

# **Landcare in America**

## *Changing Landscapes, Lifestyles, and Livelihoods*

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### **Introduction**

One of the greatest challenges faced by Americans today is unprecedented patterns of urbanisation, especially ex-urban residential development of rural lands resulting in significant loss of working farms and forest lands. Other challenges include economic restructuring and the implications for local communities of global competition for natural resources. In general the challenge for Americans, and people worldwide, is to develop Landcare management systems for the sustainable production and consumption of quality food, fibre, water and energy to meet the needs of a growing human population.

This chapter describes the landcare movement and industry in North America, particularly in the United States where landcare has been especially active in recent years. From the point of view of Landcare pioneers in the United States, Landcare is the next generation of land conservation and development. It is citizen-led, community-based, civic-minded and state-supported sustainable land management for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is about local people working together to improve local economic, social and environmental conditions through collaboration with government agencies, businesses and other key partners to achieve shared goals and common objectives that no one can accomplish alone. As such, it is appropriate for today's increasingly urban and global society. Landcare is land management for the future.

### **Evolution of Landcare in the United States**

The emergence of Landcare in the United States follows international trends that merge social justice, economic development, and environmental sustainability. Such trends are best illustrated by the Agenda 21 Report adopted by more than 178 Governments at the 1992 United Nations' Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It also represents on-going strengthening of democratic processes and decentralised decision making from command and control state/federal programs to

local and market driven solutions. Collaborative conservation tailored to local needs and fine tuned by local expertise is increasingly the norm.

This new context has produced conservation strategies now incorporated into Landcare, such as *working landscapes* and *triple bottom line (3BL)*. Working landscapes is a strategy seeking to sustain lifestyles and economies as well as landscapes. The Nature Conservancy, for example, has established an effective program that promotes farming, ranching and forestry as essential strategies for conserving open space and ecosystem services. 3BL accounting has become fashionable in management, consulting, investing and non-governmental organisation circles in recent years in the hope that business success can be measured not just by traditional financial bottom line but also by its social/ethical and environmental performance. Business investments are pursued with the promise that green business is good business.

In developed countries such as the United States there exists a dense institutional infrastructure of governmental and non-governmental organisations engaged in local-to-regional scale land management. This runs the risk of 'Landcare' being ignored or resisted because of the tremendous institutional capacity and momentum of established conservation programs. However, the push by the current US administration for *cooperative conservation* provides Landcare the opportunity to be relevant to long established conservation institutions. State and federal conservation agencies are now seeking methods for collaborative conservation with local communities. These agencies need the capacity that Landcare creates to demand their expertise and seek support through their programs. The neighbourhood-scale community Landcare groups and larger, regional Landcare networks that have developed in Australia provide lessons for building the social infrastructure that facilitates institutional innovation.

As the community Landcare movement was gaining ground in Australia throughout the 1990s, a group of leaders from the United States, including key staff from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and partners from the corporate sector, began to take interest in the idea. This group of leaders, known as the Landcare Pioneers, has grown in number and has been a catalyst for various Landcare initiatives, hoping to spark a community Landcare movement throughout the United States and beyond. The opportunities for Landcare in the United States are many and growing especially as partners such as the USDA and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) along with National Associations of Conservation Districts, Regional Councils, and RC&D Councils, and various corporate partners continue to step forward to play a supporting role. However, it was difficult to jumpstart a grassroots movement from Washington, DC. It was recognised that a community Landcare movement must grow from within one or more specific locations. Since then, local initiatives had started to spark and spread in Virginia and Philadelphia through the efforts of committed local Landcare

champions. In July 2007, a meeting with Landcare partners was held in Washington, DC where a renewed commitment was made to the future of Landcare in America. Subsequently, a National Landcare Workshop was held at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia in October 2007 to determine the way forward for the Landcare movement in the United States.

## **Landcare in practice**

### *Grayson Landcare*

The New River Land Trust in southwest Virginia has been a highly successful land conservation organisation in terms of the area of private land they have helped to put into conservation easements. However, the Land Trust realises that establishing conservation easements on private lands is only a tip of the iceberg in terms of the complex problems landowners face. In the light of rising land values for residential development, keeping lands for farming and forestry is increasingly difficult for private landowners. In 2005, the New River Land Trust, with support from the Conservation Fund and other partners secured a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to help farm and forest landowners get organised and to improve their incomes from farming and forestry by working together for mutual benefit.

