Conservation Through Commerce

A Roundtable Discussion

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To many people the words "conservation" and "commerce" are anathema. And in fact, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) was set up for the express purpose of divorcing the two (by banning trade in endangered species CITES attempts to destroy the value of those species). But are they really incompatible? According to a growing number of conservationists, and a number of initiatives, particularly in southern Africa, they are not just compatible, but inextricably linked.

Conservationists who have experimented with and used both conservation and commerce in tandem have been involved in some of the most heartening conservation success stories in recent years. And so in the Spring of 1998, in the shadow of Earth Day, an exploration of just how one might achieve conservation through commerce was a natural topic for a forum on "The Promise of Private Conservation," hosted by the Center for Private Conservation and held at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. The forum was one of a series of events hosted by the Center for Private Conservation to focus attention on the role of private institutions and markets in encouraging and supporting conservation efforts.

The experts on the panel were gathered from around the world, and included Clive Stockil from the Savé Valley Conservancy in Zimbabwe, Grahame Webb from Wildlife Management International in Australia and Steve Edwards from IUCN's (the World Conservation Union) Washington, DC office. The panel was moderated by Ike Sugg from the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

These distinguished panelists explored how individuals and communities around the world, given the right institutional arrangements, have been able to use the value of wildlife to improve conditions for both people and animals. The success of those efforts that have melded conservation and commerce have helped change attitudes toward conservation and commerce throughout the international environmental community. Two of the panelists have been instrumental in two very dramatic species recovery programs, for the saltwater crocodile in the Northern Territories of Australia, and for the black rhino in Zimbabwe, which is certainly not out of danger, but is finally increasing for the first time in decades. Their insights are particularly telling – in each case it was the moment that people began to realize the value of these species that things started to turn around.

MR. SUGG: Thank you all very much for being here. For those of you involved in wildlife conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources, you will be well aware of just how distinguished the three panelists we have here today are.

Before I introduce them, I'd like to read you a passage, something that I wrote, that I think is a very good lead in to today's topic. Because so many people feel that "conservation through commerce" is some sort of oxymoronic idiom – and let me tell you, they emphasize the "moronic" part – it is up to those people who have actually *tried* private sector approaches to resource conservation to address animal welfare and rights concerns, and the rhetoric of market failure. Which, in fact, is not really market failure, but a failure to have markets.

If one had to reduce the objective of natural resource conservation to a single concept, it would have to be sustainability.

While these three gentlemen may not agree on every point, I am quite sure that they will say some provocative things that I hope will help to open everyone's mind a little bit more to the idea that institutions matter – that when private property rights are well-defined, good things happen on private property, using the market and pricing resources.

The passage that I referred to goes like this: "If one had to reduce the objective of natural resource conservation to a single concept, it would have to be sustainability. By definition, resources are used a means to an end. Natural resources are, therefore, valuable. Given proper institutional arrangements and sufficient economic incentives, most people will conserve resources so as to ensure that the values obtained from using them can be realized in the present, as well as in the future. Conservation is, therefore, inextricably linked with, indeed defined by, sustainability. Without the right institutional arrangements and economic incentives, however, the utilization of natural resources will likely, if not inexorably, lead to their depletion, and that is especially true for valuable resources." *

Without the right institutional arrangements and economic incentives, however, the utilization of natural resources will likely lead to depletion, especially for valuable resources.

Much of the expertise and experience of our panelists come from their work in developing countries, where the issues often boil down to what use or uses resources and the land will be put to. Oftentimes it is a competition between "cows and plows" and perhaps other, less ecologically intrusive approaches.

And indeed, if wildlife is going to survive throughout the developing world, then we're going to have to come up with ways to make those wildlife resources into valuable, natural assets. Sufficiently valuable, in my view, to compete with "cows and plows" – to compete with row crop farming or what have you. Because, obviously, when something like wildlife *is* valuable, then there is real hope and promise.

Unfortunately, in the United States, we've eschewed this approach entirely when we adopted the king's game approach, which says essentially that the government owns the wildlife and holds it in trust for

* Ike Sugg and Urs Kreuter (1994) *Elephants and Ivory: Lessons from the Trade Ban*, London: The Institute of Economic Affairs.

the people. Under this system, if you put a price tag on wildlife, it will disappear, because if no one owns the wildlife, then no one can benefit from being a good steward. These laws also make it very difficult to find success stories to counter the belief that no one should own the wildlife – because any attempt would, for the most part, be outlawed.

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In other parts of the world, however, where the pressures are more acute and the stakes are a little higher – for example where people may be worried where there next meal is going to come from – they are forced to be more innovative, more open to alternatives. And that is, in a nutshell, why we have the three people we have today.

Our first speaker is Dr. Steve Edwards. He heads the Sustainable Use Initiative at IUCN – the World Conservation Union. He has a Ph.D. in ecology and systematics from the University of Kansas, and he has been working in wildlife conservation for a good 25 years.

I have had the pleasure of working with Steve as a member of IUCN's North American Sustainable Use Specialists Group. He's done an awful lot of good work both in public and behind the scenes, encouraging his fellow conservationists in the environmental community to look more openly at these type of approaches, and he's been instrumental in setting up a number of community-based conservation initiatives throughout the developing world. Without further ado, Dr. Steve Edwards.

