

Fishbowl #1: Connecting

Karen Beattie- *Science and Stewardship Dept. Manager; Nantucket Conservation Foundation*

Kurt Gaertner- *Director of Sustainable Development, Executive Office of Energy and Env. Affairs*

Bill Keohan- *Chair, Town of Plymouth Community Preservation Committee*

Karen Lombard- *Director of Stewardship and Restoration; The Nature Conservancy (Mass Chapter)*

Heather McElroy- *Natural Resources Specialist, Cape Cod Commission*

Initial Question: How can we pick up the pace of conservation?

First of all, don't shy away from setting goals, broad ambitious goals.

Kurt Gaertner offered other ways we could be more confident that when it's our turn, we'll reach our goals. Money of course: never stop looking for grants. And – though it's easier for someone at the state level to talk in these terms – regulation: zoning, land use, natural resource protection.

Gaertner was the first, of many, that also expressed a belief in the 'power of the partnership.'

Karen Lombard echoed that last sentiment and was the first to focus on a minor theme that emerged through all three fishbowls: stressing the beneficial economics of conservation.

"A lot of people don't realize that when you protect open space there's no house, no septic systems and no need for fire or police protection."

Heather McElroy of the Cape Cod Commission – and a member of the Pine Barrens RCP Steering Committee – spoke of the CCC's suite of tools utilized to "protect as much remaining land on Cape Cod as possible."

A check list of the tools we all use would likely be a good way to remind ourselves of our options, and to be sure we are utilizing each and every one, where possible.

Land banks, CPA funds, state partnerships, and – utilizing the wealth of existing and newly developed maps (including one just developed for the Partnership by an intern on loan from Highstead) – a clear understanding of the location of the most important resources.

One potentially important tool that is often overlooked: The Open Space and Recreation Plans that 11 of the ecoregion's communities have already developed.

McElroy also let forum attendees know that the CCC is nearing completion of a revised regional plan that she hopes will give greater weight to the Pine Barrens in the development decision-making process.

Not everyone is in favor of more mapping. Lombard said she didn't believe in more mapping but, rather, in ways to translate the mapping that has already been done into concrete plans and action.

Karen Beattie underscored the importance of planning, and introduced a 'variation on a theme' that was heard throughout the day: translating the goals of conservationist into the values of the public.

"Much of the public hears the word 'conservation,' Beattie said, "and instantly thinks 'anti-development.'"

Plymouth's Community Preservation Committee Chairman Bill Keohan offered a short-cut to convincing the public of the value of conservation: partnerships.

Besides the financial benefits of sharing conservation projects (often acquisitions) with a variety of groups, Keohan said, partnerships have greater “political power.”

When seeking approval for a particular acquisition Keohan said, he looks to put together the broadest coalition possible: the town itself, land grant organizations, historic groups, neighborhood associations and more.

Keohan also emphasized the need to educate people in the region – to build support and awareness about the Pine Barrens.

There followed a list of techniques, tools and programs that subtly make the argument for the preservation of the larger ecosystem by focusing on much smaller areas: the Nature Conservancy’s “Habitat Network,” the Stewardship Network of New England (which links people to volunteer opportunities), municipal programs like Nantucket’s call for homeowners to plant native species in their yards, the ‘Adopt-A-Species’ project that has the goal of having every municipality in the ecoregion officially adopt one of its unique species.

Lombard also reminded participants of a relatively new opportunity that exists in old developments. “Un-development” reclaims developed land for open space.

“I would call for a change in the mindset that “once land is developed on, it’s gone.” Lombard said “There are opportunities in our communities for “un-development.”

She specifically cited Route 28 in Yarmouth, where the town is taking down some tired old development that, once removed, will reopen vistas to the salt marshes.

Keohan said that Plymouth is moving in that direction. Specifically, in light of climate change concerns, they are trying to restore, protect or reclaim low lying areas on the coast or perform a “strategic retreat” in coastal areas in partnership with other coastal conservation groups.

Cheryl King Fischer, a Partnership Coordinator, entered the fishbowl at this point and asked for comments about the value of campaigns, of knocking on doors in the community, not just at forums or exclusive events.