Jerry Moles was hired as community organiser of this new initiative. In a meeting of landowners and professional land managers, Jim Johnson, then faculty member in the College of Natural Resources at Virginia Tech, suggested that the way landowner groups organise to address their challenges appeared similar in form and function to the community Landcare groups that operate widely in Australia. The people at the meeting were intrigued by the Landcare idea and, after looking into the concept in more detail, decided to adopt the Landcare name and basic principles (such as cooperation and the triple bottom line) as organising elements for their own work in Virginia. In 2005 Grayson Landcare was formed, and incorporated as the first “official” Landcare group in the Americas.

Grayson Landcare is a locally organised group of farmers, landowners, and residents concerned about economic and environmental problems they faced in Grayson County and southwest Virginia. Grayson County has historically been an agricultural community based on cooperative and family relationships, and has a unique cultural history of more than 200 years in the beautiful Appalachian landscape. Unfortunately, rising land prices, increasing property taxes and competition from corporate farming have all threatened the security of family farms, fragmenting the country landscape and dissipating the rural way of life. Grayson Landcare addresses these challenges with the triple-bottom-line—improving economy, community, and environmental sustainability.

The goals of Grayson Landcare are to: 1) increase the incomes of citizens; 2) involve the community and improve community services; and 3) protect natural resources on which people depend for food, water, and air.

The process of understanding and assimilating Landcare was both challenging and fun. Questions remain with regards to the most appropriate definition of Landcare. There were many ideas attached to Landcare, and its definitions vary depending on how individuals view and use it for their own purposes (Box 1).

#### Box 1. Different ideas on Landcare

- Landcare is a democratic approach to community development with three goals, (1) increase the incomes of the citizens, (2) improve community services and amenities, and (3) protect the resources upon which our lives depend, our food, water and air. This is about making sure that our great great grandchildren have the same quality of food, water and air as we do while we remain secure with an acceptable lifestyle.
- There is also an ethic of civility that requires that we be open and honest in our dealings with each other, willing to listen to other points of view and, when in doubt, seek expert counsel to guide our decisions. We wish to be as well informed as possible. We wish to understand the cause and consequences of the events in our daily lives. This requires that we listen to others or else we will remain ill-informed. In the end though, we decide and it is up to each one of us to live with our consciences knowing that we have done the best possible for all concerned.
- Landcare is about feeling good about what we do and where we live. Knowing we can count on our neighbours is a tremendous advantage. Landcare is an ethic that everyone looks after everyone else.
- Landcare focuses on ventures involving both local people and local resources.
- Landcare is about building community wealth by establishing locally owned and managed enterprises. Landcare is about local economic cooperation. Landcare is about investment in local enterprises both by locals and by others outside the region aware of the value of our enterprises.
- Landcare is about bringing out the best in each of us. The best can only appear if we're willing to pause and consider the consequences of our actions, attend to what others are saying, carefully consider our direction and be responsible for our actions. In a community, people listen to each other or else there is no community.
- Landcare is rooted in the belief that ultimately each community must decide what is best for itself. Experience in Australia over the past 20 years has shown that, with the involvement of the people, communities can better serve themselves. The magic of Landcare is no magic at all. What has made the difference is that when people sit down with enough time to fully weigh their alternatives, community solutions can be found that benefit everyone.
- Landcare is everyone working together for the betterment of all.

*Excerpted from a letter written by Jerry Moles, Consulting Director of Land Stewardship for the New River Land Trust and Facilitator of Grayson Landcare (2006)*

#### *The Landcare Centre*

Following the establishment of Grayson Landcare, the Virginia Tech faculty and administrators felt the need to organise themselves differently in order to better serve and partner with this, and similar groups of landowners, around the state and beyond.

