space and habitat and a healthy watershed, the ranchers have to stay in business" (Marston 2001).

This is the root of community-based collaboration.

volvement (IAP2 2004). Collaboration is stronger than cooperation and the over-used phrase of 'partnership' because it requires the consideration of shared power and may be defined as a "shared responsibility for achieving results" (Chrislip 2002).

During their brief history, community-based collaboratives (CBCs) have addressed a wide array of issues including water allocations, timber management, wildlife conflicts, range improvement, rural community development, and engagement of First Nations in natural resource policy. Most CBCs are not born of inspiration, but arise from raw necessity.

In the case of the Salmon Mountains Working Group in Lemhi County Idaho, for example, reintroduction of grizzly bear and gray wolf impacted livestock management, restrictions on federal land use reduced timber availability, and the immigration of retirees radically changed the area's demographics. While individual residents might disagree on the relative merits of endangered species protection, they found common ground under the umbrella of sustaining the Salmon community, and this, in turn, provides a basis for redefining their relationship with the surrounding landscape.

Early in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the concept of community-based collaboration began to be codified into policy and law. The Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (P.L. 108-148), for example, calls for the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans that must be "collaboratively developed" by local and state government representatives in consultation with the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and other interested parties.

The challenges of policy and law dictating "thou shall collaborate" to agencies unaccustomed and untrained to undertake such activities will be a common theme in this paper.

It is important to note that community-based collaboration has its critics who charge that local groups wield undue in-

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Bull Elk.

Simply defined, community-based collaboration is the process by which perceived adversaries enter into civil dialogue to collectively consider possible solutions. As such, collaboration represents a growing obligation to public participation that builds from the act of informing, the willingness to consult, and the invitation of in-

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fluence, that urban constituencies are increasingly disenfranchised, and that participants may possess dubious political and financial motivations (Cestero 1999, Coggins 2001, Dukes and Firehock 2001).

With the critics in mind, it is important



that CBCs learn from past experience, and move quickly toward development of best practices, similar to that experienced by the land trust movement across the United States in the last fifteen years.

### Methodology

This paper draws on the experience of more than 125 collaborative projects supported by the Resources for Community Collaboration (RCC) program of the Sonoran Institute in the period 1998-2004, as well as dozens of others supported by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) over the last ten years.

RCC, launched in 1998 with a founding grant from the William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, works to provide financial and technical support to organizations undertaking collaborative efforts across western North America to resolve natural resource issues. NFWF is a non-profit organization, established by Congress in 1984, that develops and funds conservation partnerships benefiting fish, wildlife, and plants, and the habitat on which they depend.

Across the collaborative spectrum, some CBCs appear to succeed while others meet with limited success or outright failure.

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## Collaboration in Our Backyard

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RCC project map 1998-2003.



# Collaboration in Our Backyard

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What are the lessons to be learned from these real-life experiments? How can future practitioners decide whether they should use community-based collaboration as a conservation tool? Drawing on the collective experience of RCC/NFWF-supported projects and others, a number of lessons become clear. While not presented as an exhaustive or exclusive list, eleven ingredients are critical for a successful CBC:

1. Exhaust Traditional Approaches
2. Build a Common Vision
3. Recognize Challenge and Time Involved
4. Ensure Open, Inclusive, and Transparent Process
5. Identify Stakeholders and Opinion Leaders
6. Provide Facilitation and Process
7. Develop Common Factual Base
8. Ensure Flexibility and Adaptability
9. Secure Operational Funding
10. Achieve and Communicate Results
11. Meet or Exceed Applicable Laws and Be Accountable

## 1. Exhaust Traditional Approaches

While working collaboratively seems like the obvious choice, it should be viewed as the method of 'latter' resort, not the first. Much like an apprentice is expected to learn for years before he can consider himself a craftsman, a key ingredient for CBC success is a realization that traditional forums for redress have failed. To be successful, all parties involved in a collaborative effort must be motivated to work together. They must be willing to share power in the search to develop alternatives to the status quo.

Since most adversarial situations are marked by divergent interests entrenched in their own camps, exhaustion of traditional approaches leads to a growing willingness to meet with 'the enemy.' It is not enough to be told that collaboration makes sense, it must be the collective experience of the group undertaking the effort.