DR. EDWARDS: With that introduction, I don't know what I can say, except that I've sure learned these lessons well. I came out of a pure academic, research background. I studied frogs at the University of Kansas. My frogs were in the Amazon Basin. It was wonderful! I got to live in villages and collect those little beasts, and I remember one time I was sitting there extolling the virtues of a frog and some chap walked up to me and he said "Why are you studying those frogs?"

Unless we are bringing into that equation the very people that live with those resources, we will not be successful.

I said "Because I like 'em." He looked at me and said "That's not good enough." And I said "Aw, c'mon, does it really make any difference?" He said "Yes! You have to justify what you're doing to the world. It's quite important." And that little exchange – that gentleman happened to be a member of the National Academy of Sciences – was a pretty good lesson, which is that what we do has to be relevant to the public.

When I joined IUCN in 1986, the words "conservation" and "commerce" were anathema. You didn't put them in the same sentence. You didn't think about them. In fact, I thought, at the time, being a scientist, that maybe there was a lot of value in keeping them separate. It gave me a rationale for doing what I was doing. If there was a bad guy, then I was the good guy.

That was, in fact, the way we approached it. I was the head of IUCN's Species Conservation Program from 1986 to 1991. And my job was to help develop specialist networks, primarily academic research

types, that went around the world studying different animals and presenting their opinions on the status of those species.

Sustainable resource utilization depends on balancing a variety of incentives: Economic, institutional, and biological.

At this time I was also moving out of my traditional academic background into the real world of international politics and conservation, and took it upon myself to educate myself, and spent a lot of time working in the bush. And it became very clear to me, during that period, that what played well in Washington or in Gland, Switzerland, where I was located, didn't necessarily "play" in the developing world. Why? Because we were, in fact, leaving the people out of the equation.

It's all well and good for us talk about what is important in terms of conservation, but unless we are invoking or bringing into that equation the very people that live with those resources, we will not be successful. And that understanding is what brought me together with such colleagues as Ike and others on this panel, to pursue this concept of sustainable use.

"Sustainable use" is, in fact, a bridge. Ike has made the point that resources, by their very nature, are to be used. Wild resources – animals and plants – have been used, and will continue to be used by men and women for their own purposes. One important reason for that is development. My learning curve – my own experience – has shifted to actually developing community-based management programs. And I have developed community-based natural resource management systems in Central America, South America, West Africa, and Central Asia.

What I have learned from these programs is that no matter what community you're dealing with, what language they speak, or what state of development they are in when one starts, they all are interested in managing and utilizing their own natural resources in a sustainable manner. Utilizing them for an economic benefit. The era of the "noble savage" is long gone. I don't know if there ever was one. People want money to purchase things. They convert those resources in their neighborhood into cash to purchase those things.

The Savé Conservancy is about a million acres – larger than the state of Rhode Island.

How sustainable this resource utilization is depends on balancing a variety of incentives: Economic, institutional, and biological. We have learned in our experience that the keys are to apply the principles of adaptive management and monitoring. I'm not going to go too far into that because a colleague here is going to spend more time explaining it, and probably better than I can. But let me say this: When we look at the management and use of renewable natural resources, there is a tendency for the developed countries to push for requirements that are based on scientific criteria that must be in place before a utilization program can be undertaken.

Now, that's all well and good if we were starting from scratch. But the reality is we're not. The reality is that the use is going on. So, how do we, in fact, step into a use regime, and begin to introduce a process that will lead to greater sustainability? Because you can't ask people to stop eating.

If I stood in a village and said "Oh, before you do that, we need a proper survey," I would be run out of that village on a rail. What I *can* do is, by developing a trust with that community, begin to develop a program where they will adopt a process – we call it "adaptive management and monitoring" – so that that use will be more sustainable.

The only animal that had a value at that time was a cow – there was absolutely no value on wildlife – so the wildlife was replaced with cattle.

Now, why might a community do something unsustainably? Because they're trying to improve the quality of their lives. That, in turn, implies that there are markets for their products, and so one of the issues that we are now facing is how do we help develop a market regime that goes beyond the basic subsistence level that will help these communities develop, right now.

I just came back from Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire, and I asked a colleague who was with me during this trip, "How would you define development?" And he paused for a moment and he said "Making opportunities available." And I thought, "That's brilliant!" What this man had done, in three words, was summarize what I think we ought to be doing in the future. It's not telling people what to do; it's providing them with tools and the ability to better manage their renewable natural resources.

One dimension to our program there is, in fact, facilitating the development of the market – making those resources available. And I'm going to leave it at that, and say that in my explorations of different management and use systems, I think one of the best private enterprise examples that I have ever come across was developed under the leadership of Mr. Clive Stockil, with so I will make way for Clive.

IKE SUGG: Thank you, Steve. Clive Stockil has been instrumental in the development of the Savé [pronounced Sah'-vay] Valley Conservancy in Zimbabwe, and it is indeed impressive. In fact, it is almost staggering. The Savé Conservancy is about one million acres – larger than the state of Rhode Island. And it's imperative to understand the conservation value that these conservancies, especially the Savé Conservancy, are making in southern Africa, and in Zimbabwe in particular. In Zimbabwe they are the last refuge for the black rhinos, which are severely imperiled, but whose numbers are now increasing for the first time in decades.

I think these are three fundamental issues, no matter where you are, ecological sustainability, economic sustainability, and socio-political sustainability.

As I mentioned in the passage I quoted from earlier, the heart of the matter is restricting access, which is clearly the case inside of a private conservancy. Because they've come close to reducing those animals to possession, people who might otherwise have killed them because they weren't worth anything to them alive, may now realize a far greater benefit by keeping them safe and sound. But since we have the expert here, I will turn things over to Mr. Clive Stockil.