As a result, the Landcare Centre was formed as a public-private partnership initiative representing a broad coalition of local, state, national and international partners who are working together to build the capacity of the Landcare movement and industry in Virginia and beyond. The primary purpose of the Landcare Centre is to facilitate the formation and development of local community Landcare groups, regional Landcare networks and innovative Landcare industries by providing information and decision support to Landcare practitioners and serving as a conduit to existing Landcare organisations and programs. David Robertson, a faculty member at Virginia Tech, was the founding Director, with initial financial and administrative support provided by the Department of Forestry and Conservation Management Institute at Virginia Tech and the USDA National Agroforestry Centre, a partnership between the Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. As of 2007, accomplishments of the Landcare Centre included:

- Introducing Landcare to the Headwater regions of Virginia, including the upper James, Roanoke and New River watersheds which feed the Chesapeake Bay, Albemarle Sound and Mississippi River basins.
- Initiating innovative inter-agency and multi-institutional collaborations to develop Landcare management systems for the sustainable production and consumption of quality food, fibre, water, energy and related resources. This includes developing local food systems with the Office of Congressman Boucher in the 9<sup>th</sup> District of Virginia, USDA Rural Development, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and Virginia Farm Bureau. It also stimulated a forest Landcare industry development with Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and the USDA Forest Service. Furthermore Landcare bioenergy initiatives were developed with Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals & Energy and private enterprises.
- Creating new jobs and business opportunities in the Landcare industry, including assisting with the development of specific Landcare enterprises such as Blue Ridge Forest Cooperative (a member-owned sustainable forest products company) and Grayson Natural Foods (a cooperative livestock processing and marketing initiative). Support has been provided by USDA Rural Development's Value-Added Producer Grants program and the Rural Business Opportunity Grants program. The Centre is now working with partners to pursue new cooperative business enterprises emerging in the bioenergy, water and tourism sectors.
- Coordinating regional, national and international Landcare networks for learning and technology transfer of best practices, including projects such as the Headwaters Forest Landcare Partnership, 2007 National Landcare Workshop in Virginia, Victoria-Virginia International Landcare Fellowship and Tamar-Grayson Sister Landcare program.

- Providing Landcare education and training programs, including study tours, workshops and presentations to landowners and agencies.
- Preparing more than \$5 million in grant requests to federal agencies and private foundations to develop the Landcare movement and industry.

#### *Catawba Landcare*

In spring of 2006, Ned Yost, a second generation landowner, read a story about Grayson Landcare and the Landcare Centre in the *Virginia Forest Landowner Update* and thought that the community Landcare approach would fit his situation in the Catawba and North Fork valleys of the Upper James and Roanoke River watersheds. In the summer of 2006, residents of these valleys, including conservation easement donors, organised the neighbouring landowners to talk about practical steps on sustainable land management. They approached the Landcare Centre and the New River Land Trust to present information on Landcare and land conservation practices. The three basic principles of Landcare (improved social networks, economics, and the environment) resonated with many of the participants. Subsequently, Catawba Landcare was formed and a community-based conservation and development approach to land management and natural resource stewardship has emerged in this region.

Christy Gabbard serves as the first Landcare facilitator/coordinator for Catawba Landcare to provide inter-agency coordination and facilitation among participants. This led to the development of a strategic plan, and a great deal of work has been accomplished in a short period, including partnerships with leaders from neighbouring Roanoke and Montgomery Counties to create a more cohesive picture of value-added products that can be marketed through Landcare initiatives. Catawba Landcare also works with the Conservation Management Institute and students from the Roanoke Valley Governor's School to address the problems of stream management. Stream bank classification data were collected and paired with corresponding landowner parcel data in a geographic information system and used to quantify degraded stream reaches. Catawba Landcare has cooperated with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Landowner Incentive Program to improve water quality and stream habitat for the native trout population in the Catawba and North Fork valleys. These activities have benefited downstream reservoirs of the City of Roanoke and neighbouring communities.

#### *Land-of-Sky Landcare*

In January 2006, Jerry Moles and David Robertson visited the town of Montreat in western North Carolina to give a presentation on Virginia Landcare. The meeting was organised by Jim Stokoe at the Land-of-Sky Regional Council (LOSRC), a four-county regional council of local governments in Asheville, North Carolina, which had been

promoting the Landcare concept for several years. The meeting marked the beginning of Landcare in Montreat.

