

## Conservation Innovation UPDATE

The Program on Conservation Innovation at the Harvard Forest



Join us online Wednesday, March 18, for a dialogue with a remarkable group of students recently returned from the **Conservation Capital in the Americas** conference held in Valdivia, Chile

Dear Colleagues in Conservation:

On March 18 at 10 am EST the Conservation Finance Forum will host an online discussion with four student participants recently returned from the conference on **CONSERVATION CAPITAL IN THE AMERICAS**, held in January 2009 in Valdivia, Chile. These young people were among the thirty students who attended the conference from North, Central and South America.

The thirty students who attended the conference, making up about a quarter of 120 people from the public, private, non-profit and academic sectors at the meeting, represented 17 diverse academic institutions, including Harvard, Yale, Oxford, Duke, the University of Montana, Colby College in Maine, the Universidad Austral de Chile, the Universidad Pacifico in Peru, and the Univesidad del Valle in Colombia.

The student guests on this broadcast, representing both undergraduate and graduate institutions in the United States, will consider the significance of the meeting in Valdivia, and the potential of the innovations discussed there to have a lasting impact on the practice of land and biodiversity conservation across the Western Hemisphere.

The student guests include: **Jude Wu**, a second-year student at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies who presented a paper on conservation finance intermediaries at the conference; **Blair Braverman**, a sophomore environmental policy student at Colby College who presented a paper on the conservation impact of Alaska's Iditarod Trail; **Chris Larson**, a Yale School of Management student focusing on private investment in agricultural lands, and **David Lewis** a Harvard School of Design student who studies green building and sustainable

real estate finance (to review each of these well-written papers, click on the following link: <http://www.conservationfinanceforum.org/wrapup.html>).

The conversation will be hosted by Jim Levitt (Harvard Forest, Harvard University). We look forward to participation in the online session by colleagues from North, Central and South America, and beyond.

You can sign up to listen and submit live questions during the course of this expert chat with Chris Larson, Blair Braverman, and Jude Wu by logging onto the [event page \(click here\)](#) on the Government Innovators Network.

Please join us on Wednesday, March 18 at 10 am EST for this discussion of Conservation Capital in the Americas. We look forward to interacting with you in the [live](#) forum.

Best regards,

Jim Levitt, Editor and Director of the Program on Conservation Innovation

Elizabeth Reardon, Assistant Editor and Research Assistant

## **Students and the Future of Conservation Finance**

*By Matthew Zieper, National Research Director, The Trust for Public Land*

*[Editor's Note: following the conference on Conservation Capital in the Americas, a stack of very enthusiastic memos and letters were sent to the conference organizers, expressing enthusiasm for what proved to be a very worthwhile experience. Among those very kind pieces of correspondence, Matt Zieper's stood out, and is adapted for the readers of the Update on Conservation Innovation].*

Amidst a grove of 2,000-year-old alerce trees towering hundreds of feet in the air, a group of several dozen land conservationists slowly walk in silent reverence on a mid-summer January day in the Southern Hemisphere. They have come to this protected outpost of ancient trees along Chile's Valdivian coast to pay respect to the past and to create the future. Their walk is part of a field trip which wraps up a remarkable four days at the Conservation Capital in the Americas (CCA) conference.

The first-ever conference was the brainchild of Jim Levitt from the Program on Conservation Innovation at Harvard Forest, Steve Reifenberg from The David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard, Armando Carbonell from the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy in Cambridge, Massachusetts and Antonio Lara from the Universidad Austral de Chile in Valdivia. A forthcoming eponymous book will be published later in 2009 drawn from book chapters prepared for the conference.

Back in the alerce grove, the pioneers of the conservation finance movement stood shoulder to shoulder with eager students from North and South America, the movement's future leaders -- one generation getting ready to carry a torch that had been lit for them by the generation of founders. The college and graduate students at the Valdivia conference were chosen from dozens of applicants who had submitted essays on the subject of conservation finance.