MR. STOCKIL: Thank you. Unlike Steve, I didn't get to going to school – I was ambushed by the "barefoot professors" and spent my life in the bush. That's really what got me into this project. And I can say that, over the past four or five years, this project has been one of the most exciting – I won't call it conservation – but development programs in Zimbabwe.

I would like to take this opportunity to say how honored I am to be here. It's a long way from home, but while we might be on different continents, basic principles and common objectives bring us together, with minor variations. And I would like to thank the sponsors for inviting me to come here today.

We have converted from beef production into wildlife production, and tourism is the vehicle through which we are going to generate an income.

Zimbabwe, for those of you who haven't been there, is a small country in southern Africa. We have South Africa to the South, Mozambique to the East, Botswana to the West, and Zambia to the North. It's a landlocked country. And, within Zimbabwe, the Savé is the largest internal river in the country. And the Savé Valley Conservancy lies on the western side of this river.

The size of it has already been mentioned. It's made up of 25 individually owned properties, and 84 percent of its boundary is made up of communal lands, which are basically areas which have traditionally been reserved for indigenous people. And 16 percent is commercial agriculture, to the south. We are in what we call "region five," which is a low rainfall area about 500 feet above sea level. Rainfall ranges from 300 to 500 millimeters, which would be 12 to 20 inches, and some years as low as two inches. And that is really what has been the reason for us to look at this whole program.

Now, it might appear as though we're looking at it from a conservation point of view. We're not. We're looking at it in terms of "What is the most appropriate form of land use? What is sustainable?" I will very briefly try to cram seven years of experience into seven minutes and that's not going to be easy. But I'll try to give you an example of the process we went through in terms of making this decision. And, right from the outset, the criteria here was "What was sustainable? What was going to be the most appropriate form of land use, given the rainfall factor and soil types, et cetera?"

The conclusions in that land use report were that we could make between two and four times the amount of money from wildlife as we could out of cattle, and what was more important, it was sustainable.

I will deal, firstly, with the era before 1920, because 1920 was when modern man first moved into the north of the conservancy and brought cattle along. This is all well documented, and we have photographs and literature that substantiate the early history of the development of this area. They found the valley to be highly productive in wildlife, with a full range of species from elephant to major predators to the plains game, right down the full spectrum. In other words, that whole area had developed a balanced system.

The only animal that had a value at that time was a cow – there was absolutely no value on wildlife – and therefore cattle moved in and immediately were seen as the only form of economically sustainable land use. Cattle eat grass. So do wild animals. There was a conflict. And so the wildlife was replaced with cattle. A systematic program was set about to remove the wildlife, to create opportunities for cattle.

The cattle industry was heavily subsidized by government in the form of veterinary services, in the form of creating abattoir facilities and in marketing facilities. And also subsidized by virtue of the fact that

government ministries or departments were deployed to assist in the eradication of some of the larger mammals, mainly elephant and buffalo. As you may know, buffalo carry the hoof and mouth disease virus and, therefore, were not compatible with cattle.

We have recognized that we need to get more game into the conservancy, and, at the same time, that we need to deal with the socio-political pressures on our boundaries. So, we've brought the two together.

This all happened over a period of about 40 years, in the north of the conservancy. What is interesting is that the southern end of the conservancy was only settled in 1973, so the history there is much shorter, and that is the area where I come from. I'm down in the south of the conservancy, and the case history of Senuko, which is the property I have, is actually almost frightening. In 25 years we turned the whole system completely around and brought nature down to its knees. Nature collapsed within 25 years.

We saw soil erosion. We saw over-grazing. We saw the loss of perennial grasses. And we were forced, by the end of the eighties, to sit down and really think about what our future was. Where were we headed? It was absolutely certain that we were headed for an economic disaster, let alone an ecological disaster.

What was interesting was that during the early phases of the introduction of cattle, the larger mammals were removed by cropping, hunting, et cetera, but there were some species which were selective grazers, species like hartebeest, and roan. These animals were not hunted out; these animals weren't poached out; these animals disappeared for the simple reason that they were selective grazers and couldn't compete with coarse grazers.

And, in a sense, in retrospect, that was nature talking to us. Nature was trying to tell us something. But, at the time, there was no value on wildlife. There was only value in beef. And, of course, the success of a farmer or a cattle rancher was determined by the carcass hanging on the butcher's hook, not from where that carcass came from.

In our situation, going back to natural systems, putting a value back on wildlife, and involving the communities, that we achieve all three of those issues: Ecological, economic, and socio-political.

And so these species disappeared. We didn't recognize that nature was talking to us. We then, unknowingly, allowed some of our perennial grasses to disappear. But because we were cattle ranchers, not grass ranchers, we let them disappear without noticing. And, of course, when the better quality grasses disappeared, our carrying capacity started taking a knock, and you could carry less stock on the land.

At the same time, the viability of cattle production was on the decline. The returns per head were less, and there was a simple way of combating that – putting more stock on, which just exacerbated the problem. By the end of the eighties, the beginning of 1990, as I said, nature collapsed. The perennials had gone. The annuals had gone. And nature, in desperation, created a weed that, basically, merely bound the soil to some extent, and that's when the erosion set in.