Acknowledging his love of campaigns, having led many political campaigns, Keohan said he was excited about their potential to sway opinion.

Mass Audubon’s Bob Wilbur steered the conversation back to one of the forum’s developing themes: finding the most effective argument for the public

“Land Conservationists are not trying to protect everything,” Wilbur said. “I think we need to communicate better to the public that growth and change is inevitable and is a good thing, but that the task at hand is to protect attributes of certain locations.”

Wilbur suggested explaining to the public that these “attributes” increase their quality of life.

“I also encourage all of us to use broader human themes, words and themes the public understands, that resonate with the,” Wilbur said, adding that “the use of storytelling in terms of conservation is extremely helpful lately and we should look to utilize that more often.”

Woods Hole Research Center’s Chris Neil noted that community service studies – which compare the costs of development and conservation side by side- should also include **future** cost avoidance.

“It’s not just the services that we have to pay for today, but the services that we will one day have to pay for,” Neil said. “For example pollution clean-up, or the high cost of wastewater treatment.”

“Southeastern MA has one of the biggest aquifers in the area and protecting that is a huge cost,” Keohan added. “People in Plymouth are weary of the cost of the sewer lines that broke after paying for the first 10 years ago.”

“I love the idea of looking at the cost of services studies again and updating them,” McElroy added.

When the suggestion was made to try and knit all these ideas into one, several suggestions were forthcoming.

Keohan emphasized the need to win the war for “hearts and minds.” Lombard stressed the need to define specific goals and offered the suggestion that the Partnership break their strategy into three areas: 1. education and outreach, 2. defining best management practices, and selecting 3) one political piece to focus on for the next five years.

“We can’t underestimate the importance of partnerships like this,” Beattie said, putting the Partnership into a key role.

“We need to take the logos in the room today and put them all in one place and present a unified front,” Beattie said, “and that will be an extreme force to use.”

End of Fishbowl #1: Connecting

Fishbowl #2: Conserving

Dave Celino- *Chief Fire Warden, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation*

Mary Griffin- *Regional Director Southeast, Cape and Islands, Mass Audubon*

David Foster- *Director, Harvard Forest, Harvard University*

Ed DeWitt- *Executive Director, Association to Preserve Cape Cod*

Tim Simmons- *Restoration Ecologist*

Mary Griffin:

Mass Audubon’s Mary Griffin announced at the start of Fishbowl Two that their conversation would begin with an attempt to focus on two issues: increasing the pace of conservation in the ecoregion (from SEMass through the Cape and Islands) and what land management responsibilities we all share in terms of preserving the unique habitats in the region.

“When I think about this region/state, I think about how many diverse and rare state-listed and federally listed species that are here,” Griffin said. “I think all of us in this room have a responsibility to the species and habitats in our region.

“From 25-150 species are lost every day – which shows that there is an urgency to do more and to think bigger.”

Griffin cited the Tidmarsh Farms project that Mass Audubon is presently engaged with: a 600+ acre former cranberry bog that is evolving into massive bird sanctuary, environmental laboratory and open space project.

“The Tidmarsh project was too big for Audubon to take on alone—partnerships are the reason this project is moving in the right direction.

Ed DeWitt was not ready to talk about the power of Partnerships. Like many in the previous fishbowl he sees a critical need (one of the themes brought out during the forum) for recasting the people, projects and language of the conservation movement, to make it more appealing to the public at larger.

“Can I have a show of hands,” DeWitt asked, “of how many people in the room consider themselves ‘Environmentalists?’”

In 1990, 75 percent of Americans self-identified as Environmentalists, DeWitt said, but 25 years later that number had dropped to 46 percent.

“This could be due to people thinking conservationists and environmentalists are against things, or are anti-development, anti-everything,” DeWitt said, then suggested that we need to do a much better job at how we are perceived outside of the conservation community?

Harvard Forest Director David Foster offered a more holistic approach to changing the public’s perception of conservation: begin by identifying how management plans – whatever their final goal – could be shown to service society’s needs.

“The people who originally maintained these areas,” Foster explained, “did it for free because they were living off the land and benefiting from the resources.”

If we could show how the people in the region could benefit from things like grazing their animals, or allowing people to “farm” other areas – or find other ways of to concretely demonstrate a societal benefit,” Foster suggested, “resistance to preserving those lands would dramatically diminish.

