Keynote Address

Big Conservation and Little Conservation: Collaboration in Managing Global and Local Heritage

Janis B. Alcorn
Biodiversity Support Program
World Wildlife Fund

ABSTRACT
Conservation initiatives around the world are separated into two distinct scales: Big Conservation, of the sort practiced by big international NGOs, and Little Conservation, the type undertaken by millions of anonymous local people. Big Conservation tends to ignore the efforts of Little Conservation, but, ultimately, it is Little Conservation that makes the long-term difference. If conservation in general is to be successful, then the two branches must learn to work together — to marry the money and technical knowledge of Big Conservation with the commitment and traditional knowledge of Little Conservation. This will require a fundamental change in the way Big Conservation operates, since it must give up a measure of control over the conservation process to local people.

The topic of this conference — Innovative Strategies for Natural Resource Management and Control — is a primary concern to many of us working in conservation outside academia. The conference focuses on three themes: legal recognition of group rights and ownership; management of market forces; and information technologies in service of communities. These three themes surface around the globe when conservationists and resource managers discuss "integrated conservation and development" projects. But these themes surface less often in mainstream conservation discussions.

Recently there have been efforts to reform conservation; these efforts spring from a spectrum of critiques. On one side are those who are trying to get conservationists to question whether the end justifies the means in their work, and to recognize and alter the human rights abuses and other imperialistic aspects of conservation. In the middle are those who seek to integrate sustainable development with conservation, such as IUCN's Strategy for Caring for the Earth. Others in the middle are working to join the interests of the state and local people to work on specific management problems, such as the new Joint Forest Management strategies in India and other countries. At the other end of the spectrum, there is a retrenchment of standard approaches — led by traditionalist biology-centric conservationists, with the most radical of them calling for creation of a UN Nature Keeping Force modeled after the UN Peace Keeping Force. Under this proposal, biologists would monitor park management globally, and, if national governments failed to protect parks, the biologists would call in the UN forces to keep people out of those parks. As you discuss the three themes of focus in your conference, I would like for you to keep this bigger picture in mind as a context for your discussions over the next two days.

Your conference focuses on local heritage. Global heritage is the most familiar buzzword today. All heritage is ultimately local, however. The popular cry is "think globally, act locally," but the catch is that in order to act locally, you have to think locally.

We who think globally are what Raymond Dasmann has called "Biosphere People." We Biosphere People seldom know much about the rivers, forests, hills and grasslands in whose midst we live. We locate ourselves in grids on paper maps or round metal globes. We don't know the names of the plants around us. We don't know their natural rhythms. We don't know the history of the places where we walk. Land and resources are viewed as commodities. We extract resources from around the world; we wear shirts from Bangladesh, jeans from Burma, belts from Guatemala, and shoes from China. We eat grapes from Chile, pineapples from Sri Lanka, and oranges from Brazil. Our companies extract oil from Papua New Guinea and Ecuador, and gold from Indonesia. Profits made on our stock market come in from points all around the world. And we talk about our global heritage. The environmental and social impacts of our use of these resources is invisible to us. There is no feedback that affects our immediate lives. We are the elite, we live in the "North," and in the capital cities of every country in the world. We are not well-informed for thinking locally, or well-organized for acting locally — particularly in someone else's locale.

The popular cry is "think globally, act locally," but the catch is that in order to act locally, you have to think locally.

Dasmann contrasted Biosphere People with "Ecosystem People." Ecosystem People know and depend on their local place — their livelihood and well-being depends on their immediate environment. Their identity and their history are part of the landscape. They locate themselves in relation to natural features in the landscape and the history associated with those features. Feedback from overuse of the resource base is seen and felt in the immediate environment. Ecosystem People think locally, and they are well-informed to think locally. Indigenous peoples are Ecosystem People. Ecosystem People are often invisible to Biosphere People.

Ecosystem People are now being recognized as "stakeholders." But as one of the conferences speakers, Peter Poole, once joked to me: a stakeholder is anyone who shows up carrying a T-Bone steak in each hand. In other words, anyone who is powerful enough to claim rights can be a stakeholder. The critical point is that Ecosystem People are *stakeholders with prior rights* to the resource in which others are claiming a stake. Biosphere People, however, generally ignore that issue. When they do invite Ecosystem People to the table, too often it is to extract their local knowledge to be used for decision-making by Biosphere interests. Certainly this division into two groups is an oversimplification of a complex set of relationships. But the contrast is heuristically useful for defining the problem and the ends of the spectrum.