It was then that we sat down and realized that we had to look at our future. And, in 1990, we, as a group of ranchers and landowners, sat down and looked at where we

were headed. We believed that it was important to look at it professionally, rather than to try and make a decision from the heart, because we might be emotionally involved. We employed professional consultants to assist us, and we produced a land use feasibility study. This has been very useful in assisting the members to make the right decisions, and it has also been very useful in terms of negotiating with government.

Were commercial sale of products to be stopped tomorrow, much of this land, which amounts to more than twice the area of national parks, would be put to other uses.

If I may just pause a minute and mention political sensitivity, because, at this point in time, land in Zimbabwe, as you may have heard, is a very sensitive issue. And decisions with regard to land use cannot be made with aesthetic values in mind. Every bit of land has to, in some way, contribute to the national economy and create jobs. So, it's important that one understands the fact that there are very few opportunities in the private sector where one can enjoy tying up large pieces of land purely for aesthetic values.

The conclusion in this report was that there were three issues that we had to consider, and I think these are three fundamental issues, no matter where you are, whether you're in Africa or in this part of the world. They are ecological sustainability, economic sustainability, and socio-political sustainability.

Those are the three factors that we had to build this project on. We couldn't ignore them; we had to deal with them. Our approach was to be pro-active and to go out and to look at how best to deal with them. For the first one, ecological sustainability, it was clear that the system had broken down. What could we do about it? The only thing we could do was to take the stock off the land and to sit back and let nature mend itself. In a sense, that was a huge investment. We consciously had to give up an income for a period of five years, to allow nature to start rebuilding.

What has happened since has been a miracle. The systems have bounced back. We've gone right through the progression of seeing the annuals and the perennials come back, to seeing springs develop that haven't been visual for 15 to 20 years. It's been extremely exciting. I would say that the current ecological status of the area has, basically, been rebuilt back to where it was prior to the cattle era.

I don't think we have a clear understanding of what conservation really is, what we are trying to achieve, or why we are running into problems.

The economic side is the issue we're dealing with at the moment. We've had to convert from domestic stock to wildlife, which means that we are in the process of restocking that area now, at great expense, with the same species that only 25 years ago were costing a huge amount of money to remove.

We pioneered the first translocation of adult elephant. We've moved 600 elephant in family units from an overstocked game reserve just down the road, Gonarezho, to restock this area. We introduced buffalo and the full range of plains game. Predators are coming back, and what's exciting is that even species like the cape hunting dog or wild dog, which up until a few years ago were considered vermin, and in fact a bounty was paid on tails delivered to the District Commissioner's office, are now settled, stable, and breeding. We're up to about 80 in the conservancy.

That is the product now. We have converted from beef production into wildlife production, and tourism is the vehicle through which we are going to generate an income. Lodges are now being constructed in the conservancy and tourism is now a reality. The response has been very encouraging. The quality of the product has been comparable to other projects and areas around. We see tourism as being the cornerstone for achieving that second sustainable requirement.

When it comes to conservation we seem to put all problem solving mechanisms aside, and try to solve problems without really assessing the what the problem is.

There's also a great demand for the production of wildlife. The value of live game in southern Africa is very high at the moment. There are also other opportunities as a result of the fact there's been a value put back onto wildlife. Other areas are now considering going back into wildlife, and that is creating a demand. So, we see ourselves becoming a seed bank for other areas in the future.

There's talk about developing large parts of Mozambique, which has been through a civil war and a lot of their game reserves were depleted of wildlife. We are looking at restocking those. Where are they going to get the stock from? We see ourselves as being a major supplier of wildlife for projects like that. That's another form of income.

At the end of the day, the conclusions in that land use report were that we could make between two and four times the amount of money from wildlife as we could out of cattle, and what was more important, it was sustainable. We were talking about species that have evolved and adapted to that area and were more compatible with low rainfall. So, we believe that the decision that we made has achieved the first two of those sustainabilities – ecological and economic.

The third, the socio-political sustainability, is always a more difficult one, because it depends in part on who you're talking to, what level of government. You have a range of audiences that you have to deal with. Once again, we decided to be proactive and to go out and to find mechanisms to deal with this. Eighty-four percent of our boundary is communal land, made up of five district councils, 16 wards, and approximately 120,000 people, and that is a major factor. One cannot develop an oasis in a sea of poverty and expect the communities to support the program.

You can't go in and think you're going to save the gorillas if you're not interested in saving the people.

To this end, we have created a trust, which the five councils are members of and, basically, trustees. It's a long, complex, story, but I will try and cut it down as briefly as I can. What we have done is recognized that we need to get more game into the conservancy, and, at the same time, that we need to deal with the socio-political pressures on our boundaries. So, we've brought the two together and we've created an opportunity whereby those surrounding communities can purchase wildlife from governmental parks or from other private producers, and bring them to the conservancy and enter into a management agreement with the conservancy whereby the conservancy undertakes to manage their wildlife. That wildlife remains the property of that particular community.

How do they derive a benefit? The agreement will state that if they bring in 100 buffalo and graze them in the conservancy, they are allowed only to maintain a hundred. At the end of the year, the net increase

in population will be, let's say, 10 percent. So, they'll have 110 buffalo. And, through the conservancy, we'll organize an annual auction. The 10 buffalo will then be auctioned to the highest bidder. The revenues from those 10 animals will then go back to the community for community development. So, it's like setting up an endowment for the communities, who will then have a stake in the conservancy.

You can't expect people not to feed their children.