Perhaps Foster was also acknowledging the creativity of many of the poster presenters at the forum: there were advocates for preservation through ‘green’ cemeteries, through the use of edible landscapes, and many demonstrations of the compatibility of development and preservation.

DCR District Fire Chief Dave Celino pointed out that the choice of management approach isn’t always a choice: oftentimes, it’s a responsibility.

“When we are successful at setting aside open land (Pine Barrens),” Celino said, “that comes with the responsibility of that resource - the potential for wildfire).”

Those responsibilities, he pointed out, often fall to the municipality.

After first saying that when considering lands for protection, he would emphasize that we be “selective, not opportunistic,” former NHESPC restoration ecologist Tim Simmons waxed philosophically about land preservation in general.

“In Hyannis, we spent many years trying to protect the most significant unprotected area in the Commonwealth. The State stepped in and took it by eminent domain and the land is still protected today.

“Do you think anyone regrets spending a large amount of money to protect those areas?” Future generations won’t complain that there’s too much open land for them to enjoy.

DeWitt noted that, in his experience, it’s often easier to get money to acquire land, but difficult to get funds to manage that land going forward.

Simmons said he saw some movement, slow perhaps, that attitudes are changing about funding management, especially about the Pine Barrens.

Foster, perhaps evincing a change of mind about the use of certain management techniques, notably fire, argued that “sand pine landscapes” were a European invention.

“It is important to recognize that these landscapes were all shaped by people,” Foster said, and by that he meant the influx of Europeans in to the area in the 17th and 18th centuries.

“In most of New England, this land was changed by people who were living off the land by farming, industries, etcetera. They were taking resources from the land to benefit themselves.

“Now, what we have in the sand pine landscapes, is not the result of thousands of years of burning, but largely the result of 400 years of European settlement usages.”

Foster returned to his argument that if you emphasize a societal benefit – farming, grazing (other innovative uses besides preservation for its own sake) – “this may help engage the public to take care of their protected lands for free while they benefit from it.”

Given the region’s surfeit of single family, one acre house lots the suggestion was made that homeowners must also be brought into the effort to preserve the Pine Barrens.

DeWitt agreed, and noted that there may be an opportunity in the houses that sit vacant for 10 months of the year in the region, especially on Cape Cod.

Could they be farmed in that time. Could they be landscaped in such a way that they benefit wildlife or woodland?

Griffin said she was intrigued by the changing lifestyle choices of millennials, many of whom might be very interested in what she called “small scale living.”

Mashpee Wampanoag Director of Natural Resources Chucky Green joined the group at this point, and gently argued with Foster about the reasons for the condition of the woods and Wildlands. For Green fire was, is and will always be an important management tool.

“My Uncle Pete was the first Chief Fire Warden in the Town of Mashpee; he did a lot of brush fires in the town. I do not agree with you David when you say that Native people did not burn, I would need to see the data of where you got the charcoal levels because I know that Mashpee relied on prescribed fires in early times.

“A lot of medicines that my tribe uses comes from special plants in our area. When we burn the land, we have seen that plants that had not been seen in our lifetimes back and growing healthy in the same land.

“When people complain about finding money to treat or maintain our lands, they need to realize that we broke it. We broke the natural processes that made the land what is was and now we have a responsibility to maintain it,” Green said.

Green said he has both the tribe’s perspective, and that of the town in mind.

“If we protect open space and work to maintain it, we have a cost that is a lot less than other potential costs like putting houses on the land. On our property, we hadn’t been able to harvest blueberries in a very long time and the year after one burn we had the best blubbery harvest I’d seen in my entire life,” Green continued.

“Once people see how beneficial burns can be on the lands they want us to come and do the same to their lands so they too can reap the benefits,” Green said. “The Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge one of the biggest feathers in my caps: 6,000 acres of continuous open space, partners working together to burn and protect, 5,000 acres of rabbit habitat.”

Griffin returned to the conservation to point out that conservation and land management along coastal areas, rivers and streams will likely save huge amounts of money going forward because they serve as natural buffers for our communities during storms and the effects of climate change and that we need to “articulate” those benefits more effectively.

