
Naturally Green Planning

Rebecca Kihslinger

Environmental Law Institute

Habitat Conservation and Land Use



- Most significant threats to biodiversity:
 - Habitat loss
 - Habitat fragmentation
 - Habitat degradation

- Local land use planning determines:
 - Where development occurs
 - The pattern of that development
 - The physical characteristics of development



Local Land Use Planning: *The 5 Strategic Points of Intervention*

- Visioning and goal setting
- Plan making
- Management tools
- Development review
- Public investments



ELI's Naturally Green Planning Program




ELI's Naturally Green Planning Program

ENVIRONMENTAL LAW INSTITUTE



Lasting Landscapes: Reflections on the Role of Conservation Science in Land Use Planning

"Healing the land must begin with good planning, for there are so many ways we can go wrong—or at least waste time and money—if we do not proceed intelligently and on the basis of the best available information."
Reed E. Moss



ENVIRONMENTAL LAW INSTITUTE



Six Programmatic Activities

1. Map high risk critical habitats
2. Undertake interdisciplinary research on effective conservation planning strategies
3. Undertake market research and develop a communications strategy



Six Programmatic Activities

4. Develop outreach materials designed to meet the needs of community planners
5. Disseminate outreach materials to planners and environmental professionals
6. Develop a conservation planning curriculum



Six Programmatic Activities

- ✓ Map high risk critical habitats
- ✓ Undertake interdisciplinary research on effective conservation planning strategies
- ✓ Undertake market research and develop a communications strategy



Market Research

- Market research on how to effectively motivate local decision makers to make conservation-minded land use decisions.



Market Research - Overview

1. **Methodology**
2. **Interest in the Issue**
3. **Opportunities and Challenges**
4. **Messages and Messengers**
5. **Communication Preferences**
6. **Recommendations**



1. Methodology

1. Methodology - Participants

■ In-depth phone interviews (60 Interviews)



- ❑ NE (6) SE (15) MW (5) SW (2) W (19) Multi/Nat (13)
- ❑ 37 planners (excl. academia)
- ❑ 16 conservation experts (excl. academia)

■ Online survey (537 Responses)



- ❑ NE (117) SE (116) MW (103) SW (57) W (124) Multi/Nat (20)
- ❑ 266 planners (excl. academia/other)
- ❑ 155 conservation experts (excl. academia/other)
- ❑ 65% indicated that they are in area of moderate-high value and risk of loss



1. Methodology

■ Biases and other considerations

- Likelihood of bias towards those more supportive of conservation
- No significant differences between segments other than conservation experts vs. planners
- Emphasis in analysis given to in-depth interviews
- Results are representative, but not statistically significant



2. Interest in the Issue

2. Interest in the Issue

- **High interest in habitat conservation among community planners**
 - “The professional planning industry is becoming a great deal more aware of conservation planning because it is realizing resources are limited.” - Q2R28 Planner
 - “We look for opportunities to include (conservation) in plans, and have had some success in a politically pretty conservative county.” – Q2R8 Planner

- **...and that is expected to increase**
 - “I have interacted with hundreds of planners. The profession is aware of conservation, and (interest is) on the rise.”- Q4R24 Planner



2. Interest in the Issue

- **Conservation is, however, only one consideration**
 - “Wildlife habitat consistently rates at or next to the bottom, but we did get it added as one of things we look at in reviewing plans.”- Q2R14 Planner
 - “It depends on what (our communities) want...right now there's a lot of interest, so it's a huge topic for us.” – Q2R4 Planner
- **Planners are more interested in conservation, than conservation experts are in “other” planners**
 - “Planners and biologists speak differently and at cross purposes.” – Q6/R15 NGO



3. Opportunities & Challenges

3A. Opportunities

- **The buzz is “green” & “sustainable”**
 - “The issue here is sustainability. If you don't use the word sustainable three times per day, seems you are not a planner anymore.” –Q2R11 Planner
- **Perception of good data and innovative tools**
 - “I'm sure there are tools I'm not even aware of and I've been here 20 years.” Q8R13 Planner



3A. Opportunities

■ **Comprehensive plans**

- “Having a comprehensive plan, and an alignment of the conservation and development interests early on (is critical).” Q5R29/37 Planner
- “It is almost a question that doesn't need to be asked because (the law here) requires rapidly growing counties and cities to prepare comprehensive plans” – Q2R18/37 Planner

■ **Funds for direct conservation action**

- “(The solution is) tough land use policy combined with land acquisition.” - Q5R2 Planner



3A. Opportunities

■ **Other: Younger planners**

- “There's a generational shift taking place... New hires seem to be more energetic about tackling larger planning issues. Some of the old guard got jaded.” - Q4R31 Planner
- “The young planners...are citing environmental concerns as the reason they are in this field.” – Q4R35 Planner

■ **Economic downturn as possible eco-upturn**

- “Before the economy starts heating up again is a good time to step up, participate in the process, and focus on the opportunities that exist.” Q8R24 Planner