Let me turn now to a related contrasting pair — what I'm calling Big Conservation and Little Conservation. But before I talk about what's big and what's little, let me quickly define what I mean by conservation. Conservation is a social and political process by which natural resources, including forests, are managed to maintain biodiversity. Biological information and socio-political information are both important for conservation decision-making. Most of this information is held by local Ecosystem People. This is not to say that all information is held locally; it isn't.

BIG CONSERVATION

What is Big Conservation? Big Conservation is global. It is big organizations and big institutions located in big office buildings in capital cities: the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and the World Wildlife Fund, Conservation International, IUCN, the Asian Wetland Bureau, and the African Wildlife Foundation, for example. Big Conservation is the concern of BINGOS — Big International NGOs — and their local partner NGOs. Big Conservation is the concern of Government Forest Ministries and Park Departments. Big Conservation is big money. And Big Conservation is powerful. It is funded by multilateral development banks, bilateral donors, and wealthy foundations. Big Conservation is dominated by biologists with interests in global heritage. Big Conservation works for the "preservation" of habitats and ecosystems in areas distant from the homes of Big Conservationists. Big Conservation depends on funding and political commitment from bureaucracies and foreign interests distant from the field sites where projects, and biodiversity, are located. Big Conservation is what most people think of when they think of conservation.

The primary strategy of traditional Big Conservation is park and forest reserve systems, where areas are managed under plans drawn up by foreign consultants and nationals from capital cities. Some have referred to this as the "bullets and barbed wire" approach to conservation. Some elements inside Big Conservation have embraced efforts to develop a less combative relationship with people who live in or near parks and reserves, but the government agencies that carry out Big Conservation generally tend to view local people as their primary enemy, because they define local people as the major cause of park degradation.

Big Conservation's discourse and fund raising focuses on large, attractive animals: the panda, the tiger, the elephant, and the jaguar. The vision of Big Conservation does not include local people, and only peripherally any people at all — usually only the biologist/discoverer who interprets the scenery for us as he/she passes through it. Photographs and discussions focus on wild forests or beautiful reefs with no people in the picture — that is the desired goal of conservation. In Big Conservation discourse, local citizens are generally ignored, or called "populations" that threaten the "carrying capacity" of an ecosystem — in language derived from animal population biology. The organizations and institutions of local people are invisible to Big Conservation. Local people are viewed as a threat; they are the poachers, the slash and burners, the interlopers, and the squatters who must be removed from biodiverse areas.

The standard political *modus operandus* of Big Conservation has been to ignore local rights and claim the priority of global or national interests as moral vindication for their actions. Big Conservationists also claim the high ground, because they claim they are not representing themselves but rather speaking on behalf of biodiversity, representing the interests of wild animals who have no voice. Increased international funding for Big Conservation is being used to increase the area under Parks and Protected Areas — primarily in areas occupied, used and claimed by Indigenous peoples. In this context, Big Conservation has been criticized for legitimizing states' use of military force against Indigenous minorities. Conservationists are providing arms to governments and backing the states' moral rights to seize lands and punish those who resist their will. By supporting the consolidation of state control over natural resources, Big Conservation may very well be undermining its own interests, given the other interests of state-linked elites who have logged and mined biodiverse areas for profits.

By supporting the consolidation of state control over natural resources, Big Conservation may very well be undermining its own interests.

Environmentalists in the South have accused Big Conservation of turning the chicken-coop over to the foxes. They question whether Northern Big Conservation's action is simply done in ignorance, or is another extractive activity by the North. But this North-South discourse has generally ignored Little Conservation, and has instead focused on the faults of Big Conservation.

LITTLE CONSERVATION

What is Little Conservation? Little Conservation occurs as individuals make choices in their day-to-day lives. On the one hand, those decisions depend on an individual's ecological knowledge and his or her skills in applying the patterns established by traditional resource management systems. On the other hand, the decisions are made within the opportunities and constraints imposed by the communities' tenurial institutions — the rules that control resource access and use. Traditional farming is often viewed as requiring limited skill or controls. This is far from true. Traditional systems of slash and burn agriculture manage ecological processes through institutions with rituals, rules about allocation of lands, time-limits on land use, and a focus on maintaining proper social relationships within the community.

Little Conservation is a largely invisible influence on those who carry it out. It is embedded in local dress and metaphors, in the "right way" to do agriculture, and in ethical relationships with ancestors. It is passed on to children in songs, dances, and histories; it is part of local cultural heritage.