The idea of green burials and its potential as a conservation tool were brought forward at this point by Candace Currie of Green Burial Massachusetts.

It’s a simple idea: those who wish to be buried without the chemicals, concrete vaults and other elements associated with traditional ceremonies pay to be interred (if that’s the right word) in a more pastoral setting, preserving the land, protecting the aquifer, potentially establishing an endowment that can be used for further acquisitions.

State and local regulations are often obstacles to the establishment of these facilities – and need to be researched ahead of time – but town’s (in Massachusetts at least) are obligated to provide burial space for all of their residents and may look favorably on this approach.

The Dennis Conservation Trust's Kathryn Garafoli came forward next to talk about "engagement with the community."

"I think that a lot of Land Trusts are starting to realize that it starts with educating the children in our area. The children learn Environmental Education at school and then bring that information home to their parents.

"As a young professional in this industry I understand the basics of conservation and land protection, but I know that a lot of people my age do not have this knowledge or access to this knowledge.

"We can't expect them to instill the pride of our land in their children if they don't understand what it is," Garafoli said. "I think there is a big incentive for private donors to educate children and do projects on environmental education."

Chief Celino also sees the need to change minds, and he referred specifically to land managers.

"This is difficult because foresters and firefighters are typically introverts," Celino said. "We need to get them to get out and share their stories with the people and help the public understand what is being done.

"We want get the people that are making decision about funding and conservation, etc. get them out on the land and out on burn projects," Celino said, "so they can see what is being done and why and understand it more."

Foster steered the conversation back to the important role that "a regional conservation partnership (RCP)" could play.

"**These** partnerships offer an opportunity to look at a sizeable region that heavily uses local organizations and regulations but under an overarching partnership that ties everyone together. T

"This kind of exercise is a very good way at working towards a successful partnership," Foster said.

RCP Network Director Bill Labich noted that all 43 RCPs, though different from each other, are working toward increasing the rate of conservation

(The Pine Barrens Partnership) is extremely political, in a good way," Labich said. "Because this landscape is largely developed but still widely open space, it is going to take a lot of political fighting to make this vision come true for the Pine Barren Partnership. I see this RCP becoming a leader in the RCP world and I'm excited to see what Sharl, Frank, Cheryl and Evelyn do with this Partnership."

End of Fishbowl #2: Conserving

Fishbowl #3: Communicating

Frank Mand- *Gatehouse Media*

Tonna-Marie Rogers- *Coastal Training Program Coordinator, Waquoit Bay Reserve*

Alicia Porter- *Communications Director, Buzzards Bay Coalition*

Naomi Arenberg- *Producer, Living on Earth Radio, Instructor, Cape Cod Community College*

Waquoit Bay's Tonna-Marie Rogers began the third and final fishbowl by asking Ed DeWitt to repeat the statistic that he stated in his earlier fishbowl.

“In 1990, “DeWitt complied, “75% of Americans identified themselves as an environmentalist. This same poll was done in 2015, and 46% of Americans identified themselves as environmentalists.”

Rogers pointed out that forum attendees had reacted viscerally to that statement due, she said, to its emotional content.

“One thing I have learned is that people listen more to things that they care about, versus things they have a lot of knowledge about. People think with the heart, not the head.

Gatehouse Media Reporter and Partnership Coordinator Frank Mand responded with an anecdote that underscored the importance of affecting hearts, as well as minds.

“As a reporter dealing directly with local communities and government, I understand that people in New England are already thinking of themselves in terms of community and that’s a good starting point to reach out to people, and find more things that the community can relate to and support.

People will support our conservation efforts and goals once we make it personal, show them how conservation will benefit them, improve their quality of life.”

Living on Earth Radio’s Naomi Arenberg also told a story to begin with: one that she read in Nature.

“If you come from the angle that science is the ‘truth,’ then you just don’t understand the facts,” Arenberg quoted from the article in Nature.

“People will not be willing to listen to you, they will find that angle offensive. You need to speak in such a way that people are willing to listen, and to do that it is important to recognize that there are many ways of doing and learning. Humans are not rational. Yet, we tend to portray ourselves as much more rational than we are.

