

WORLD•WATCH

VISION FOR A SUSTAINABLE WORLD

FROM READERS

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FROM READERS

A Challenge to Conservationists: Phase II

Mac Chapin's article in the November/December issue of *World Watch* has generated the heaviest flow of letters to the editor since we began producing the magazine in 1988. This overwhelming response has led us to publish an unprecedented number of those letters in this issue, including reactions from leaders of the "Big Three" conservation organizations that were at the center of Chapin's story.

As you will see in the letters that follow, both the facts and their interpretation are hotly debated by experts and officials from a range of organizations. But we are heartened to find that there is substantial consensus on the core issue the article addresses:

that the needs of indigenous peoples and healthy ecosystems must be more effectively integrated in conservation programs than they are today. We hope that Chapin's article and the responses published here will spur the kind of dialogue and commitment to change that will be needed if consensus in words is to be translated into action on the ground.

There is no doubt that Chapin's article has made a lot of people uncomfortable, but discomfort is sometimes needed to force people to address problems that have festered for a long time. In talking to dozens of representatives of environmental organizations, indigenous groups, and foundations about these questions

in the past few months, we have been impressed by the number of dedicated, savvy people who are committed to finding a productive way forward.

Worldwatch will contribute to this process by continuing to convey the latest developments and most creative thinking on the subject to a worldwide audience. Fresh air and debate, we believe, are essential ingredients of change. Early in 2005, we plan to convene a roundtable discussion that will bring together the key players in this drama to consider concrete steps that will better mesh the needs of indigenous peoples and the natural world.

CHRIS FLAVIN

President, Worldwatch Institute

From Conservation International

"A Challenge to Conservationists" (*World Watch*, November/December 2004) offered an interpretation of the relationship between indigenous peoples and conservationists who work to save biodiversity around the world. The article raised several important issues regarding those relationships, and we agree that those topics deserve serious attention. Over the past several years, these matters have increasingly occupied more of our time and resources, and our commitment to building long-lasting and productive relationships with indigenous communities has never been stronger.

Therefore, we were disappointed by both the content and tone of the article, which was fraught with errors

and unsubstantiated assertions. Instead of shedding light on such a critical issue, we are concerned that the article drives a wedge between conservationists and indigenous people, thereby distracting attention from what really matters: protecting and maintaining biodiversity, and the basic ecological processes and ecosystem services that are the foundations for sustainable livelihoods, indigenous cultures, and economic development.

We would like to provide your readers with accurate information regarding our organization's values, policies, and track record. Since its founding, CI has believed that conservation must benefit all people who live in areas of high priority for biodiversity conservation, and there are no more meaningful places to demonstrate this

than the homelands of indigenous and traditional peoples. Recognizing this, one of our five core organizational goals over the next five years is to continue increasing our partnerships with and the support of indigenous peoples.

CI was among the first large environmental organizations to adopt an indigenous peoples policy in 1996, and we updated that policy last year. We regularly consult with indigenous leaders on its implementation. Our work with indigenous communities has produced important results. For example, in 1992 we began helping Brazil's Kayapó Indians transition from uncontrolled logging to economically and ecologically sustainable forms of income generation for their emerging development needs, including protection of their 28-million-acre reserva-

tion territory from ranching and other illegal invasions. In Ghana, we teamed up with the indigenous communities of the Kakum National Park to build a canopy walkway that is today one of West Africa's most popular tourism destinations. CI has also worked closely with the highest council of traditional rulers in Ghana to create a campaign for the protection of endangered wildlife, using sacred animals as the flagship for the campaign. This also helps protect the cultural heritage of the indigenous communities in Ghana. These are just two examples of many.

Last year, we shared 25 percent of our budget with partner organizations.

While WWF was the first large conservation group to articulate and practice a policy affirming the central importance of working as partners with indigenous peoples, we are committed to learning from both our successes and mistakes.

Still, the combined budgets of CI and the other major conservation groups pale in comparison to the resources needed to face the environmental challenges of today's world, including the pressing needs of indigenous peoples to hold their ground and sustainably manage their lands against formidable forces. We welcome new ideas for how conservationists can work with indigenous peoples to secure funding at a much larger scale.