Little Conservation is a largely invisible influence on those who carry it out. It is embedded in local dress and metaphors, in the "right way" to do agriculture, and in ethical relationships with ancestors.

Little Conservation is visible in the community near Madang, Papua New Guinea, where people hand-feed rare, endemic fish in a bend in the river and limit their offtake to a few individuals for a once-a-year ritual. Little Conservation is the community that is petitioning the government to give it "conservation area" status so their forest won't be logged under the concession granted by the government to an outside logging company. It's the local farmer or housewife who takes an interest in trees or herbs that are becoming rare and take it upon themselves to maintain these species on their property or to argue in community meetings that everyone needs to spare them when they plan agricultural clearings. Little Conservation is at work in the traditional fishing ban following a reef owner's death in the South Pacific nations and in the mangrove harvest ban applied when a community recognizes that overharvesting has occurred. It's in the Thai Karen admonition that if you can hear a monkey's call echo when you are in your field, you have cleared too much forest. It's the decision made by the forest farmer to spare a rare tree and avoid steep slopes and greenbelts along waterways as he selects a field site to initiate a traditional agroforestry system. Little Conservation operates when village elders restrict access to certain forests or decide to allow agricultural land to return to forest when it's clear that forests have shrunk too small.

Little Conservation is seen in the Bushmen's managed burns used to maintain a patchwork of wild resources. Locally the burns are small but together they spread across the breadth of the Kalahari Desert. Little Conservation is seen in the managed forests that Chuck Peters has been studying in Borneo. Such biodiverse managed forests are found across the expanse of Borneo in mosaics with patches of communities' natural forest reserves.

The small acts of individuals and communities guided by Little Conservation add up to big, geographically visible patterns. Little

Conservation operates in perhaps 85% of the world's high biodiversity areas, including the areas where Protected Areas overlap with the territories of Indigenous Peoples. Big Conservation, in contrast, is carried out in a much, much smaller area. Little Conservation, then, is geographically bigger than Big Conservation.

So why have I called it Little Conservation? It is little, because globally it has been invisible, and because it is done by politically weak groups. The institutions that support Little Conservation have no office buildings, no named organizations. For example, village organizations meet under trees to make decisions. When no one is meeting, there is no visible sign of the organization — just a spot under a tree, or empty stools or mats in the corner of a communal house. They don't look important, and it's easy for outsiders to miss their presence. The institutions that support Little Conservation spread across national boundaries, but they aren't recognized by any international or national body, and they have seldom been studied by outsiders.

Little Conservation is little because its budget is tiny. It is a nonentity on the global donor scene. There is virtually no funding for Little Conservation. The World Bank's leaders have never heard of it, and those who practice Little Conservation have often never heard of The World Bank. Little Conservation doesn't require large sums of money; it is locally supported by cultural values, community-based institutions, and traditional resource management systems adapted to local conditions. At the national level, it is supported by appropriate policies that enable the local support mechanisms to continue to function under changing circumstances.

Finally, Little Conservation is little because Little Conservation is local. Its vision is limited to the local situation, a small area. There are no grand designs for, or assessments of, others' situations. Strategies and methods do not reflect an appreciation for regional or global trends, and they rarely foresee the impacts of "modernization" before they happen.

Little Conservation traditions are faced with many, many stresses and threats including: escalating pressure from outsiders who are logging, extracting other resources, or settling on community lands; state expropriation of lands and resources; demographic changes; cultural change; failure to educate young people in traditional ecological knowledge; missionaries; community institutions that are unable to interface effectively with outsiders; technological changes; and crop changes.

They are also threatened by Big Conservation which has, with all good intentions for saving global heritage, contributed to the destruction of Little Conservation by ejecting local peoples from areas that were rightfully theirs. Big Conservationists have made enemies of those who could be their allies. Instead of making allies with those who face off against loggers to defend their community forests, Big Conservation has instead too often sided with elites who share interests with loggers and other resource miners.

COLLABORATION IN CONSERVATION

Over the past decade, Little Conservation has become more visible on the world stage. Community groups have increasingly joined together in federations, unions, and other "peoples' organizations" to assert their rights. They have come to Big Conservation to seek assistance on what they see to be a common agenda. For example, in Northern Thailand, a group of villages have fought to protect their watershed forests from local logging interests. They were successful in that local fight, but then the government declared their forests part of a new national park. The village-based organization then sought help from a Bangkok-based environmental NGO. The Bangkok-based national NGO assisted them, but the international NGOs backed the park's creation. Big Conservationists often question local motivations, while at the same time they overlook the motivations driving the state. The biology-centric elements of Big Conservation deny the existence of Little Conservation and complain about others' blind belief in the Noble Savage, yet they do not critically evaluate their own beliefs in the Noble State.

