

Land Conservation in a Changing World

by

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Chapters 1 – 3

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Title page image: Thomas Cole (1801-1848). *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm – The Oxbow*, 1836. Oil painting. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Source: Wikipedia Commons.

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Dedication

To my former colleagues and mentors
at
The Trustees of Reservations in Massachusetts
and my friends
who have dedicated their lives and many talents
to the land conservation and cultural heritage preservation movements

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Brian Donahue, legendary Founder of Land's Sale in Weston, Massachusetts and Professor of Environmental History at Brandeis University who, following my retirement from The Trustees of Reservations, encouraged me to prepare the course syllabus on which this work is based and approved the course proposal under the name *Land Conservation in a Crowded World*; and Frank Lowenstein, Deputy Director of the New England Forestry Foundation, who partnered with me in teaching the course in the spring semester of 2015. I also wish to thank The Trustees' archivist, Alison Bassett, who encouraged this effort and directed me to the invaluable organizational archives that have been heroically archived and cataloged by Alison and her dedicated staff; and my editor, Chris Fryefield, J.D., now a staff member at the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts, without whose sharp eyes for accuracy, fitness of phrase, and sense of flow and organization this work would not have reached this stage. Errors that remain are entirely on me. Finally, I want to acknowledge with love and gratitude the support of my wife, Wenda Tai, and my son and daughter, Carrington R. Ward and Andrienne Tai-Ward.

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Note:

To make these postings easier to handle, each chapter and its set of appendices are numbered independently and posted separately.

Personal Foreword

In 2014, having retired from a well-regarded non-profit conservation and preservation group, after many years as conservation staff member and director of a great conservation team and program, I had a perhaps slightly exalted idea of what my experience in the conservation world would offer to students exploring field of environmental management, conservation, and policy. My idea for a survey course on land conservation origins and practice met with encouragement from Brian Donahue, Brandeis University Professor of Environmental History and founder of the pioneering community organization, Land Sakes, in Weston, Mass. At his suggestion, I asked Frank Lowenstein (formerly with The Nature Conservancy in western Massachusetts and then Deputy Director of the New England Forestry Foundation), who was teaching a course on climate change at Brandeis as an adjunct lecturer, to work with me on the syllabus. We collaborated well and team-taught the course, with at least B+ success, to a group of undergraduate and graduate students in the winter semester of 2015. With many changes, that syllabus morphed into a chapter outline for this work. I had hoped that Frank, who is a brilliant thinker and teacher, would join me as co-author, but he could not pile this onto his already demanding commitments, so I forged on alone.

Brian had suggested, “One of the best things about teaching a course is that it’s a good way to start a book.” What he didn’t say was that writing a book is like running (or maybe limping in) a slow marathon with a constantly receding finish line, long after the water, oranges, and cheering throngs have disappeared.

A work in progress: current plans for publication and distribution

This book will continue to be an ambitious undertaking. As an independent scholar, I have no research assistants and little personal access to other researchers in this field. Thanks to Portland State University’s policy of extending library privileges to any resident of Portland, Oregon, I do have terrific access to its solid collection, including academic journals, but not to e-books, an increasing proportion of its acquisitions. My time is short, my budget for this project is limited, and the pace of change seems to be accelerating. The mountain of reading in this field seems to bulge by the day like a volcano with indigestion. I write too slowly; my garden

demands persistent pulling of invasive plants; our home improvements need management; and my bi-coastal family deserves much closer attention than I'm giving to my garden. I have little time or patience for seeking out publishers.

For these reasons, I have begun publishing this work by groups of chapters on my personal website, <https://wesleytward.com>. I welcome your feedback, corrections, suggestions, and ideas for approaching this subject. I promise to use your comments to improve my accuracy and sharpen my insights, with appropriate acknowledgement. I'd also like to add more images and charts, which are a real challenge to obtain or create. I'll do my best to answer all reasonable communications.

I do see online publishing as an opportunity to form a community of talented people interested in contributing to this important subject. If a publisher has not materialized through my efforts or, more likely, the intervention of angelic forces, at the point an entire part is poised for independent lift-off, I may publish that part as a bound softcover volume and make it available as an on-demand publication. As noted in the Proposed Table of Contents, I hope to recruit insightful collaborators or contributors for several of the later chapters, and I have begun that search, with some encouraging success. Potential collaborators, please raise your hands!

Finally, dear readers, as time allows during this project, I hope to develop this website as a forum for your stories about, and experiences in, land conservation and your suggestions for making better sense of this topic. At this point, I'm interested in the personal and organizational connections that helped this movement coalesce and grow, in North America and around the world. I'm especially interested in stories of the origin and development of land trusts with unusual community-serving and community-challenging missions, and of those with diverse boards, staff, and supporters.

With your help, I would like to imagine, and perhaps even construct, a non-GMO family tree of land conservation organizations and agencies that would suggest their inter-related origins, evolution, and futures. Perhaps, as a community, we could devise a virtual, entirely painless, organizational DNA test kit. The results would offer sometime unexpected insights into an organization's deep origins. For example, the results might show A% in antiquities and

historic preservation, B% biodiversity protection (with sub-percentages for the main emphases), C% in reclaiming the commons, L% in linear conservation, M% in climate mitigation and adaptation, and the remaining X % in some sort of innovative mission, like de-paving city parking surfaces and replacing them with parks and gardens or restoring stream habitats by removing dams. Of course, I realize that few of you with sound minds and vibrant careers will have time to spare for that project. However intriguing, there is simply too much to do in this work as it is. But if you have ideas, send them to me as soon as you can:

wesleytward@comcast.net.