3B. Challenges

- **The process is political, and political will isn't often aligned with conservation concerns**
 - “There is an eternal tension between the state with its mandates and the cities who prize local discretion and guard their autonomy.”
Q6R19 Planner
 - “We've got a good city planning staff, but the governing body has traditionally ignored their recommendations.” - Q8R5 Planner
- **Political will isn't always where it is needed most**
 - “While there is an interest in wildlife conservation at the rural level, there is a concern about costs and local control, especially with zoning regulations and enforcement.” – Q6R18 Planner



3B. Challenges

- **Absent a requirement, conservation still seen as extra, not essential, even under “green”**
 - “You need to clarify that ‘green’ includes wildlife habitat.” - Q13/R22 Planner
 - “There is political will for wildlife conservation only among a couple of our planning board members (who are hunters). It is about parks, open space and way of life.” - Q6R12 Planner

- **Conservation seen as costly to the planning process and costly to local economies**
 - “It often costs more, and takes more coordination or effort.” – Q6R12 Planner
 - “The difficulty in quantifying the economic benefits of conservation. For example, protected land is often perceived as ‘unused.’ – Q7R15 Planner



3B. Challenges

- **Lack conservation experts willing to participate....even though their input typically would be welcomed!**
 - “There is a developer that wants to do a 1000 acre development...and if (the planners) are doing their job they should be aware of the conservation plans, the recommendations from NGOs, but they also have to turn this around in 20 days.” - Q6R35 Planner
 - “You almost as a planner feel you have to help the conservationists make their case.” - Q8R12 Planner

- **Conservation groups do not have the staff or funding**
 - “Our ability to participate in these planning efforts often depends upon funding, and the ability for people to pay for our input.” – Q6/R2 NGO



4. Messages & Messengers

4A. Messages

■ Suggested approach

- Bring conservation concerns further into the established planning processes by helping already interested planners make the case for conservation directly, and through allies, to local decision makers

■ Suggested frame

- Conserving wildlife habitat *is* one of the essential elements of being “green” & “sustainable”

■ Suggested messages

- Others have done this successfully (a) applying new and innovative approaches (b) retaining local control, and (c) maximizing benefits to their communities while (d) minimizing costs to their economies



4B. Messengers

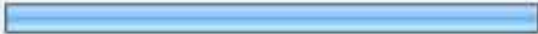







- **State agencies and heritage programs**
- **Conservation NGOs**
- **Planning associations**
- **Combination perhaps the best overall**



5. Communication Preferences

5. Communication Preferences

■ “Just help us make the case...”

		Response Percent	Response Count
Talking points		49.2%	87
Charts and graphs		31.1%	55
Explanatory text		24.9%	44
Maps		47.5%	84
Photographs		33.3%	59
Presentations/slides (E.g. For PowerPoint)		56.5%	100
Printed publications		42.9%	76
White papers		21.5%	38



5. Communication Preferences

■ For general information

- Presentations at conferences they already are attending
- Talking points, slides, case studies about the benefits of accounting for conservation in community planning, aimed at relaying to a policymaker / planning board audience

■ For detailed information

- Searchable web site with aforementioned messaging tools and case studies (67%), combined with email alerts (43%) and “out of the ordinary” events, such as webinars
- Continuing education for planners, especially through already required avenues, like APA



5. Communication Preferences

- **No substitute for one-on-one contacts**
 - Explore opportunities for improving the participation of conservation experts in local planning processes



6. Recommendations

6. Recommendations

■ Who and where?

- Those **planners** who already are looking to inform **planning decision makers** about the benefits of conserving the natural environment
- **Conservation experts**, especially biologists, willing to learn and participate in the planning process
- Aimed at use in accepted **high priority / high threat conservation areas** (e.g. priority areas in state action plans) where conservation is not required, but likely to be considered in planning



6. Recommendations

- **What and how?**
 - **Messaging**
 - **Case studies**
 - **Connections**
 - **Interactive web site**
 - **Ensure feedback loops**



Naturally Green Planning Website

search

[ABOUT](#) [CONTACT](#)

Naturally Green Planning

Welcome!

This site was created by and for community planners and conservation experts who share an interest in helping their communities in a healthy and sustainable way.

Each section contains overviews and case studies, as well as links to resources for creating a naturally green community.

- **Nature** covers what is at risk, and how communities benefit from including nature conservation in their planning.
- **Planning** offers resources to help planners incorporate biological information into local plans and policies.
- **Network** is a guide to finding other experts, as well as state specific resource centers.

Looking for information on your state? [CLICK HERE.](#)

[register / login](#) Create a free membership to review and comment on existing resources, and suggest others.

[nature](#) [planning](#) [network](#)

Project Partners

This website was created by the Environmental Law Institute in collaboration with the American Planning Association and NatureServe.



Stay connected

We hope that this website will serve as a community for planners and conservation experts interested in naturally green planning. Register and become part of the community.



An aerial photograph showing a residential development on a hillside. The houses have light-colored roofs and are arranged in a grid-like pattern. A winding road runs through the development. The surrounding landscape is hilly and appears to be a mix of natural vegetation and cleared areas. The word "Questions" is overlaid in white text on the right side of the image.

Questions