In retrospect, it was in 2003 when Jim Stokoe attended the National Association of Regional Councils conference in Pittsburgh, PA and heard a US Forest Service staff describe an Australian community organising model called *Landcare*. As a long-time Land-of-Sky staff member with a keen interest in sustainable development, Jim was fascinated with Landcare, and soon had the opportunity to travel to Australia to study it firsthand. When Montreat Town Commissioner O'Neil Tate and Town Administrator Ron Nalley invited him to present the Landcare model to the Town's Parks and Recreation Committee and Town Council in spring 2006, Jim thought it might be a hard sell. He was concerned about the values of Landcare, particularly the autonomy of Landcare groups, if it were to be under the control of local governments. But he underestimated the depth of the conservation ethic in Montreat and the Town Council's interest on Landcare. The town officials responded positively, and the Montreat Landcare Team was formed in January 2007, with 20 initial projects ranging from invasive species management to erosion control to environmental education to electric vehicles. In April 2007, team member Rusty Frank led several volunteer works to clear an invasive plant called *Japanese knotweed* within a new columbarium and memorial garden. Jim Stokoe is gratified that Montreat has become (in O'Neil Tate's words) 'the first Landcare town in North Carolina', and that one of LOSRC's member governments took such a leadership role in its formation.

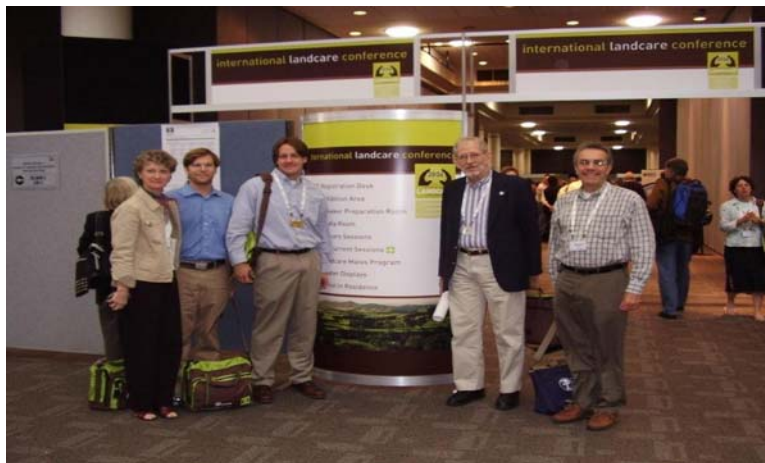


Plate 1. US Landcare partners at the 2006 International Landcare Conference in Melbourne, Australia.

### *Central Mississippi Landcare*

Landcare is being implemented in Central Mississippi to help reduce the amount of pollutants entering the Mississippi River and contribute to the degradation in the Gulf of Mexico known as the hypoxic zone. The Bogue Chitto Creek watershed was selected as the demonstration site of a Landcare project. This creek empties into the Big Black

River, which is a direct tributary of the Mississippi River. This watershed was identified as being compromised by organic enrichment/low dissolved oxygen and biological impairment. The Central Mississippi Planning and Development District (CMPDD) has served as the Landcare facilitator for the Bogue Chitto Creek watershed for the past two years and has forged strong partnerships with other local agencies. The Landcare coordinator drew on the partnerships developed during the project pilot phase to identify citizens concerned about their local watersheds, and organise *public involvement meetings* to gain their input. These meetings served as catalysts for the formation of localised, stakeholder-led Landcare groups. The objective of these meetings was to provide educational materials and training sessions, identify and address stakeholder concerns, encourage stakeholder participation in watershed restoration activities/projects and promote localised watershed stewardship.

#### *Land Trusts and Conservation Easements*

Most easement donors do not have a land/forest management plan in place but are purportedly interested in conservation and sustainable development practices. Targeting these donors and using Landcare as a model or philosophy to incorporate effective land and water stewardship strategies has proven effective. As a platform to bring together various stakeholders who may not have expressed interest in conservation activities, Landcare offers a logically consistent and easily understood set of objectives easily supported by landowners and agencies alike, expanding the number of landowners served by land trusts, including those with or without easements. Landcare has thus served as a tool to easement donors and land trusts alike. It helps those unlikely to donate easements, but still in need of economic incentives, to maintain their open space and to resist development and difficult economic pressures.