There are other spinoff advantages like, for instance, if there is an animal poached. Let's say one of the community come in and poach one of the buffalo. At the end of the year it's recognized and instead of selling 10 buffalo, now they will sell nine buffalo. All of a sudden, they realize the value of that animal. The communities will then assist in managing the illegal off-take.

These are some of the programs that have come out of this whole issue, but they all come back to the fundamental issue, and that is "What is the most appropriate form of land use, given the area we're in?" And we believe that, in our situation, going back to natural systems, putting a value back on wildlife, and involving the communities, that we achieve all three of those issues: Ecological, economic, and socio-political.

If you get that formula right, we believe that these wild areas, in a world where the human population is increasing every day and wild areas are shrinking every day, there is a chance that these areas can be maintained indefinitely. But, unless you deal with those three factors, we see large areas that are under natural system management at the moment being replaced by a more competitive form of land use, and we have to compete in Africa. If we don't compete, we will lose out, and so will the wildlife. Thank you.

MR. SUGG: I think there is also another very important point, and that is that none of this could have been possible without a change in Zimbabwean law in 1975 that allowed private landowners to obtain what's called "appropriate authority" over the wildlife on their land. "Appropriate authority" is essentially usufructuary rights or proprietorship – in other words, all the rights and benefits of ownership without title. And since then, as Dr. David Cumming of World Wildlife Fund Multi-Species Project in Harare has pointed out, the amount of land under wildlife in Zimbabwe has increased from 17,000 square kilometers to 30,000 square kilometers. That's just since 1975.

People have never spent resources conserving things that they didn't use or they didn't value, and in the English language the words "useless" and "valueless" are interchangeable.

Quoting from Dr. Cumming, he said "The greater proportion of this land would not now be under wildlife if consumptive use and sale of products had not been possible. Were commercial sale of products to be stopped tomorrow, much of this land, which amounts to more than twice the area of national parks, would be put to other uses." *

* David Cumming (1990) "Wildlife Products and the Marketplace: A View from Southern Africa," *Multispecies Animal Production Systems Project*, WWF Project Paper #12.

With that, I will introduce our final speaker, Dr. Grahame Webb, who is the Director and Founder of Wildlife Management International, a company based in the Northern Territory of Australia. I have known Webby for a few years now, and he is one of the more knowledgeable and certainly one of the most colorful people in the sustainable use of wildlife movement, and anywhere in the world, a highly respected gentleman. He is the Regional Chairman of both IUCN's Crocodile Specialists Group for Australia and New Zealand and, also, the regional chair of the Sustainable Use Specialists Group. Grahame Webb.

DR. WEBB: Thank you. What I'd like to talk about today, really, is some of the bigger picture conservation issues. I think we tend to run into a lot of problems with conservation because I don't think we have a clear understanding of what conservation really is, what we are trying to achieve, or why we are running into problems.

As for my background, I have worked on a number of different projects but I have been particularly involved with the return of crocodiles in the Northern Territory. I'll talk about that at the end, because we hear so much about things going wrong, and we don't hear a lot about when things go right. But crocodiles are something that's certainly gone right in the Northern Territory. We have more crocodiles now than I think we have ever had, which has brought its own unique brand of problems.

Conservation is the sum total of actions we take to preserve or maintain items to which we attribute a positive value.

But if you ask people what conservation is, if you got one word back, you'd probably get the word "problem," because whenever you hear the word "conservation" there's always someone whinging about something. And the other word is wildlife. People relate conservation to wildlife.

And I think that's where the problem sort of starts and finishes, because conservation problems are really no different than any other problem. We solve problems every day, and we have libraries of books written on solving problems. But when it comes to conservation, for reasons that are not clear at all, we seem to put all those problem solving mechanisms aside, and try to solve problems without really assessing the what the problem is.

Any manual on problem solving will tell you, basically, that the key element is to actually identify the problem, "tease" it apart, and find out what are the elements that are causing the problem. And then, if you really understand a problem, you can build up a solution to it. When it comes to conservation, we often don't do that. We seem to just take things for granted. We don't burrow into it and find out why there is a particular problem.

And part of the reason for that is that we have allowed conservation to become a mixture of philosophical elements – animal rights, animal welfare, and conservation itself. And I'd put to you from the start that these are three totally separate issues, all to do with achieving totally separate goals. And if you're going to address and solve conservation problems, the first thing you've got to be able to do is to really tease all these issues apart and find out what actually is the base of the problem that you're trying to address. And that's been pretty difficult to do in the public arena.

The history of conservation is such a mixture. Back at the turn of the century in this country, there was a realization that game species were disappearing, and a lot of expertise went into bringing them back so that people could have game species for hunting and fishing and the like. But in the 1960s, when a new definition of "conservation" started to evolve, a lot of that history and expertise that built up was just quietly forgotten. Organizations, as Steve said, like the IUCN, went off on a tangent, largely with people from a science background, not people from a business background.

Game management people were deemed to be doing the wrong thing because they were killing things; they couldn't be involved. So, you had a group of people who all considered themselves great thinkers, but with no practical experience at all, heading off into a field that involved the livelihoods of people – their welfare, their medicines, their children's education, their food. But these things were all irrelevant to the "save the world" type conservationists who went out to solve problems without any practical problem solving skills. This went on for about 15 years, I think, before people started to wake up.

What most of them learned, of course, when they got into the field, is they couldn't solve these problems, because the problems were basically about people. And you can't go in and think you're going to save the gorillas if you're not interested in saving the people. Whenever you put people into the field to solve a conservation problem, they usually come back with the same story – that it's impossible to implement this program in this place, or you might be able to implement it now if you pour in a couple of million dollars for a few years, but it's impossible to sustain it because the people are poor and the people need the resource. You can't expect people not to feed their children.