There are...two levels of potentially synergistic collaboration between Big and Little Conservation: site specific collaboration, and policy level collaboration.

There is, as I mentioned earlier, a movement within Big Conservation to "involve local people" in conservation, although this involvement often does not build on Little Conservation practices or beliefs. There are, however, two levels of potentially synergistic collaboration between Big and Little Conservation: site specific collaboration, and policy level collaboration. Site specific collaboration includes a variety of possibilities including integrated conservation and development projects (ICADs), co-management, and technical assistance. Let me briefly discuss each one.

ICADs are based on the premise that unless people affected by the establishment of protected areas feel that they are benefiting in some way from protected areas, they will not be deterred from unsustainable resource extraction in those protected areas. Most ICADs are very local and seek to find the one or two incentives that will keep people out of the park; or to find cash replacements for the resources people have lost to the park.

Park managers often allow residents from outside the park to benefit by harvesting specific resources. For example, residents outside several protected areas in India and Nepal are allowed to cut grass inside the protected area for a short period each year. In addition, the park offers tree seedlings for planting on private land to replace wood lost when villagers were denied access to firewood gathering inside the park. ICADs aim to provide development benefits to people who have been removed from a park or who live next to a park in exchange for agreements that residents will not clear agricultural lands inside the protected areas. ICADs promote cottage industries such as beekeeping, distribute hybrid seeds, improve water supplies, and initiate ecotourism to generate local revenue. One of your conference themes involves market development for local products. This strategy is usually, but not always, implemented in association with ICAD projects.

The general consensus is that existing ICADs have seldom been successful, however. Analysts have concluded that the primary reason for their limited success is that ICADs have not achieved true participation. Rather, they involve people as passive recipients or implementors of projects, not as active partners in design or evaluation of those projects. Hence, they seldom build on Little Conservation practices and traditions.

A second area for local collaboration is co-management. Some level of co-management is occurring in some protected areas today. This decision to work with local people generally depends on decisions by individual park or reserve managers who see the value of recognizing the rights of local, traditional owners of the resources, and are committed to develop ways to integrate them into park management decision-making. These are generally *ad hoc* local efforts that are not officially, or legally, recognized as policy. For example, in Indonesia, WWF is working with government agencies and park residents in East Kalimantan to use participatory mapping so that local people can identify their traditional resource zones for designation as the park's multiple use areas, and designate the areas they would like to see remain "core areas" untouched by outsiders or themselves.

Thirdly, at the local site level, Big Conservationists offer technical assistance. Technical assistance can strengthen local people's capacity to monitor and manage the biodiversity on their lands. For example, the Xavante in Brazil requested that WWF assist them to develop ways to survey and monitor game populations. In the Yukon, wildlife department researchers gather information from communities on the status of fur-bearing wildlife in each area, analyze regional patterns, and then provide advice on management based on trends they find in the data. In these cases, native communities are not forced to follow the advice; the decision is left in their court. Technical assistance may also be provided in terms of legal assistance to fight illegal logging or encroachment on Indigenous territories. This may take the form of direct legal assistance, background legal research or acquisition of satellite imagery as evidence.

STRENGTHENING CONSERVATION

How can Big Conservation use its power in the policy arena to support Little Conservation to reach their common objectives? I've identified five areas where policy reform could strengthen conservation: a) tenurial rights b) border defense c) true co-management d) land use planning and e) educational rights. Many strategies are used in each of these five areas. All five make use of mapping and other information management technologies — one of the themes of your conference.

The first is tenure. Tenure is often discussed in these types of fora as an incentive for investment in long-term resource management. Community-based tenure and group ownership is more than an incentive, however. I think one of the best ways to conceptualize the important role of tenure is to think of property rights systems as "shells" in the computer jargon sense. Tenurial shells provide the superstructure within which activities are developed and operate — a sort of inner environment within the larger world. The tenurial shell is a constraining and enabling structure linked in very specific ways to the larger "operating system" in which the shell is embedded. Local ecosystems and societies have survived and flourished within the protective, enabling shells of community-based tenurial systems. Communities are not homogeneous, happy, harmonious entities. Tenurial shells form crucibles within which local conflict and differing strategies can bubble together in the context of local cultural and ecological factors, without being destabilized by external factors.