Historically, the persons most likely to donate easements are those with high annual incomes.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, Landcare's ability to improve the economics of easement donors will be less appealing to land trusts, for this group already has economic stability. However, given the conservation ethic and education level of many easement donors<sup>2</sup>, and lack of management plans for their conserved properties, Landcare has become a useful tool to educate existing land donors about best management practices (BMPs). Landcare also provides a model for easement donors and land trusts to communicate sustainable land management to their neighbours. Landcare also helps land trusts to expand their constituent-base to include landowners who are land rich and cash poor. Historically, these are people who do not easily donate a conservation easement, and are prone to selling their properties due to development pressure, increased taxes and lack of economic incentives to stay on the farm. Landcare gives land

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<sup>1</sup> Data for Virginia indicate that 38% have incomes greater than \$200 000 and less than 9% have incomes below \$40 000.

<sup>2</sup> 86% have a bachelor's degree and 46% a post graduate degree.

trusts and these landowners the incentives and knowledge to maintain open space while improving land and water management practices, without necessarily donating a conservation easement.

Importantly, Landcare provides land trusts with an opportunity to affect land management. Land trusts typically are locally governed by well connected and highly motivated people interested in land conservation. They know how to get things done, especially working with landowners and community partners. Often, what they lack is practical land management expertise and practice. Some land trusts across the nation are struggling with the task of managing and sustaining their growing estates. A criticism of land trusts is that they don't do a very good job. Another frequent criticism is that the land trust movement de-emphasises economic sustainability and community capacity in favour of environmental sustainability. Stated differently, it can remove or reduce economic development options from communities. Again, Landcare offers a viable strategy to address these concerns. The considerable political power and community-based orientation of the land trust community could be a valuable ally for the emerging Landcare movement. Land trusts are one of the many partners alongside state agencies, corporate sponsors and others that landowners and local communities can draw on to help implement for implementing Landcare practices. The burgeoning industry of Landcare service providers is another.

#### *Lawn care and Landcare*

In January 2005, the Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA) and the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA) joined forces under the new name, *Professional Landcare Network* or PLANET. This international association represents 4 000 member firms, over 100 000 employees and millions of clients. One of the largest and most prominent of these Landcare service providers is TruGreen Landcare. TruGreen Landcare is the world's largest lawn and landscape maintenance company, offering a suite of Landcare services including landscape maintenance, golf course maintenance, landscape design, irrigation services, snow and ice management, tree care, fertilisation and weed removal among others. TruGreen Landcare is owned by Service Master which provides full-service home and business maintenance through a series of businesses, including Merry Maids, Terminix and Furniture Medic. As rural landscapes and landowners continue to change and become more urbanised, the opportunities for full-service land management continues to grow.

PLANET has the potential to expand to include horticulture, forestry, agriculture and natural resource management industries and professions. In 2006, negotiations occurred on a merger between PLANET and the American Nursery and Landscaping Association (ANLA). As land conversion and parcelization continues, links are likely to grow with other professional societies, such as the Society of American Foresters. There

is an abundance of new employment and business development opportunities associated with professional land care and the Landcare industry. As these opportunities unfold, the challenge for the Landcare movement is to leverage improved corporate behaviour, while negotiating support for the triple bottom line mission, without diluting the Landcare ethic and principles in the context of a corporate landscape.

The Chesapeake Club is a good example of non-profit Landcare in action. The club is a partnership of people working together to promote sustainable development and a healthy Chesapeake Bay. Their tactics include a foodscape approach and care for the land via sustainable landscaping and lawn care services industry. They have developed a Chesapeake Club standard, as a branded lawn care regimen designed specifically for the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

### *Organic Landcare*

Organic Landcare is one example of the emerging standards for Landcare practices.<sup>3</sup> Organic land care standards have arisen in response to concerns that the land care ethic—which is embedded in the name Landcare—is being sold out and exploited for economic gain (which is only one part of the triple bottom line). Organic Landcare is an extension of organic agricultural practices to the entire landscape. According to the Connecticut Farm Bureau, growing public awareness of pesticide use hazards and new legislation mandating least toxic and non-toxic alternatives are fueling a new market opportunity for professionals with knowledge of organic land care.<sup>4</sup>