If we're going to make conservation work, we need tolerance, respect, and understanding for all people's cultures and traditions.

And so it was in the eighties that people started to really swing back toward realizing that conservation really was much more about involving people. You weren't going to run conservation projects in any country unless you had people involved. If you want to sustain a conservation project, you have to look at the economic side, you have to look at the cultural side, you have to look at the social side. They're all elements.

You can't just go in there saying, "I love tigers, look out, here I come," because it's not going to work. It might make you feel good, you can stand up at podiums like this and say something like "I saved the whale," but that's about as far as it'll go in real, pragmatic, terms. I mean, these things have managed to survive without individuals for a long time, and I don't think individuals, in the end, are going to make much difference.

It's all going to come around to whether or not it's possible for the people that live with a resource, to work with it and save it, and this is now, in the nineties, just becoming generally accepted. The only people now that are objecting to this new approach and the type of approach that Clive was talking about, are really the people who have adopted such strong philosophies about animal rights and welfare that they can no longer move with the stream. But the practical, sustainable way of conserving things is coming over the world like a tidal wave, and it's going to continue doing that, because it works, because it makes people important. It assumes that people are the key variables involved.

I have worked in many different fields and have, for a long time, tried to get a clear understanding of what conservation is really about, and for me an important insight was the realization that humans have a long history of conserving things. They've been conserving buildings and stories and legends and myths and old lifestyles, and medicines, and all sorts of things over time. And about the only common denominator is that people have never spent resources conserving things that they didn't use or they didn't value, and in the English language the words "useless" and "valueless" are interchangeable. The whole garbage industry is based on useless items, thousands and thousands of tons of them every day that you take out and trash, because they have no use.

Crocodiles in the Northern Territory are a good example of conservation in action.

I don't think anybody can come up with an example where people have put resources into conserving something that they haven't considered had a use or a value. When you apply that to wildlife, I think you can legitimately say that conservation is the sum total of actions we take to preserve or maintain items to which we attribute a positive value. That value is all important. Now, you can value a whale because it produces really nice, tender, red, meat that tastes beautiful, or you can value a whale because you like to see it leaping up and wagging its tail; it makes you feel good to lie in bed at night and think about whales. Either way, as long as you value it, you'll be interested in conserving it.

If you absolutely hate whales, if you're a fisherman and they happen to plow through your nets or sink your boats or something, then you can't be expected to spend resources looking after whales. People don't and they won't. Whales are probably not a good example, because people don't interact with them as much. But, certainly, with wildlife generally, people need to value it to conserve it. I don't think there's a chance of that being wrong.

The question of whether you value something for consumptive or non-consumptive uses is where people start to get a bit worried, where the whole story gets a bit emotive. Personally, I don't have any problem if people want to consume wildlife, as long as they do it in a way that's sustainable. Some people do have a problem with killing things and eating them, but I don't. Even so, those sort of people can still generate resources for conservation.

But when the people that are opposed to killing and hunting start to tell the people who are not opposed that they are socially inept or antiquated, then I think that's very wrong. I think, in the world today, if we're going to make conservation work, we need to base it on 10 words: Tolerance, respect, and understanding for all people's cultures and traditions.

The people who were hunting them and making money out of them put the pressure on the government to conserve them.

I am basically worried about the whole issue of animal rights, animal welfare, and conservation as three separate issues, and I get very worried about animal rights. I think it's a very dangerous, theoretical issue. Once you start drawing parallels and saying people are at the same level as animals, the question arises as to where you put the people. Do you put them with the whales or do you put them with the cockroaches, or do you put some of the people with the whales and some of the people with the cockroaches?

The problem with animal rights is not the consequences of a few people treating their pet as a person; it's the consequences of allowing a governmental system that allows you to treat people as though they were animals. And people should not forget, in all seriousness, that the strongest animal rights legislation came from the government of Adolf Hitler, who in turn showed little regard for people. So, I think animal rights is an urban, religious-type philosophy that has no practical application.

Animal welfare, of course, is a different issue. Animal welfare can have a people point of view. It's not just about caring for animals, because if everyone tortured their dogs, they'd end up torturing people.

Conservation, as I said before, is the more practical side. For some people, however, these things can still get out of hand. There's a very good example from Round Island, where there was an effort to eradicate feral animals that were destroying the habit of an endangered species of boa. Animal rights and animal welfare concerns stopped them from eradicating the feral animals, and so the boa went extinct. So it doesn't automatically follow that the three things go together. Quite often, if you increase animal rights and animal welfare, you decrease the ability to conserve.

These issues are pretty general ones, which I got interested in because of crocodiles. Crocodiles in the Northern Territory, I think, are a good example of conservation in action. During the period from 1945 to 1971, saltwater crocodiles were just harvested whenever they could be found. There were no controls. They were considered a predator and a nuisance. Nobody gave two rat's backsides about saltwater crocodiles and crocodiles were wiped out very quickly.

With wildlife, people need to value it to conserve it.

And over 26 years there were about 120,000 taken. What was a common animal became a rare animal. I should say, these saltwater crocodiles are the biggest of the crocodiles. They get up to seven meters long, weigh a ton, and they eat people or cattle or anything else that comes within their range. So, people weren't that displeased to see them go.