I was fortunate to attend the Valdivia conference as a practitioner. Over the past ten years, I have served as the research director for the Trust for Public Land's conservation finance program, a group that has helped create \$35 billion in new public funding for land conservation in the U.S. And yet, serving as a participant in the Valdivia conference -- as a presenting author and one of a handful of judges for the student essay competition-- may be one of the most profound experiences of my professional life. I would liken Valdivia to other seminal events like the Bretton Woods conference where the post WWII system of international financial cooperation was created at a rustic New Hampshire resort.

What made this conference such a profound experience for me was the presence of roughly thirty college and graduate students who were full participants joining the seventy academic experts and practitioners. Not relegated to "observer status" in chairs at the back of the room, students were front and center as thought provoking presenting authors, eager questioners challenging long-held assumptions and animated members of ad-hoc breakfast discussions where the future was being hatched over oatmeal.

In a four-day whirlwind period, the conference pulled off an unlikely triple crown. First off, it brought together one hundred participants from North and South America to share the innovative ideas necessary to exponentially boost the level of funding for land conservation in this hemisphere.

Secondly, it provided a sturdy foundation for conservationists in Chile, Argentina and throughout Latin America to practice land conservation based on all the hard-learned lessons from the past four decades in the U.S., such as our experience with a variety of conservation-related tax incentive programs, and for North Americans to learn from several bold initiatives

from the South, such as Costa Rica's Payment for Ecosystem Services program.

The third crowning achievement of the Valdivia conference was the opportunity to educate and inspire a new generation of leaders in the field of conservation finance and to greatly enlarge the community of practice in the field. In the decades ahead, the field of land conservation will need many more conservation finance professionals to reach the levels of activity necessary to confront the challenges ahead. To address the impacts of global climate change, safeguard drinking water supplies, provide a sustainable and healthy food supply and provide the parks and open spaces that make communities livable and whole, there is a strong need for more than a few dozen conservation financial professionals to ply this trade. We need an army! I believe the Valdivia conference was a great kick-off to a long-term recruiting mission.

Already the Valdivia conference is paying dividends by inspiring new professional and personal relationships and yielding new initiatives to expand the boundaries of conservation finance. Many of the benefits of the conference will not be known for years or decades even. One day, when one of the participants at Valdivia goes on to serve as ... U.S. Secretary of the Interior, president of a large conservation NGO or head of a private sector initiative providing ecosystem services in South America, everyone will remember having met them there at the Valdivia conference. As one conference participant joked to me, "it will be like Woodstock, everyone will claim they were at Valdivia."

## **A Chilean Perspective on Conservation Capital in the Americas**

*By Nicolas Gutierrez, translated and adapted from his article in El Mercurio, January 20, 2009*

*[Editor's Note: the January 2009 conference on Conservation Capital in the Americas was covered by the local newspaper in Valdivia, El Diario del Sur, as well as by El Mercurio, Chile's leading national newspaper, published in Santiago. The following article, which appeared in El Mercurio on Tuesday, January 20, was adapted by James N. Levitt for the readers of this UPDATE. The original, Spanish language version can be found at <http://diario.elmercurio.cl/detalle/index.asp?id={f459fbbb-ed9d-412e-b5e7-454c3e7abefd}>*

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## **In good times and in others:**

# There are always resources for nature

NICOLÁS GUTIERREZ (adapted into English by James N. Levitt)

VALDIVIA.- Financing conservation initiatives may sound, a priori, like a difficult task in "normal" times. Today it seems almost titanic.

Still, at the Conference on Conservation Capital in the Americas, organized by Harvard University, the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, and the Universidad Austral de Chile (UACH), conservationists looked forward with some optimism, hoping to enhance conservation finance opportunities across the Western Hemisphere.

About 100 participants gathered on the UACH campus in Valdivia to discuss how to finance conservation projects linked to small, medium and large organizations in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors.