“Incorporating social science into physical and environmental sciences is one way to bridge divides in understanding between scientists and nonscientists. Engaging with your local community gives people a way to listen to who you are as a scientist instead of focusing on you as an academic.”

Buzzard Bay Coalition Communication’s Director Alicia Porter returned to the “environmentalist” statistic and suggested that there are not fewer environmentalists today, just fewer willing to be assigned that title:

“I have done a lot of studying and research on how to communicate about conservation and what words, verbs, etc. resonate with people and makes them care,” Porter said

“People don’t always have time to read pamphlets, attend conferences and forums and that doesn’t mean that they don’t care,” Porter said. “I have been trying to find the middle ground with people and one thing that I have found is that the community loves events that include outdoor exploration.

“Once people get outside and interact with the outdoors, it makes them appreciate it more. This will help influence them in the right conservation mindset—this goes into what Tonna-Marie said in regards to people thinking with their hearts and not their minds.”

John Burns of Burns Environmental – who is also the president of a local chapter of Trout Unlimited – offered the surprising revelation that even this staid sportsmen’s group (at least the chapter he leads) has been benefitting from using events, and socialization, to swell its ranks.

“We are aging out in our Chapter and it has been a struggle to engage younger people and new members (including women),” Burns said.

But recently he began to change things: the way they communicated, the kinds of meetings they had. They offered night fishing with an instructor, other kinds of parties, encouraged women to become members and provided women's programs.

"We are gauging the interest of our people and trying to give them whatever they need to get the most out of a membership with Trout Unlimited."

EPA Director of Partnerships Jennifer Norwood said they are also trying to reach out to women, and young adults.

"We are trying to get women out into the woods not only hiking, but hunting and fishing too. We have been providing instructional clinics for women and young adults on hunting and fishing. One thing we think is that huntsmen and people that are using the land for hunting and fishing are our best conservationists. They want to protect the land so they can continue to use it and benefit from it.

Norwood noted that of her missions, to better partner with the organizations in the room, has been stymied by recent budget cuts.

"We are greater in numbers," Norwood said, "unfortunately, the current budget cuts hit the DCR the worse than all other agencies in the State. Sharl and I are trying to make a new website to get all these organizations and friend's groups together to get everyone on the same page and in same place working together for the same goals.

Educator Mindy LaBranch noted the importance and effectiveness of "citizen science."

"It's very simple and beneficial and a great way to engage children and their families. I have one project that has inner city children counting and distinguishing species of birds."

Porter noted that Buzzards Bay Coalition also uses citizen science effectively, the "Bay Watchers" program, which uses residents taking samples of their local bodies of water and then BBC does the analysis.

At that point DCR's Josh Nigro asked if the forum itself was taking advantage of the communication tools available today.

"What have we done today to get the message out about the forum? Has anyone tweeted or gone on FB to share what we have been doing," Nigro asked.

Panelist and Partnership Coordinator Frank Mand noted that all of the posters presented on this day were being filmed, and would be disseminated to the presenters and, later, compiled into a larger video as well.

"Social media controlled by one centralized area could be an important role of the RCP."

"Part of what we are hoping to acquire today," Rogers added, "are these conversations, inspiration to take back to our own organizations and"

"What is the added value of having this partnership," Rogers continued. "It's that something that happens when you can come together and get more accomplished with a group of partners instead of doing it by yourself."

"Hearing you, Tonna-Marie, and mulling over what others have said, we are talking about personal outreach and although I work in broadcasting mass media, I can agree personal outreach is very important.

"There is nothing more powerful than the human voice. Calling people, having conversations, small group talks, and the like are very beneficial to getting people to do what we want them to," Arenberg said. "Talking to your neighbors is one of the most beneficial things we can do to change the minds of our communities. "

“I went to a training many years ago on Hazard/Risk Communication,” the EPA’s Trish Garrigan commented, “and they were instructing us on how to talk to the public. No matter what science or facts you throw at them telling them that an area is safe, they will not listen.

“You must listen to people, acknowledge their concerns and fears and then use the science and evidence to help console their fears. The only way you will get through to people is when you listen to their concerns and address those concerns respectfully and honestly.”

End of Fishbowl #3: Communicating