Organizations intent on embracing collaborative approaches to conservation have

to ask themselves the question: "what would we be doing if not engaged in a CBC?" If the answer to the question is 'taking legal action,' 'maintaining our role as outside agency expert' or 'seeking a public referendum,' the issue and participants are likely not ripe for engaging in a collaborative approach. If the answer is some variation on the 'we have tried everything short of breaking the law' theme, the ground may be ripe for collaboration.



## 2. Build a Common Vision

The foundation for uniting a collaborative effort is forging a single vision built on a passion for place or a community of purpose. In practice, however, many efforts fail to ensure that such a vision is developed common to all at the collaborative table. While there are many potential ingredients, a core set of attributes was consistently recognized by the practitioners surveyed:

- There is a need for passionate and committed individuals. While individuals may represent one or more agencies or organizations, they draw on a personal desire to make the collaboration work.
- The group must shape its own vision rather than adopt one already fashioned. There is a need to work to jointly develop a set of goal statements and purposes, develop a common vocabulary, and ensure all stakeholders (including new members) get an orientation to place them on equal footings with their peers.
- A good vision focuses on what the group shares in common rather than where there is disagreement. Success is glimpsed

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when individuals from different views are willing, on a trial basis, to put past antagonisms aside and work to build trust and solve problems.

- A good vision statement acts as a touchstone for all members serving as milepost for where the group has been, where it is at the moment, and where it is going. It becomes the benchmark for defining success.

Most collaborative efforts form in the face of real or perceived crisis. Faced with this sense of urgency, it is difficult not to focus on battling for short-term outcomes rather than focusing on the broader vision. But it is the long-term vision that unites the greatest number of stakeholders and engenders the greatest sense of community. It is the ‘what’ that continually helps define the ‘how.’

For the core of like-minded people that often forms the nucleus of an emerging collaborative, it is easy to assume that others will equally share their vision and eagerness to participate. However, experience shows that the collaborative effort must budget adequate time and effort for building a common ground swell of interest, conducting outreach, and initiating project planning. Before approaching opinion leaders and other vital stakeholders, the emerging CBC must develop a compelling case for the tangible benefits the community will accrue from the project.

Lastly, as collaborative groups work to shape a common vision, there may be some stakeholders that choose not to participate for ideological or other reasons. It is important to keep in mind the stakeholders not at the table as a vision is fashioned, and to continually challenge the group to work to gain the entry of these individuals.

### 3. Recognize Time Involved

In a world where everything is meant to be easier and faster, community-based collaboration takes time—to explore and identify areas of potential common ground, to develop the necessary trust, to experi-

ment with possible ways to address shared problems, to build the coalitions necessary for affecting policy changes, and to conduct the necessary project work, monitoring, and evaluation.

While it is tempting to find short cuts, these tasks are very necessary to have the group—especially one that does not trust each other—work together in the same direction. At the same time CBCs must remember what many practitioners have learned the hard way. It takes weeks and months to build trust and develop relationships, but seconds to destroy them.

Another outcome of the long and potentially exhausting collaboration process is the reality that some participants will become burned out and others disinterested. Single interest ‘whiners’ will come and go, and it can take a long time and a lot of patience to get rid of them. As one practitioner dryly observed, “don’t start unless you are thick-skinned.” The outcomes, however, can clearly reward those who endure.



While difficult to quantify, the majority of organizations polled noted that the social capital of working together to forge common goals extended far beyond individual project outcomes. While difficult to measure and quantify, the impact of collaboration on social capital cannot be ignored, as many practitioners believe it to be the most significant outcome of their efforts.

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# Collaboration in Our Backyard

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## 4. Ensure an Open, Inclusive, and Transparent Process

As a basic tenet of representative government, the need for community-based collaboratives to be 'open and transparent' is, at first glance, a startling glimpse of the obvious. To actually conduct a collaborative effort in such manner, however, presents more of a challenge.

Teresa Jordan (1998), member of the Toiyabe Watershed and Wildlands Management Team notes that while Wendell Berry entreats us to think locally and act locally, the dark side of local control is the potential for local tyranny. The collaborative process can escape the taint of localized tyranny only if it remains open and the 'optics' of its actions are transparent.

Two key aspects of an open process are incorporating the attitudes and viewpoints of people who are not at the collaborative table, and insisting on the inclusion of local experience-based knowledge in the collaborative project.

Practitioners also stress the need for collaborative groups to continually work to ensure that their process includes all stakeholders regardless of their views or opinions. CBCs must make sure each participant understands their role in the collaborative and work to create a climate where all participants believe their opinion is important.