But they also happen to have the highest quality skin. They're worth about three times the value of American alligator. So, around about the 1970s, the people who were hunting them and making money out of them realized that the going of the saltwater crocodiles was the going of their industry, and they're the ones who put the pressure on the government to conserve them.

And, back in 1971, saltwater crocodiles in the Northern Territory were, finally, protected. That was pretty easy, because at that time there weren't any of them there, and there hadn't been any there in big numbers since the hunting started, really, since the 1950s. So, it's a little bit like saying "Well, we'll preserve the dinosaurs". Everyone will say "That's a good idea." The unicorns? Yes, we'll conserve them too. Because it doesn't interact with you, it's not a problem.

Well, saltwater crocodiles started to come back, and come back with a vengeance, and suddenly people were seeing crocodiles everywhere. Within nine or 10 years people that fished in these rivers were seeing them sliding off the banks. And at that time – we were working on them then – all the people down in the cities in bottom half Australia kept saying that there weren't really any crocs coming back at all – that we were imagining it. Every sports store was selling baseball bats to knock 'em out of the

way, and there was still this image that we were all telling lies, that they weren't coming back at all, that the crocs were still disappearing, were critically endangered.

Of course, IUCN got involved. When you really want to drive an environmental problem, it's pretty easy if you know people like Steve. You start getting international organizations to put the pressure on, then you can say "Well, there can't be any crocs; the IUCN has just said there's none, so there can't be."

So, we went about it our own way in the Northern Territory and told everybody to jam it, because we had a real problem. We're only 150,000 people in 1.3 million square kilometers, and we had two people killed and two people badly mauled, and in the start of our tourist season we had a croc attacking boats and tipping them over. So we started a program. It was a problem crocodile program, a public education program, and a commercial program. One solution for the problem crocs was just take them out of Darwin Harbor. We take out about 250 a year now, to stop them from eating people in the harbor.

The public education program was really to make sure everybody actually understood what was happening – that these animals were going to have to come back a hell of a lot more than they were already to get their populations back up. And the third one was to make them valuable. We did that through farming, through tourism, and through using crocs as symbols of the Northern Territory.

People will look after things that have a value.

Which brings us to current situation, where we have brought saltwater crocodiles back from probably less than a thousand adults to probably 65,000 to 70,000 wild animals, fully restocked in every river and creek across the whole of the Northern Territory, from one side to the other. Ninety-seven percent of our rivers are totally intact, their mangroves and everything else, and we have brought crocodiles back, those big predators, back into all the rivers, and it's a real success story. It's very difficult to do that, and it'd be very difficult to do it here, difficult to do it in most countries. The only reason we've been able to do it is because of their value. In the eyes of the public, these animals are valuable to the Northern Territory.

I keep stressing that at every turn. When people said to me, in the early days, when I'd have to battle both sides of the coin, the old IUCN on one side, people in the Northern Territories on the other side. And people would say to me things like, "Well, how many crocodiles do you want?" When we were able to turn that question around and just say "Well, how much money do you want in the bank?", that's when things really changed. Because if people make the claim that you have to love animals before you can conserve them, that means, for animals like crocodiles, that you're never going to be able to conserve them, because people aren't going to love them – it's the same for snakes, frogs, cockroaches, and many other animals. If you can short circuit that thought and give them a value, then it will work.

I can tell from experience that it works. People might have trouble with the morality of it. I'm not interested in that. It works from a conservation point of view. People will look after things that have a value. It might be some moldy, old, fruit tree in their backyard that generates $10 worth of worm-eaten fruit every year, but they won't chop it down, because it's valuable, it generates something. And that works. Without a doubt, it works. For us in the Northern Territory, there is no doubt we wouldn't have been able to conserve crocs unless we adopted this absolutely pragmatic, realistic, approach.

MR. SUGG: Thanks, Grahame. Thanks to everyone. We've got a little bit of time so we'll take some questions from the audience.

QUESTION: Could someone explain a bit more about the black rhino trade in southern Africa, both domestic and international, and comment on the possibility of the resumption of the trade in rhino horn?

MR STOCKIL: Okay, I think the first thing one's got to recognize is the status we are in at the moment. We've gotten down to really low numbers of rhinos. Our current objective is to build those populations up, and that is what we are doing. Our population is growing at 10 percent per annum now. The decline has been reversed.

And going back to what I said earlier on, the issue here is not how you use it, the question is whether it is competitive in terms of other forms of land use. Now, if a rhino becomes a key component in justifying that form of land use, through achieving those three sustainables, then I think the rhino is going to be around for a lot longer, and its population is going to grow, because more and more people are going to want the rhino. But, we're at that low level period at the moment, and so from our point of view, our only objective is to build those populations up.

QUESTION: I'd like to hear more about the process of land redistribution in Zimbabwe. It sounds like land is being taken away from the very people who have made the land productive.

Any rights granted to animals are granted by taking away rights from human beings.

MR STOCKIL: I think we all recognize, in Zimbabwe, that there is a need for some land reform and redistribution. There is enough land to do this, and we have been involved in a number of discussions with several ministers and the Vice President, et cetera, with regards to the conservancy program. And they have recognized that the conservancy is in a different category with regard to land acquisition and redistribution. The conservancy has been identified as being a catalyst which will develop wildlife and tourism in a new area in Zimbabwe. Up until now, tourism has been restricted to the west and north of the country, and the conservancy is in the process of pioneering the marketing and the creating an awareness of a new industry in the southeast of the country.