What is true co-management? It ranges from direct co-management of specific protected areas by joint boards to situations where government's role is simply recognition of local community-based organizations or Indigenous peoples' rights to make their own management decisions.

External recognition and legal protection of community-based property rights regimes strengthens the protective border. In many cases, if the protective tenurial shell were removed, individuals and institutions in the outer milieu would destabilize and destroy the community-based organizations, their institutions, and their resources inside the shell.

Second, border defense is supported by community-based tenurial systems and community-based border surveillance, as well as by policies that commit the power of the state to defend the borders of indigenous peoples' territories.

Third, national-level policies that legitimize and support true co-management are critical tools whereby states can reach conservation objectives through partnerships with communities. Co-management policies enable the state to maintain a certain degree of control over resource management decisions on private lands.

What is true co-management? It ranges from direct co-management of specific protected areas by joint boards to situations where government's role is simply recognition of local community-based organizations or indigenous peoples' rights to make their own management decisions. In most spheres, this falls within specific geographic areas variously known as semi-autonomous regions, campesino ecological reserves, comarcas, Indigenous reserves, etc. In the latter cases, the state is not directly co-managing, but indirectly co-managing through regulations that govern such entities and supporting those entities by defending their rights and borders.

Examples of direct co-management can be found in Australia and England. In Australia, Aboriginal land owners and the ANPWS run parks through a joint management arrangement. Aborigines serve on Management Boards and Consultative Committees which prepare long-term plans, as well as participate in day-to-day decision-making. In England, parks are planned around residents' livelihood activities and residents participate in park management decisions. Most British parks are under private ownership and the National Park Authority must cooperate with landowners to achieve its goals. Management Agreements establish Farm Conservation Plans, and provide financial incentives and compensation for agreed-upon management practices.

Outside of protected areas, co-management of a nation's resources can take all sorts of innovative forms. For example, appropriate subsidies for crops traditionally grown in biodiverse systems, such as rubber, "rustic" coffee and rattan gardens, can assist subsistence farmers to keep biodiversity in the landscape. Local communities need the biodiverse structure for the foods, medicines, craft materials, and other benefits provided by the multiple species systems in the short term; and the nation needs the biodiverse landscape for the storage of genetic resources and provision of ecosystem services for the long-term.

True co-management means recognizing the authority and institutions of peoples that do not share the urban-based culture of Biosphere People. It means surrendering dominance over interaction between our cultures to a process where our goals are put at risk by entering dialogue and collaboration. The direction and outcome is not foregone, and this frightens Big Conservation. Therefore, most co-management is not true co-management, but some sort of arrangement that yields no decision-making authority. For example, people are threatened with eviction if they do not sign compacts under terms dictated by Big Conservation, and this is called "co-management."

Fourth, policy changes that enable local land use planning are critically important, especially in places where tenurial rights are claimed by a state that is not likely to give up those rights to communities. Land use planning should be done in a way that focuses on making evident the existing plans that local people have for their lands and resources. Government often assumes that people have no plans and uses poor data to make broad land use decisions that are imposed on people, or are used to separate the people from their resources.

Lastly, but equally important, are education rights. In most countries, current national policy actively supports efforts to "mainstream" Indigenous cultures, thereby destroying their cultures and identity, and their Little Conservation traditions. The Karen whose homes and forests have been enclosed by the Thung Yai Wildlife Sanctuary in Thailand, for example, are seeking assistance in developing a program to educate their children in traditional knowledge and beliefs so they will be able to continue to take proper care of the forest left to them by their ancestors. But it is likely they will instead be resettled away from their forest homeland under a pending GEF project.

It is prudent to assume that, if wild species are observed in the vicinity of peoples' homes and fields ... then those people are in some way responsible for the presence of those species.

FINDING LITTLE CONSERVATION

If Little Conservation is so pervasive, why has it been so seldom documented? There are several reasons: government agency workers are educated to ignore it; urban-based researchers have been oblivious to it — it was not part of their upbringing, and it has not been something they were looking for. Biologists have sought information about specific species preferably as far away from people as possible, and anthropologists have focused on social behavior and rituals, but generally ignored their impact on the natural environment. Nevertheless, whenever researchers have looked for it, they have found Little Conservation all around the world.

