Collaborative Conservation and Multi-parcel land protection projects

Stephen Thor Johnson, Sage Advisors and New England Forestry Foundation

Evaluating your Readiness and Building Capacity for Aggregation

More than just a checklist, this workshop will explore the reasons for (and challenges of) collaborative conservation. Bring your stories of working collaboratively – the good and the bad. We'll reserve time to have an open discussion where you can ask questions, share your experience, and help advance the state of the art in collaborative conservation.

1. Taking stock – Do you have clear mission, service area, conservation plan?
2. Project experience – What sorts of projects have you done? How do you "staff" these efforts? Do you have more opportunities than "staff", or the opposite?
3. Fundraising experience – How do you fund land conservation, including due diligence, baseline reports, legal services, negotiations, purchase price, stewardship fund contribution? Do you have operating reserves (how many months of reserves?)?
4. Looking around – Do you have like minded land trusts in your "neighborhood", or regional land trust covering a landscape that includes several local land trusts' service areas?
5. Partnering up – Have you worked in a formal or informal partnership with other land trusts? For what reasons? What organization initiated and/or provided leadership? How did you manage the funds needed to accomplish your joint project/s? What worked well? What did you learn? What would you do differently going forward?
6. Filling in the gaps – Do you need training, additional human resources, operating funds, project capital, other?
7. Open Discussion – see discussion questions circulated by email.

The Aggregation Toolbox – Resources for Accelerating Land Conservation

In this workshop we will examine some of the essential elements of successful, multi-parcel collaborative conservation programs with diversified funding sources. Because every region has unique assets and challenges, this workshop will focus on the common strategies and tools rather than try to offer the definitive "recipe" for aggregation. With experience gained working with over a dozen RCPs, New England Forestry Foundation is developing an "Aggregation Toolkit" of these strategies and tools, plus links to other resources that support this collaborative approach. It is very much a work in progress and your input is needed. We'll reserve time to have an open discussion where you can ask questions, share your experience, and help advance the state of the art in collaborative conservation.

1. Shaping your RCP for undertaking Aggregation – creating a regional vision, commitment to shared conservation and fundraising, leadership issues, role(s) for the convening organization.
2. Setting joint priorities – defining the problem, identifying forest and habitat resources, creating a regional conservation plan. What properties are you interested in conserving?
3. Will you use a standard conservation easement (working woods, or other) for efficiency?
4. Drafting and adopting the agreements – MOU, Project criteria, Fiscal management.
5. Engaging landowners by teaming up with consulting foresters.
6. New models for due diligence and saving money: competitive contracts for multiple appraisals and baseline documentation reports.
7. Conducting a feasibility study and creating a campaign cabinet. Phasing considerations.
8. Raising the funds – identifying and sharing donors and prospects, joint requests.
9. Administering the funds – allocating funds fairly, funding related costs, fiscal agent fee.
10. Closing projects – maintaining or enhancing quality, fiscal accountability, ensuring long term stewardship.
11. Evaluating success – What are the appropriate measures?
12. Refining the process – What are your milestones and decision points? What if you don't continue?
13. Open Discussion – see discussion questions circulated by email.