The Clearwater Elk Initiative found that some members of its group wanted to jump right into solving the problem without setting up guidelines and rules. They found it important to first establish operational guidelines that ensure the process is open to all interested parties regardless of views. The Idaho-based collaborative worked to forge ground rules for meetings and discussions, and then made sure they followed them so no one felt that more than one standard of conduct existed for the project.

One final pragmatic observation from the field is to ensure the process and actions are maintained in a written record. An open and transparent process is reflected in a comprehensive set of meeting minutes that includes such obvious items

as attendance and decisions made.

## 5. Identify Stakeholders and Opinion Leaders

A community-based collaborative is a reflection of the strengths and diversity of its stakeholders. Failure to address the issues of inclusiveness and diversity at the stakeholder table can render the collaborative process to be little more than a replication of the power balances that already surround a set of issues. Recognizing the need for inclusiveness and diversity is a necessary step, but creating it at the collaborative table is the hard part.

Half of the stakeholders surveyed in a random sample of 76 watershed-based stakeholder efforts in California and Washington noted that some critical interests were not effectively represented in their partnerships (Leech 2004). Leech also noted that ordinary citizens often face a lack of motivation or other obstacles to participation, unlike agency, industry, and environmental representatives.

While one or more disputes have brought people to the table, it is people, not issues that will make the collaboration succeed or fail. With that in mind, participants will likely spend much more time on people issues than natural resource issues. The field experience of Calapooia Water Council, Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council, and others offers some additional insights:

- Do not confuse constituents or partners with stakeholders. The difference between them is akin to the difference between eggs and ham—the chicken is interested but the pig is committed.
- Learn and appreciate various missions of your fellow collaborators even as you work to have them represent their learnings rather than their organizational interests.
- Protect ALL stakeholders' interests and avoid alienating a party and turning them into a spoiler.

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- Agency participants need to work on connecting with, rather than directing, collaborative efforts.

Practitioners consistently noted the need for strong leadership as an essential ingredient to the extended life of a successful collaboration. The presence of credible leaders in the stakeholder group who help convene, catalyze, and sustain the process is critical to the effort's success. When viewed from the outside, a collaborative group drawn from diverse sectors of the community demonstrates the group's commitment to inclusiveness and provides a forceful statement to outside observers on all sides of the issue.

## 6. Provide Facilitation and Process

Having set the collaborative table with a diverse and representative group of stakeholders, many of whom will likely be community leaders, it is now time to 'herd the cats.' Heeding the advice of more than one seasoned practitioner to "never attempt to facilitate and lead at the same time," CBCs should consider engaging outside facilitators to help the group obtain its collective goals.

In the experience of CBC groups polled, it was rare for the emerging collaborative to have strong facilitation experience internally, which required them to acquire skilled facilitation from the outside.

In selecting a facilitator, the single most important attribute is that all participants in the collaborative process must perceive any facilitator as fair and legitimate. Overall the purpose of the facilitator is to build a process, to work with the group to establish sideboards, and then work to make sure they are observed. A facilitator also makes sure the quieter voices in the process don't get run over.

Another part of a facilitated process is to keep the group focused on being proactive, not reactive—to focus on the vision, not the past. A collaborative effort must work to make progress happen rather than sit back and see what happens.

## 7. Develop a Common Factual Base

A major obstacle facing the resolution of most natural resource issues is the apparent complexity of the issues at hand. Creating a common factual base is critical—"to bound the problem with credible information" in the words of Wondolleck and Yaffee (2000). Many CBCs note that ideological conflicts (Republican versus Democrat, meat-eater versus vegan, agnostic versus catholic) do not prove to be overwhelming barriers to progress, but conflict over issues of fact can incapacitate a collaborative process.

Recognizing the need for a common base of scientific information is the first step. The next is to recognize that the process for collecting the information needs to be a shared effort, not merely a stockpiling of data by one or more 'experts.' As federal and state land management agencies are often the repositories of natural resource information, their involvement in a community-based collaborative must go beyond a singular role as providers of 'expert' information.

Regardless of the information's accuracy, the stakeholders around the table must come to accept the science themselves, not have the information force-fed them from a group of self-proclaimed experts who already might be viewed by many of the stakeholders as part of the problem.