In the city of Philadelphia, vacant lots are being improved by community Landcare groups, and in the northeast United States and Canada, the Northeast Organic Farmers Association (NOFA) and the Society for Organic Urban Landcare (SOUL) have developed 'organic' and other professional land care standards, to hold the Organic Landcare industry and its practices accountable to the public. NOFA is raising the bar for land care through the implementation of an Organic Land Care Program with standards that cover all aspects of land care from site analysis and soil amendments to weeds, mulches and pest management. NOFA's Organic Land Care Program was formed to extend the vision and principles of organic agriculture to caring for the landscapes where most people live, work, play and otherwise spend their daily lives. Its mission is to educate land care professionals and concerned citizens to practise organic land care, with the goals of maintaining soil health, eliminating synthetic pesticide and synthetic fertiliser use, increasing landscape diversity and improving the health and well being of the people and web of life in our care.

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<sup>3</sup> Hoover, S. 2005. Organic landcare and the development of national standards. *Pesticides and You*. 25(2):12-14.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.cfba.org/html/calendar/calendar\\_detail.php?nid\\_2/16/07](http://www.cfba.org/html/calendar/calendar_detail.php?nid_2/16/07)

On the other hand, SOUL, which is based in Canada was formed in response to the growing need for ecologically responsible land care practices. A growing public awareness on the need to manage landscapes using environmentally sound practices is creating a demand for professionals who have the knowledge and credentials to practise organic Landcare. Organic Landcare practices go beyond integrated pest management, beyond the use of so-called organic fertilisers and pesticides. They include the concept of intrinsic health and seek to create environments that cater to the well being of all inhabitants. Organic Landcare practitioners know that they are but stewards of the land, and can at best, hope to work with nature, but never to dominate it.<sup>5</sup>

#### Box 2. Community Landcare in Philadelphia

From a financial standpoint, it would be impossible for Philadelphia Green to amend each of the city's 35,000 vacant parcels with topsoil, trees, and fencing. As an alternative, Philadelphia Green created the Community-Based Vacant Land Management Program in 2003. Later renamed Community Landcare, this program employs nine community service organisations to clean and mow hundreds of lots in 10 Philadelphia neighbourhoods on a monthly basis. Although these lots don't receive the same degree of care as the stabilised lot, the change is still quite dramatic. Neighbourhoods look far more appealing when unused parcels are well-kept.

Currently 2,500 parcels, roughly 2.5 million square feet, are maintained from March through November as part of this program. The work crews are made up of neighbourhood residents who are gainfully employed in making their communities healthier and safer places to live. Community Landcare provides training opportunities with the aim of developing marketable landscaping skills for the 70 individuals involved.

Source: <http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org/phlgreen/vacant-CLC.html>, accessed 2/17/07

#### *Forest Landcare*

A growing land ethic has been observed in southwest Virginia, where forest landowners involved with Grayson Landcare and Catawba Landcare have turned the Blue Ridge Forest Cooperative (BRFC) into a 'certified sustainable' forest products company and sought assistance for their forest Landcare management needs. BRFC is a cooperative business that helps its member-owners manage their forests, including harvesting, processing and marketing of forest products. BRFC adheres to the principles of the Forest Stewardship Council which were developed in response to the fact that in many forests around the world, logging still contributes to habitat destruction, water pollution, displacement of indigenous peoples and violence against forest people and wildlife. According to the Forest Stewardship Council, many consumers of wood and

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.organicLandcare.org/index.php>, 2/17/07

paper, and many forest products companies believe that the link between logging and these negative impacts can be broken, and that forests can be managed and protected at the same time.

Harry Groot, President and Chief Financial Officer of BRFC, describes forest Landcare as 'meeting multiple landowner objectives for long term ecological, economic, and social gain.' Forest Landcare embodies practices like timber stand improvement, habitat control and management, invasive mitigation/eradication, water quality maintenance/improvement.



Plate 2. Forest Landcare specialist explains the value of non-timber forest product during a USDA study tour in 2006.