I hope you enjoy this exploration as much as I have; and will give me your ideas, suggestions, large and small bits of knowledge and valuable stories, and your critiques.

Wes Ward

Half-mile east of the Willamette River,
Brooklyn neighborhood of Southeast Portland, Oregon
July 9, 2018

Proposed Chapter Outline

Land Conservation in a Changing World

Wesley T. Ward

Introduction. What is “land conservation” and why is it important?

Part One

- 1. Environmental awareness as the necessary context for conservation.** Is conservation in our DNA as humans? Prehistoric and indigenous examples of sustainable practices; ancient examples of environmental protection. Is there an intellectual foundation for conservation in the ancient world? Early examples of intentional conservation: sacred groves and royal forests.
- 2. European and English context of conservation.** Royal forests and parks of privilege. The notion of a “commons” – does a commons necessarily end in tragedy? Enclosure and defense of the commons. Notions of property, public and private. Property as a bundle of separable rights. Common law: usufruct and easements. The Lockean idea of liberty as

applied to private property in service of economic growth and the reciprocal rights of landowners. Ideas of perpetuity and legacy and the legitimacy of a trust.

- 3. Nineteenth Century Crucible of Conservation: Romanticism, Revolution, Reverie, and Railways.** The context for historic and scenic preservation in England and America. Romanticism, transcendentalism, the idea of landscape.
- 4. From the Nineteenth Century Crucible: Landmarks of Historic Preservation and Land Conservation.** Thomas Jefferson's unconsummated reverie. Village beautification and stewardship. Central Park and its progeny. Early conservation societies.
- 5. Nineteenth-century parks and villages, threatened landscapes; cultural conservation and historic preservation**
Early parks and amenities in the U.S. Conservation-related associations. Village improvement societies. U.S. and British examples of conservation and historic preservation and their importance.
- 6. Conservation trusts. The Trustees of Reservations and the English National Trust – founders and formation.** Early conservation actions. Comparison of the two organizations.

Part Two

7. **20th – 21st century evolution of the land conservation movement.** Acceptance of gifts of land and the purchase of land as core techniques of private and public conservation. Volunteer and staff leadership and stewardship. The trend toward professionalism. The Land Trust Alliance and other leadership organizations. Public land conservation agencies, municipal, state, federal. Public-private partnerships for land conservation.
8. **Land trust governance and Leadership.** Chronic issues and best practices. [Proposed contributor: Marc Smiley, Solid Ground Consulting]
9. **The conservation toolkit.** Geographic analysis, planning, and portrayal. Visioning, regulation, eminent domain – their uses, strengths, weaknesses, and trends.
10. **Conservation easements: Having our cake and eating it too?** How conservation easements transformed American land trusts into national movement. Conservation easements as a technique and practice: a critical assessment. The concept of perpetuity as an ideal and a reality. The two sides of intergenerational equity. The belt-and-suspenders approach to perpetual conservation: Necessary or redundant?
11. **Cultural heritage conservation.** Archaeological and historic preservation in a conservation context. Who determines what is culturally important to conserve? Leading heritage organizations and their relationship to land conservation. Toward a unified vision of natural and cultural heritage conservation.
12. **Landscapes, large and small. Wildness and wilderness, ecology, biodiversity, sustainability.** How is climate change disrupting conservation strategy?
13. **Parkways, greenbelts, rivers, greenways, trails.** Linearity, connectivity and conservation.
14. **Working land and recreation land conservation; religious and institutional lands considered as working lands.** Farmland, rangeland, forests and working land easements. Reducing impacts on conservation values. Special opportunities and challenges of religious and institutional lands.
15. **Environmental justice and the conservation movement.** Urban land trusts and community land trusts (emphasizing housing preservation in a conservation context). Achieving inclusion and diversity. Equity, restorative justice, and intergenerational justice. Leadership, governance, consciousness raising. To what extent could demographic and generational transitions strengthen the movement, or fragment and weaken it? [Proposed contributor: to be determined]
16. **Trends in land conservation.** Community conservation. Sustainability and resilience as climate change proceeds. Conservation and renewable energy.

- 17. International conservation.** The mixed colonial legacy. UNESCO – IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature). Landscape scale conservation sponsored by large organizations in partnership with governments. [Proposed contributor: to be determined]
- 18. Indigenous conservation activism.** Conservation as survival and defiance.
- A. Examples within the developed world: including Great Bear Lake, Northwest Territories, first UNESCO Biosphere Reserve led by an indigenous community; indigenous activism in the U.S., Indigenous activism in India and China.
 - B. Examples within the developing world: Asia, Africa, and South and Central America. [Proposed contributor: to be determined]

Conclusion

Conclusion: Perpetuity in a changing world – what do people want it to mean and what does it mean in practice; can and should it be achieved? Major challenges and the future of land conservation, global and local, ecological and cultural.

Conservation Characters

Biographical list of selected thinkers and leaders, with life spans

Timelines

Timeline of Environmental Consciousness, 100,000 BCE – 1 CE

Chronology: 150 Years of Conservation, 1770 – 1920

Life Spans of Conservation Characters

Major conservation figures mentioned in the text.