## 8. Ensure Flexibility and Adaptability

Collaboratives should strive to be flexible in their timetables, keeping in mind that participants have lives outside the collaborative effort. In the ranching community of Montana's Madison River Valley, it is a challenge for the Madison Valley Ranchlands Group (MVRG) to keep momentum among its members on a range of issues from invasive plants to elk depredations due to work and seasonal activities. During the calving season, for instance, it proves nearly impossible to get a critical core of the key people involved.

Understanding that members of a com-

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# Collaboration in Our Backyard

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# Collaboration in Our Backyard

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**For more  
information  
visit the following  
web sites:**

**The Sonoran  
Institute:**

[www.sonoran.org](http://www.sonoran.org)

**The Red Lodge  
Clearinghouse:**

[www.redlodgeworkshop.org](http://www.redlodgeworkshop.org)

**The Ecosystem  
Management  
Initiative:**

[www.sner.umich.edu/emi/  
evaluation](http://www.sner.umich.edu/emi/evaluation)

munity-based collaboration must remain motivated, CBCs should constantly look for ways to keep the process energized. CBCs have successfully used field trips, special events, and potluck dinners to get members involved on-the-ground. More than one CBC commented on the ability of food and drink to bring a community together. Observers also comment on the need to have fun, and maintain a sense of humor. Use of informal get-togethers helps build respect and understanding among the group and throughout the community.

Finally, as pointed out earlier, things take a lot longer than anticipated. Recognizing that stakeholders have jobs and lives outside of the collaborative effort, set goals and deadlines, but be prepared, flexible and good-humored when the timetable falls apart.

## 9. Secure Operational Funding

The vast majority of organizations polled in this research face pressing and continuing challenges to identify sufficient funding to maintain their collaboratives. While the majority of operational budgets are small, even by non-profit organization standards, it remains difficult for these organizations to maintain stable budgets. Ironically, many collaboratives are successful in attracting sufficient funding for related restoration projects while funding for administration is unavailable from these same sources.

Equally ironic is the cold fact that an emerging collaborative effort must have some start-up resources (personnel and financial) to achieve early success or interest, however minor, to demonstrate the collaborative potential that most funding sources want to see before they fund the project.

The RCC program has witnessed these challenges first-hand. For the period 1998-2004, the program provided \$640,000 to CBCs, but the program's funding has consistently fallen short of the demonstrated need. Recognizing the challenges, here are five insights into the world of fundraising (MEB 1993, Tilt 1996):

- Remember that people give to people. Develop relationships with the funding community. Unsolicited proposals seldom get funding.

- Develop a realistic budget for project. Even volunteer organizations need more financial resources than anticipated to stay involved and vital.

- Good deeds, on their own, seldom attract funding. Develop grant-writing skills as soon as possible within the collaborative, or find someone who can provide these skills.

- Build institutional support (administrative overhead) into project funding.

- Acknowledge your supporters. Say thank you, and then say thank you again.

## 10. Communicate Results

The need for good communication is a constant theme heard from practitioners. While everyone acknowledges the need for it, few institutions are consistently good at it. In the arena of natural resource management, communications have too often been reduced to a governmental process of 'public involvement' where public notice is provided, a requisite number of public hearings are held, and the agency makes a decision that appears totally divorced from any public input. This serves as a good model for what CBCs should not do. Other lessons learned include:

- Involve the public early and often.

- Take full advantage of existing social networks in the community and involve opinion leaders outside of the CBC.

- Work to get the community familiar with the goals and process of the collaborative.

- Use telephone, email and web, but not at the expense of face-to-face interactions.

- Keep good records of all events: participant lists, minutes, photos, articles, etc.

The experience of the Applegate Partnership in southwestern Oregon cautions against seeking early publicity before relationships and trust are fully developed as this early notoriety can cause damaging

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internal tension and conflict (KenCairn 1999)

### **11. Meet or Exceed Applicable Laws and Be Accountable**

In today's arena of competing interests and watchdogs, it is not enough to do 'good work.' CBCs must be capable of 1) demonstrating their adherence to applicable federal and state law; and 2) establishing monitoring and evaluation capacity sufficient to track and document the outcomes of the effort.

To be viewed as successful, both internally and externally, CBCs must demonstrate that their process meets or exceeds environmental law and policy. The Quincy Library Group collaboration, for example, is considered by many critics to have been a select group of special interests successfully gaining the intervention of Congress to circumvent existing state and federal laws (see Cestero 1999 for fuller discussion).