So, as a result of that, government has classified the conservancy in a different category, and the process of acquiring land in that area has been reversed, in the case of at least one of the properties in the conservancy. So, I think they recognize the importance of the conservancy and I don't think they're going to try to change land use. If they do get involved, it will be to possibly address the indigenous participation in the program but not to undermine the basic project.

QUESTION: Where did this notion ever come from that animals have rights?

MR. SUGG: When it comes to the question of animal rights, you have to understand that animals are living centers of purpose, and once you start with that premise you can go pretty much anywhere. I am being a little tongue in cheek, but Tom Regan actually wrote a very good book on the subject – a kind of negative rights based defense of animal rights that is rather intellectually challenging. [*]

[*] Tom Regan (1985) *The Case for Animal Rights,* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Let me point out at this moment that we're honored to have Eugene Lapointe here, who was the Secretary General of CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, from 1982 to 1990, and he has a question. Eugene?

MR. LAPOINTE: Yes. I'd also like to point out something that Grahame touched but that very few people understood in the past, and that is that any rights granted to animals are granted by taking away rights from human beings.

Now, I have a question that all three of you have touched on, about this relationship of conservation to commerce, and of commerce to development. Do you think there is any merit to the strong perception in some developing countries, particularly those that have been frustrated with certain international fora like CITES and the IWC, that the developed countries are refusing access to resources so that less-developed countries will not become developed?

People would say things like, "Well, how many crocodiles do you want?" When we were able to turn that question around and just say "Well, how much money do you want in the bank?" that's when things really changed.

DR. EDWARDS: I think, Eugene, what you may be saying is that through conventions like CITES, potential markets for the delivery of those resources have been restricted. But they also restrict access in an indirect way. Their own development assistance often carries with it certain restrictions about how a country might or might not use their own renewable natural resources.

I go back to my colleague in Cote d'Ivoire, when he answered my question about what is development – it's the provision of opportunities. I often wonder whether or not that is the model that most givers of aid actually are pursuing.

I think that there's also some attempts to maintain a dependence, if you will, economically and otherwise, on the donor country. Particularly in African states, donor countries are, in fact, breeding a greater dependence on the part of the recipient of those funds, rather than encouraging a self sufficiency that would allow them to go on and use their own natural resources. Trying to eliminate markets certainly fits that category.

MR. SUGG: Thank you very much. If there's one lesson that I would like to draw from this, it would be in comparison to how we're trying to conserve and protect wildlife in this country. Our panelists have all talked about rewarding people for conserving wildlife, but here in the U.S., under the Endangered Species Act, people risk losing some of the rights to their land if endangered species are found on it. So we're using negative incentives instead of positive incentives. People are actually punished for having endangered species on their land, and so, naturally, they don't want them on their land. And endangered species are suffering because of it.

By contrast, the efforts we've heard about today in other parts of the world demonstrate that there is an alternative. Their success is something that we could learn from, and I hope we do someday soon. Please join me in thanking the panelists for joining us today. We enjoyed it very much.

END

The Center for Private Conservation is supported by the William H. Donner Foundation.

Created in 1995, the Center for Private Conservation researches, documents and promotes the public benefits of private conservation and stewardship.

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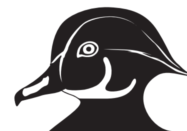

Common and Private Property Rights
A Roundtable Discussion
Property rights theorists and others who consider various conservation regimes often differentiate between common and private property rights institutions, yet the lines between these regimes are often muddled. The experts gathered for this forum use a host of examples to illustrate the wide variety of private (individual and communal) approaches to conservation.

Conservation Easements and Private Land Stewardship
by Steven J. Eagle

Many landowners pride themselves on their careful stewardship of their lands. They often want to ensure that their love for the environment is respected by succeeding family generations and others who eventually might own their lands.

The conservation easement is a device that attempts to deal with all of these problems, and this paper deals with both the evaluation and effectiveness of these easements.

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A Roundtable Discussion
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The land trust movement in the United States has grown by leaps and bounds. While few would deny the important role that land trusts play in conservation, some believe that the movement has strayed from its private conservation roots. This paper is a transcript of the Center for Private Conservation roundtable discussion on private land trusts.

Antitrust and the Commons: Cooperation or Collusion?
by Bruce Yandle
People have long been aware that unbridled access to natural resources could result in ruin for all. Whether by custom, kinship, or ownership, people found ways to assign limited rights for the sharing of pastures, streams, and hunting grounds. Yet modern antitrust law is hostile to such a mangements, making it more difficult to protect the commons.

The Tragedy of the Commons Revisited: Politics vs. Private Property
by Randy T. Simmons, Fred L. Smith, Jr., and Paul Georgia
In this monograph, Simmons, Smith and Georgia argue that private management of environmental resources through clearly defined property rights is superior to political management of those resources.

Emerging Technologies and Private Stewardship of Marine Resources
by Michael De Alessi
Until recently, the prevailing notion among regulators was that fisheries should be open and available to everyone. This assured that fisheries would be subject to the tragedy of the commons. If fisheries are to survive, access to them must be limited. De Alessi explores options for saving the world's fisheries.

Resolving the Tragedy of the Commons by Creating Private Property Rights in Wildlife
by Robert J. Smith
The problems of overexploitation and extinction of wildlife appear to derive consistently from their being treated as a common property resource. Center for Private Conservation Senior Scholar R. J. Smith, through several examples, demonstrates how creating private property rights in wildlife can preserve our natural resources.

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