

Shaping a Conservation Future

Conservation and Ecology – July 2012

Martha's Vineyard – microcosm of great issues to study and interpret.

- Indians – continuity, flexibility of lifestyle in the face of uncertainty, climate change, vegetation dynamics, hurricanes and oceans – adaptable.
- Beech/oak abrupt transition; climate dynamic; threshold; future analog.
- Loss of grasslands, shrub habitats, early successional.
- Sprawl, and monstrous houses, growth development; water contaminate.
- Connectivity.
- Sea-level rise.
- Cultural versus natural.
- Case study for dealing with issues – conservation roundtable; Land Bank; Martha's Vineyard Commission; diverse organizations; Wakeman Conservation Center; island plan leadership – HBH; local production; merge farming and conservation.

Challenges:

- Some species lost. New organisms. New habitats support novel species assemble.
- No stationarity – 500 years. Change a constant but not constant. Episodic, slow, abrupt.
- Processes – some last (Indian, Colonial); some persist, legacies, some new.
- Can only go forward, tweaking what is here and changing.
- Major change coming.
- Conflicts – Wildland x working; fire x mowing; interior forest x agriculture.

Pragmatic approach – science and history – guides; human needs.

Solution:

Priority – land protection; greatest security – options, flexibility, buffer trails; species habitat and connectivity; financial hedge; water.

Part and parcel with smart growth. Complements and reinforces the zoning and effort to be more efficient in construction, energy use and transportation. As move forward with focused development and other zoning, e.g., of commercial, industrial and residential areas advance conservation to reinforce these patterns and make them secure.

Pragmatic – conservation restrictions, work with land owners and their interests, take advantage of their history, experience, knowledge and ability to work the local land. Compensate for value. Fee purchase as necessary and useful – landowner interest, specific management objectives, focused public use and benefits – e. g. trails.

Manage as little as necessary and in focused way. Allow old forests to develop, **C** to be stored and species to sort out according to natural process/prevailing conditions. Retard change – major concern over change and yet management upped pace of change. Interaction of disturbance and changed environment will generate the most rapid change.

Preserve existing elements – most species not killed by climate change – so will live a long time even in unfavorable climate – e.g. horticulturals.

- Prevention and mitigation – very little evidence of success. Much uncertainty in how things will change or what factors will change how species will respond so a guessing game.
- Often generate more impact than are trying to correct or prevent. Impact accelerates change and opens site to new species.
- Especially true of salvage logging – value often low and impact often great; danger often overblow and other options at less expense more warranted. Fire, bugs.

Nature is fine without us. Hubris. No ecosystem change.

Impact often much greater and unstated consequences. Any further impact accelerates, augments add.

Human need to respond, to do something – true of landowners, especially true of managers, agencies, organizations – want to show they are doing something, taking charge and control of the situation.

Incredible value to unmanaged – control, legacy, research, destination. Natural part of the landscape – very little in the New England. Examples – Pisgah, Naushon, Woods Property.

Much value to management; great rationale – get products from the land. Myth of preservation.

Wildlands - core, large; nature, natural process, species; recreation science; management; coordinated adjoining ownerships – bigger wildland.

Woodlands – working lands, cultural lands.

Grazing – diversity with different regimes – different animals on different lands and over time – chickens, pigs, sheep, goats, llama, and beef.

Can cover a much greater area; lots of practitioners, educational. Eliminate fuel – low fuel with moving regime as needed. No health issues, little safety concern. Replace burning with grazing – cost but effective, historical, engaging – recreation, productive; cost effective. Intense culture – greenhouses, fields.

Photos – Illustrating Conservation

IMG 4272 Arial West Tisbury, Tisbury Great Pond – multiple options – various necks showing alternatives – pasture, shrub, forest. Succession burgeoning at the fence lines.

Basic illustrations of multiple pathways for landscapes – e.g., development, forest, grass, sand plain.

Conservation Examples – July 2012

Conservation landscapes assembled.

- i. State Forest – Greenfield – Pohogonot – Pennywise – Long Pond.
Sepsiessa – then up to Vineyard Haven through Stony Hill and Thimble Farm and to south Woodlands towards Oak Bluffs – Felix Neck – Tuthill – Morning Glory and Katama.
- ii. Chappy Trail
- iii. Western Moraine – Phillips – Ripleys – Blackwater-Norton [Seven Gates] to Central Moraine.
- iv. Coastal Ponds – Chilmark, Tisbury Great Pond [Quansoo], Long Pond and Homer's, Edgartown Great Pond [Turkeyland], Pocha Pond, Cape Poge.

Lost Opportunity

- West Chop
- Foster's Farm – State Road via Norton's to Ice House Pond.
- State Forest Development.

Fire – July 2012

Map all sites burned in the last 10-20 years.

Argument for agriculture – mow, sheep, etc.

- investment in useful infrastructure and product.
- not weather dependent – does have different efficiencies at different times.
- direct human involvement; education; year-round; classes.
use and control of wild animals – geese, deer.
- historically accurate; not speculative as fire.
- by-product of employment and resource production.
- animals, like vegetation, are relentless.
- broaden land conservation base.
- fire speculative – abundance, intensity, size, season; no other value.
- broad base of experience in Europe to fire information.

- known success – look at history.
- Scales – anyone with a brush cutter, weed whacker, brush hog, horses, cattle, sheep, llamas can get involved; no esoteric knowledge, insurance safety.
- works in concentrated, settled areas.
- ↓ fire danger.