CBCs must also ensure that their monitoring and evaluation protocols are capable of assessing environmental, social and economic progress. When conducting monitoring, CBCs should keep in mind that more measurement does not equal more understanding, and there is a need for information triage since there is an infinite amount of information available (EMI 2004).

Finally, there is the importance of being accountable for outcomes. There continues to be concern among both supporters and critics that CBCs do not pay enough attention to monitoring and evaluating their outcomes. Too often, the environmental and social impacts of community-based collaborations remain largely unknown.

### **Conclusion**

The power of community-based collaboration is its recognition that humans are part of the environment and a mandatory part of the solution. This paper has assembled the field experience of dozens

of practicing CBCs. Their experience confirms that community-based collaboration can be a fruitful road to long-term solutions, but it takes time, determination, and strong people skills.

Practicing CBCs have learned first-hand that good will, or at least a desire for its growth, is a fundamental prerequisite for collaboration. They point out the need to measure the benefits of CBCs in both social and biological terms, and to mark progress against a group's goals. They also point out many practical pieces of advice such as identifying an easily achievable first project to build trust and demonstrate the collaborative's worth. And practitioners stress over and over the importance of building relationships—CBCs are about working with people and building social capital. —

Wallace Stegner, quoting historian Bernard DeVoto, dryly observed that the only true individualists in the West were usually found hanging from a rope, the other end of which was held by a group of cooperating citizens (Hahn 1998). In today's West, conflicts over natural resources are too important to be left to battles between individuals, they require involvement of the community with its sense of place, its sense of economic foundation, and its collective capability to instill a sense of stewardship of natural resources.

That is the lasting impact of community-based collaboration.

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# The Quivira Coalition's Upcoming Free Workshops

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## *Oil, Gas and Ranching – Working on Common Ground*

With instructor Craig Leggett  
May 13-14, 2005, Farmington, NM  
(Near Gobernador, NM)

## *Mesteño Draw Restoration*

With instructors, Bill Zeedyk and Steve Carson  
May 20-21, 2005, Mountainair, NM

## *Tour on the Rowe Mesa Grassbank*

Hosted by Craig Conley, Director, Rowe Mesa Grassbank  
May 21, 2005, Pecos, NM

## *Water Harvesting from Low Maintenance Ranch Roads*

With instructors Bill Zeedyk and Steve Carson and Craig Conley  
June 24-25, 2005, Pecos, NM

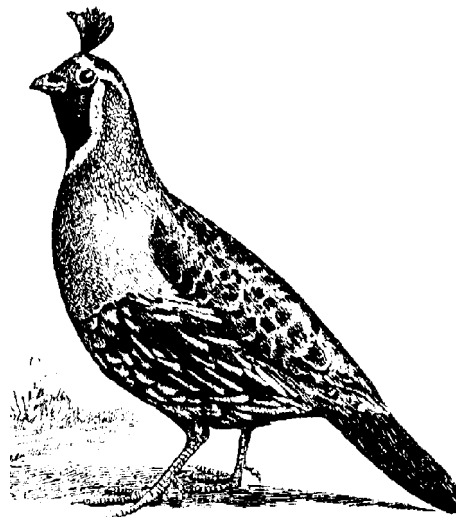
## *Introduction to Low-Stress Livestock Handling and Herding Techniques*

With instructor Guy Glosson  
July 22-23, 2005, Location to Be Determined

## *Reading the Landscape: Water Movement across a Landscape*

With Bill Zeedyk  
August 5, 2005, Los Trigos Ranch, Rowe, NM

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## More Free Workshops

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***Reading the Landscape:  
Collaborative Ranching in Action***

Facilitated by Kirk Gadzia  
August 19, 2005, Ute Creek Ranch,  
Mosquero, NM

***Erosion/Roads/and Riparian Restoration in the  
Comanche Creek Watershed***

With instructors Bill Zeedyk and Steve Carson  
September 16-17, 2005, Valle Vidal, NM

***Monitoring For Planned Grazing Utilization  
on the Rowe Mesa Grassbank***

With instructor Kirk Gadzia  
September 23, 2005 Pecos, NM

***Erosion Control and Riparian Restoration  
along the Dry Cimarron***

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Sept. 30 - Oct. 1, 2005, Folsom, NM

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