It is prudent to assume that, if wild species are observed in the vicinity of peoples' homes and fields — whether you are looking at primarily agricultural landscapes with trees and other wild species on its edges, or at situations in the rainforest where farmers' fields are interspersed with large areas of wild resources in primary and secondary forests — then those people are in some way responsible for the presence of those species. This is rather like being presumed innocent unless proven guilty. Currently, researchers take the opposite view; they blame the people they see in the immediate environment for what is absent, when in fact the primary blame should often be placed at the door of policies and actions of distant elites.

As is true of most things deeply embedded in a peoples' way of life, to discover Little Conservation, the researcher can't just ask "do you do conservation?" The answer would probably be "no." As a Karen headman asked me as we discussed conservation, "Why do you people put things in boxes? Taking care of the forest is part of our way of living, it isn't something we do separately." When researchers carry out Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRAs), they often get hints of Little Conservation, but because PRAs rarely focus on wild species, these aspects of resource management are seldom discussed. Participatory mapping and Land Use Planning exercises, and investigations into land use decision-making, are most likely to yield clues leading to the discovery of Little Conservation activities and the stresses faced by Little Conservation.

There are ways to discover Little Conservation, and if government agencies really wanted to survey and map it, they could. But it is highly unlikely this will happen, especially given the fact that in many countries governments refuse to acknowledge even the presence of indigenous peoples in forested areas.

When conservationists play the role of gatekeepers, they are involved in a charade because the only decisions that really matter in the long run are those that are made by local people who live in the midst of biodiversity.

When local people are engaged in conservation projects, it is possible to discover where Little Conservation is working in that particular ecosystem, where its vestiges linger, and where it isn't operating at all. Discovery does not mean that outsiders should document completely the knowledge and functioning of Little Conservation. This would be a waste of time and a misdirection of resources, because the operation of Little Conservation does not depend on documenting the tradition. The continued functioning of Little Conservation depends on external support for the institutions and local organizations through which Little Conservation functions. This is where the investment of time and effort should be made.

Every day, local organizations and individuals are making decisions about resource use and resource management. Their decisions impact local and global heritage. Those local decisions will continue to be made regardless of the declarations and plans made by Biosphere People at national and international levels. If Little Conservation dies out as a guiding force in local decision making, then we all lose. Therefore, regardless of the conservation tactic of choice, it is a tactical error to deny local decision-making organizations participation at the conservation decision-making table. Some would argue that in the end, when conservationists play the role of gatekeepers, they are involved in a charade because the only decisions that really matter in the long run are those that are made by local people who live in the midst of biodiversity.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Allow me to end with a metaphorical summary. Big Conservation is like a big brother, sure that he knows what needs to be done and eager to get others to do it. He isn't eager to listen to his siblings' points of view. A big brother is physically more powerful and has access to greater resources than his younger siblings. Little Conservation is like little brothers and sisters; they have many different points of view and ideas, are less powerful and have fewer resources to assert them. They have a hard time getting a word in edgewise when their big brother is talking. In the end, though, there are many more younger brothers and sisters, so they are the ones who make most of the day-to-day decisions out of view of their big brother.

To carry the analogy to its conclusion: if families act on their common interests, they prosper. If Big and Little Conservation can work together, if Big Conservation makes its resources available to Little Conservation — teaching mapping, wildlife monitoring, population biology surveys, and other technical skills — and if Big Conservationists will listen to the concerns of Little Conservationists, if the "conservation community" formed by Big Conservation groups will accept those who practice Little Conservation as members of their community, and listen to their voices, then there is a better chance that local heritage will be there for the future children of both Biosphere People and Ecosystem People. The cases you will be discussing during this conference, and this conference itself, are evidence that steps are being taken to bring Little and Big Conservation together to tackle the local and global problems presented by failure to manage resources for the future.

As those of you in the audience carry out work for Big Conservation at the Forest Service or at Washington-based think tanks, or consult for the World Bank and other big agencies, you will be faced with the challenge of finding ways to strengthen Little Conservation and ways to avoid destroying it under the momentum of Big Conservation. This is very difficult, because by acting within the structures created by the dominant paradigm of Big Conservation, your choices for action will be limited. I urge you to do your best to develop innovative strategies by remembering Little Conservation and Local Heritage as you sit around decision-making tables, as you design plans for massive resource management projects, as you engage in policy debates, and as you negotiate international agreements on behalf of those with interests in global heritage. Thank you.

QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION

Q: To what extent do you think that the history of conservation here in the United States is influencing the focus on Big Conservation in the international arena?