As reported by James N. Levitt, director of the Program on Conservation Innovation at the Harvard Forest, Harvard University, "We know today that Barack Obama is concerned about global climate change, and that may bring some important opportunities to fund conservation. Moreover, in times like this, financial creativity often emerges from unexpected sources." He recalled that, in the midst of the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln created Yosemite as a park for the people of California, an innovation which proved to be the precursor to the creation of Yellowstone, the world's first national park. That innovation in conservation has been copied around the globe. There is no reason why conservation innovations in the 21st century might not have a similar impact.

Just as new conservation opportunities are emerging in North America, conservation finance opportunities are becoming apparent today in Chile. For example, there is no structure in Chile at present that allows for the long-term conservation of large parcels of land by the private sector, reports Antonio Lara, Dean of Forest Sciences at UACH.

"In times like this there are new ways to raise long-term investment. Land is relatively cheap, and private foundations have recently been attracted to large conservation opportunities in this country. What is most important is that Chile offer some significant tax incentives that will attract the attention of those people interested in conservation," said Lara.

This should be accompanied by payments for the ecosystem services delivered by the native forest. Such services include the provision of water supplies and flood control. "If a strong system for ecosystem service payments is not created," he said, "these ecosystems and the services they provide may be destroyed."

## **Examples Across the Americas**

The conservation leaders gathered at the conference considered several interesting cases in which innovative conservation methods have -- or may in the future -- play a significant role. These projects include: the restoration of the Caral archaeological site in Peru, home of one

of the oldest examples of civilization in the Western Hemisphere; the protection of the a parcel of forest in the ChoCO-Manabí region in Ecuador, a project which set a precedent for the use of Clean Development Mechanism carbon credits in the region; and the Karukinka initiative in Chile, which ultimately protected more than 270.000 hectares in Tierra del Fuego. In Karukinka alone, nearly 300 thousand dollars are invested annually in stewardship and sustainable development initiatives.

The group also heard a case presentation regarding the newly protected Valdivian Coastal Reserve (VCR). Many of the conference participants planned to make a field trip to the VCR on the following day. The VCR, a reserve created by The Nature Conservancy, spans about 60 thousand hectares of forest and coastline along the Pacific Ocean, about 40 kilometers west of the UACH campus in Valdivia.

Following the conference, the next task for the organizers will be to weave together networks of conservation finance professionals that will be able to replicate the ideas presented at the conference. The network will allow the conference participants, once they are back in their home countries, to report on the fate of conservation projects that may find success, even in hard times.

## **Conservation and Climate Change: The Immediate Need to Adapt**

*From the Fall 2008 edition of [Innovations: Technology/Governance/Globalization](#)*

In the summer of 2008 Lincoln Land Institute held a conference on *Conservation and Climate Change: Building a Framework for Adaptive Management* in Washington, DC. Professionals from many different sectors participated, including men and women from the public sector, from academia, from business, and from the non-profit sector. The presentations and discussions at this conference raised many important points about the challenges we face concerning climate change and about how to adapt to address these challenges. The ideas emerging from the conference are synthesized in this article, available by [clicking here](#).

### **From the Library**

*Resources from the [Conservation Finance Forum Library](#)*

Here are a few resources on climate change that can be found on the [Conservation Finance Forum Website](#) to complement the [recent article on Climate Change and Adaptive Management in the Innovations Journal](#):

- [The Conservation and Climate Change Clearinghouse](#). The Conservation and Climate

Change Clearinghouse. 2008.

- [Cutting Greenhouse Gases the Role for Farms and Forests.](#) Environmental Defense Fund. May 18, 2008.
- [Things are Heating up: Economic Issues and Opportunities from Global Warming.](#) Goldman Sachs. 2007.
- [The Chicago Climate Exchange.](#) The Chicago Climate Exchange. March 2009.

For more resources on conservation finance, please visit the [Resource Page](#) of the [Conservation Finance Forum](#).

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