## **The Power and Challenges of Landcare**

Landcare is a powerful name that has proven to be an excellent public relations and marketing tool for land management. This is certainly, at least, part of the reason why firms like TruGreen Landcare have adopted the name. Landcare has captured the imagination of millions of people worldwide including agriculturalists, environmentalists, foresters, landscapers, sportsmen, gardeners, homeowners, urban populations and corporate sponsors. Landcare is a term that makes sense, and has an intuitive appeal for many different people and organisations involved with land and natural resource management. According to Stewart Lockie, that 'Landcare' means so many things to so many people is one of its greatest strengths-- Landcare is not a solitary organisation or program, but has been successful in mobilising people of varied

backgrounds and worldviews to undertake an equally varied range of projects and activities.<sup>6</sup>

This is true in America where Landcare takes a variety of forms and functions in specific locales and situations, and yet, in all cases, it retains its implicit meaning of people caring for the land—therein is the power of the name. The ambiguity of Landcare is what allows so many people to participate, and yet the power of ambiguity also has a darker side which has allowed Landcare to be used for *greenwashing*, that is as a symbolic resource by agents wanting to shape ideas about agricultural landscapes or create a ‘greener’ image for their own products, or corporations seeking to ensure that changes are less than radical.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps due in part to Landcare’s ambiguity and the conflicting agenda to which it can give rise, in recent years, the ethics and efficacy of Landcare has been called into question. Hence, as described above, efforts are underway to develop standards and certification processes to hold the movement accountable to its name and implicit ethical principles. For example, PLANET has its own certification standards, with third-party participation and independent Landcare standards that are in many cases stricter than what the industry or many of its clients prefer. Such Landcare standards are building on the ethics implicit in the name of Landcare as a platform for developing new principles and best practices, including specific skill sets, tools, and techniques for performing certified Landcare activities.

The Landcare profession is expanding rapidly and in many directions and the movement will eventually weed out (via professional norms, self-imposed standards, and third-party certification systems) those individuals and organisations that are not living up to the literal definition of the name, e.g., care for the land. For example, as a matter of policy, Landcare Australia Limited (LAL) only works with companies that live up to the Landcare ethos, although some efforts are also directed to influence their business practices.<sup>8</sup> LAL has over fifteen years of working with companies and have certainly quietly influenced many of their business practices. For example, ‘Coles’, a leading supermarket network is getting ‘greener’ in their business operations.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Pages 220 and 230 in Lockie, S. 1999. Community movements and corporate images: Landcare in Australia.

<sup>7</sup> Page 230 in Lockie, S. 1999. Community movements and corporate images: Landcare in Australia. *Rural Sociology* 64 (2):219-233.

<sup>8</sup> LAL for instance, does not work with companies manufacturing weapons of war and tobacco products.

<sup>9</sup> Rob Youl personal communication (email), 19 Feb 2007.

In sum, as with any profession or movement, standards and certification systems are necessary for the long-term success of Landcare. These standards and certification systems reflect the Landcare ethic.

## **Lessons Learned**

Landcare is becoming the global norm for natural resource management, reflecting expectations and understandings of the need for partnership and cooperation in order to achieve sustainability goals. Throughout history and throughout the world, local communities have always been, and should continue to be, the primary social unit for implementing Landcare practices. In this sense, community Landcare is nothing new, as it predates the privatisation of common-pool resources and the establishment of modern, state-led, bureaucratic and scientific approaches to both the professional management of public lands and the public regulation of private lands.

In the United States, with its long tradition of community-based conservation, there is increasing reason to promote collaborative and decentralised decision-making. The United States is a republic that has prided itself on both strong private property rights and civic duty for the public good. And, despite all the rhetoric about rugged individualism and self-reliance, there is a rich history in the United States of citizens banding together and forming local civic associations for the purposes of collective action. In addition, the United States has a long tradition of environmental conservation, being innovators in policy and strategy for wilderness preservation to species protection to clean water provision. These factors—decentralised authority in the form of private property rights/responsibilities, the capacity for collective action through civic association and a history of innovation in environmental conservation—are key ingredients for the success of Landcare.

Landcare in the US will be successful to the extent it appeals to different stakeholders with different vested interests:

- State and federal agencies looking for methods of collaborative conservation need local community capacity to request for, and apply, agency expertise and programs
- Agency professionals working in the field are overwhelmed by increasing client requests, lost management capacity and shrinking budgets. They need local capacity to implement and replicate professional advice throughout their communities
- Landowners get the advice and opportunity to achieve their ownership goals, whether that be income generation for meeting tax obligations or receiving trusted advice about amenity and environmental quality management

- Businesses get increased market shares, resources to improve efficiencies, greater profit and community recognition by participating in Landcare
- Local government gets a steadily expanding tax base, a reputation for innovation and quality, and is re-elected because it sustains environmental, social, and economic qualities that voters' value
- Environmental NGOs get environmental issues placed on the negotiating table in equal weight to social and economic concerns.