JA: Well, I think it is a great deal, even though the situations can be completely different. For example, I remember one person from Thailand who went to Idaho to be trained in park management. He found that the month-long course was totally irrelevant to his situation. He said that they didn't even talk about the problems that he faced at home. At the same time, you can go back to Thailand, to the person who is the head of the park department, and he will say "Well, we want to do things like you do in your country — you have national parks, you have Indigenous reservations — we want to take the people and stick them in reservations, like you do, and we want to have national parks with no people in them, like you do."

Part of it is also because of status. Modern, western behavior has high status — it is not considered high status to have some weeds growing in your garden that happen to be useful. It's a whole way of looking at the world. I've often heard it mentioned in the African context, where you have people who come from a background that includes these Little Conservation measures, yet they are trained as scientists to look at the world in a way that does not allow them to integrate their experience.

Q: Working in the Biodiversity Support Program at the World Wildlife Fund, you are embedded in Big Conservation, and I'd like to know how successful you have been in bringing these concerns into the decision making process at the WWF. Also, have you seen a change within the institution?

JA: Yes, that's right, WWF is right in the middle of Big Conservation, but, I would add, WWF has one of the better records in terms of paying attention to local people. Once you're actually doing a project, you realize that you have to deal with the people who live there — you can't avoid it. You have to understand that WWF is the world's largest conservation organization and it contains all of these different points of view. Of course there is some strain within WWF — right now a retrenchment of the biology-centric point of view is taking place. Many people feel it went too far; towards thinking about only people and not thinking about conservation. As an individual it's hard to do anything, but if you are part of a critical group within an organization, you can make some changes.

Q: In light of what Big Conservation has accomplished, and the factors that influenced it in its beginnings, don't you think you are being a little hard on it?

JA: Well, in the European, and in particular in the English tradition, it was the King's or the government's role to undertake these measures. This was extended to the colonies, and it has a political heritage that extends beyond the biologists — it was the milieu in which they were operating. Nevertheless, I think most of Big Conservation still holds this idea about the role of local people in conservation. I'm pointing out that if they don't perceive their situation, they will lose the initiative and fail to reach their goals, even though it's so incredibly messy to work with people.

Q: How can you reconcile conservation in an area when this means foregoing a lot of valuable resources? How can you foster Little Conservation when exploitation can produce a lot of cash in the short term?

JA: Well, for example, in Papua New Guinea, the Global Environmental Fund is undertaking a big program to create conservation areas that incorporate alternative sources of income for people. There, only 3% of the land belongs to the government — the rest belongs to the clans — so they have to come up with some alternatives. The problem is there aren't a lot of things to offer people in the short term. There's been talk of conservation packages whereby if the world wants Papua New Guinea to conserve its forests, it is going to have to pay.

It depends on the case. When ICAD siting is being discussed, one of the problems has been that they aren't always located in the most biodiverse places. They've been attacked because they have gone after places where people are already interested in conservation, regardless of what they have to conserve. Should Big Conservation be investing in these cases, or should they be looking for cases where more biodiversity is at stake? For example, the Karen — they want to stay where they are, they want to conserve their forests, and they have a lot of diversity. It has to do with searching for sites on the one hand, but there are also policy level actions that can make a lot of difference. In Mexico, for example, the subsidy to coffee led directly to the loss of a lot of forest.

Q: How do you see conservation initiatives developing in the context of the conflict between local groups and the dominant structures that see community organization as a threat in their programs to control ethnic minorities — the Karen being opposed by Burmese military groups, for example?

JA: You can't predict what can happen. You can't count on any country in this world being here for very long, and that's why I think Little Conservation is so important. As governments come and go and borders change, unless Little Conservation is still hanging in there, there are no parks. Look what happened in Rwanda — early on the ruling group put anti-personnel mines around the edges of the parks and then sent their logging companies in to take the trees down. They were the only ones who could do the logging because they knew where they had put their mines.

In South East Asia, the environment is a democracy issue. It is around environmental issues that democracy is often happening. It can be a threat to the state, but it varies. In Zimbabwe, for example, they've bought into Little Conservation.

In the Karen case, they are likely to stay there because they are very good friends with the Thai military, unusual as it sounds. The thing is, you live in this time, and you have to act in this time. You're not living a hundred years from now, so you have a choice. If you think the situation is hopeless and you don't do anything, then you have to live with the fact that you didn't do anything.

As governments come and go and borders change, unless Little Conservation is still hanging in there, there are no parks.

Q: I think part of the cause of the conflict between Big Conservation and Little Conservation is that Little Conservation sometimes fails to conserve. How do you see Little Conservation working in the many situations of overuse and degradation?