To achieve the hope and promise of Landcare, the movement needs to encourage the following:

1. *Strengthening the grassroots:* Landcare groups should be community-based volunteers working on conservation and sustainable development projects that contribute to desired environmental, social and economic outcomes. These groups select their own projects, rather than having funders, bureaucrats or government agencies tell them what to work on.
2. *Coordination:* Landcare groups need to be supported by a network that provides skills in volunteer management, grant writing, group facilitation, project management and reporting, accounting, business planning, land management and so on. Coordinators could include regional councils of government, conservation districts, resource conservation and development (RC&D) councils, non-profits and colleges. These organisations can support local Landcare groups with administrative and facilitation services including accounting, fundraising, fiscal agency and insurance.
3. *Land owners and managers:* Landcare groups contain both private and public landowners and include farms, public parks and forests, town and county recreation parks, greenways and corporate land in their portfolio. These people have the responsibility and legal authority to conduct conservation activities on lands they own, or for which they are responsible.
4. *Scientists, educators andpProfessionals:* Landcare groups need access to land management expertise available from district conservationists, extension agents, landscape architects, foresters, fish & wildlife biologists and so on. These are the professions and people who understand natural systems and can advise Landcare groups on ecosystem restoration, revegetation, invasive species control, soil conservation, erosion control and forest management as well as on project selection, monitoring and evaluation. They also can help with landowner and public education on conservation issues.
5. *Local Business and Corporate Sponsors:* Landcare is about creating economically sustainable land management systems and thus must actively include local private businesses that see Landcare as a means to improve market share, profits, and resilience. Landcare should also appeal to corporations interested in investing in the emerging Landcare movement in partial

fulfilment of their corporate mission, to improve relations with the community, and to associate their products with a popular conservation ethic.

### **Future Prospects of Landcare in the USA**

The United States of America is a country of 300 million people, a relatively wealthy nation with the purchasing power to consume a disproportionate share of the world's resources. As a developed country, with an increasingly post-industrial and post-productivist economy, it imports many things that its citizens are unwilling to produce at home. In doing so, the nation displaces many of the negative side-effects of its consumption patterns to other places, leaving the by-products and externalities beyond its borders where they are out of sight and out of mind. This leaves the country with relatively better environmental conditions compared to many other parts of the world. Depending on one's perspective, natural resource management and environmental governance in the United States might be characterised either as stable or in state of crisis.

The introduction of Landcare in the US has been based on people taking responsibility for educating and organising themselves and others to address shared interests in conserving our natural resource base. In organising local, regional, state and national partners, the Landcare movement in America has been based upon finding cooperative projects through which various stakeholders can collectively benefit. The focus has been upon the analysis of local circumstances and how they can be changed to meet the triple bottom line.

In the Americas, approximately 75 percent of people live in cities and urban areas. As such, many have little or no direct interaction with the land, and yet the land figures prominently in American cultures. People are increasingly concerned about green infrastructure and public ecosystem services, including clean air and water and wildlife habitat and biodiversity. Given this, the opportunities for practicing Landcare are many.

Landcare provides opportunities for people to show their care for the land, opportunities to practise their land ethic and opportunities to 'walk the talk'. Landcare tries to create opportunities through reorganising exchanges of goods and services, creating a new class of service providers, and challenging institutional norms that favour short-term profitability over sustainability. For rural landowners, it provides an opportunity to nurture their land with sustainable, profitable management. For urban landowners, it provides opportunities to find afford and practice green lawn care, create backyard wildlife habitat and minimise energy consumption. For consumers, it

provides opportunities to purchase locally produced, sustainably grown products. The experiences so far in the US indicate that the openness of Landcare should help everyone find their own place in the Landcare movement that is now taking shape in so many places around the world.

*For more information on landcare in the U.S., please visit [www.landcarecentral.org](http://www.landcarecentral.org) or contact the Landcare Center at [landcare@vt.edu](mailto:landcare@vt.edu)*