JA: Well, Big Conservation has failed, big time, as well. You can't forget that — the Rwanda case is a big time failure. Both sides fail sometimes, but it's a continuous thing — it happens daily. Conservation is never done. It's part of making a living; it resides in the choices you make every day. You need to respond to what's going on around you — things go bad; things get better. That's one reason why protected areas that are co-managed are usually in areas where there aren't a lot of people. That makes it possible to figure out ways to work with those people. It's not necessary to remove them and create enemies who will move back in as soon as the government changes.

Q: What specific structures can help co-management succeed?

JA: I think you can only decide that locally. If you know what's going on at a lot of different sites in a country, then you can start to come up with some policy solutions. The main one is tenure. If you give people the right to defend their territory, though, they can make decisions that you may not like. Some places they will and some places they won't — you can't predict for sure what will happen in any case.

When you're talking about implementing co-management, you also need to realize that the parties that you are asking to work together have often been antagonists. In India, for example, where the idea of Joint Forest Management is starting to be recognized by the government — now they're even talking about Joint Protected Areas Management — there is a situation where a trained paramilitary force has created a situation where the local people are their enemies; people have been killed in boundary fights. An effort has to be made to change that situation through retraining and figure out local ways to effect conflict resolution. You need to regain some kind of trust between the parties to make it work.

Q: A lot of this talk has focused on the World Wildlife Fund, which seems to be pretty advanced in this area. Other large conservation organizations, like The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, and the Wildlife Society very rarely work at the local level…

JA: I won't say in which organization this took place, and they all have their bad GEF projects, but in this particular one, this NGO was defending its GEF project that involved working with local people, and I asked "How did you know what you needed to do to work with the local people?" He said "I didn't do any surveys, I didn't do any kind of program to find this out — I have lived there for five years, and I just *know* what they need." The biologists need to work with social scientists. So, how many social scientists are there at WWF? Two, maybe three. If you want to look at where they're really taking it seriously, you need to look at where they hire people who know something about the social sciences, and there aren't many.

The other part of it is they can't raise money that way. They raise money with big, pretty animals. It's too complicated to explain to the average American why they should contribute money to Little Conservation.

Little Conservation doesn't need money as much as it needs time— time to develop its goals and objectives. It needs some kind of a shell that protects it from the forces that are pushing it in various directions while the community discusses and figures out what it wants.

Big Conservation and Little Conservation have a lot more in common than they realize, and there's a lot of opportunity for them to work together, but often they don't because Big Conservation sides with the state and brings in the guards.

Q: How do you think the actions of multinational corporations and their support of trade liberalization interact with Big Conservation, particularly at the crossroads where a lot of these companies sit on the boards of organizations like WWF? As someone trying to move forward, how can these organizations use this situation to, in turn, influence the behavior of the corporations?

JA: It's very hard to make those changes. For example, with NAFTA, there was a strong feeling of support within WWF, but WWF Mexico was strongly against it. Those political decisions are made beyond our ability to influence. They are compromised to some degree by their funding sources. On the other hand, as you say, they could be able to influence them. WWF is working with Chevron in Papua New Guinea and Greenpeace has raised a lot of questions about that. Chevron is expecting that if there is a major oil spill in those swamps, then they will have some cover. On the other hand, Chevron has hired anthropologists and has gone way out of their way to do a lot — it's quite incredible what they've invested in conservation and in working with local people there. Nevertheless, I don't think that conservation organizations have the kind of clout necessary to create broad changes in multinational behavior.

JANIS B. ALCORN
An ethnobotanist with 25 years' experience in international development and research in ecology, indigenous natural resource management systems, and conservation of biodiversity in Asia and the Americas, Dr. Alcorn began her career in 1970, as a Peace Corps volunteer working in village level development in India. She received her PhD in Botany, with a minor in Anthropology, from the University of Texas at Austin in 1982. From 1985 to 1988, she was on the faculty of the Biology Department at Tulane University. In 1988, she was awarded a two year AAAS Diplomacy Fellowship to serve as an environment and natural resources advisor to USAID. In 1991, she assumed her current position as Program Manager for Asia and Pacific in the Biodiversity Support Program (BSP) at World Wildlife Fund in Washington, DC. Dr. Alcorn developed and directs BSP's Peoples and Forests Program, the goal of which is to use mapping techniques to promote recognition of indigenous peoples' tenurial rights and to support community-based land use planning in order to strengthen biodiversity conservation in the forested areas of Insular Southeast Asia.