Regarding our collaboration with the private sector, CI works with industry partners to change the impact of their activities from environmental harm to ecological stewardship. Biodiversity conservation is too complex and important to exclude entire sectors. By working constructively with both industry and local communities, we stand a far better chance of affecting positive change for indigenous peoples and long-term stewardship.

When it comes to developing our conservation strategies, it is our core belief that sound science must under-

pin decision-making. Many well-respected and peer-reviewed scientific journals have evaluated our work, and have agreed that our scientific approaches are sound. Taking these findings, our scientists have worked hand in hand with indigenous leaders around the world to design durable conservation strategies.

We invite anyone interested in learning more about Conservation International to visit our website at www.conservation.org/xp/CIWEB/wwresponse/. While there, we hope you will explore in greater detail our approach, track record, and core beliefs.

PETER SELIGMANN

CEO, Conservation International

JATNA SUPRIATNA

Regional Vice President, CI-Indonesia

OKYEAME AMPADU-AGYEI

Country Director, CI-Ghana

From the World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

Indigenous peoples have been the objects of violence, discrimination, and abuse for more than five centuries. Recent decades have eroded some of the cultural and geographical gaps between indigenous peoples and industrial society, but this erosion often benefits the latter at the expense of the former. Recent decades have also seen the worlds of conservation and indigenous peoples come closer and many times the proximity has been mutually beneficial. Regrettably, in some cases it has not.

Although often exaggerated and peppered with inaccuracies, "A Challenge to Conservationists" succeeds in highlighting complex relationships between the rights of indigenous peoples, land tenure and resource rights, and conservation. While we take exception to the misrepresentation of our on-the-ground work with indigenous peoples, we share the author's broader concerns.

For more than 40 years WWF has been a global leader in innovating and implementing solutions at the interface of humans and nature in over a hundred countries. We have evolved from an institution supporting small, isolated

About WORLD•WATCH

WORLD WATCH is a bimonthly, nonprofit magazine, written by Worldwatch Institute analysts and guest authors, that tracks key indicators of the Earth's well-being. We monitor and evaluate changes in climate, forest cover, population, food production, water resources, biological diversity, and other key trends, and identify and analyze the most effective strategies for achieving a sustainable society—including those that come from the advances of science and technology, the rethinking of traditional economics, and the neglected wisdom of now-vanishing indigenous peoples. We accept no advertising, and we are beholden only to our readers, from whom we welcome comments.

WORLD WATCH is published in Italian, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish. In addition, selections from WORLD WATCH are incorporated into the online French-language magazine, *L'Etat de la Planete* (www.dela.planete.org/).

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wildlife conservation projects to a global network tackling the root causes of biodiversity loss and advocating conservation at much larger scales. Only by addressing these complexities and working at large, ecoregional scales have we been able to deliver the results that bring us closer to our stated mission of building “a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.”

While WWF was the first large conservation group to articulate and practice a policy affirming the central importance of working as partners with indigenous peoples, we are committed to learning from both our successes and mistakes. To that end, WWF has resolved to:

- Openly re-evaluate the WWF policy on indigenous peoples and strengthen its enforcement and monitoring mechanisms;
- Examine WWF’s large scale conservation programs as they relate to indigenous and local communities to expand support for effective partnership approaches as well as implement changes where necessary; and,
- Listen more closely to the voice of indigenous peoples and ensure that their concerns are addressed in the design and implementation of WWF field projects.

WWF is on the ground in many of the very same places where indigenous communities are experiencing the most pervasive and most intense cultural change. We have come away from these experiences understanding that indigenous peoples and local communities are essential stakeholders in any conservation success. But it’s not just about hearing the voice of stakeholders and obtaining consent. In fact, a lot of what we do in the field focuses on building local capacity and reflecting local knowledge, ownership, and pride in the practice of conservation.

In southern Chile, for example, we work together with Mapuche communities to strengthen their initiatives for sustainable forest use. In Namibia, we have worked with 14 different tribal groups to organize conservancies that improve management of their natural resources. We partner with local coun-

cils to organize community-based management systems in Amazonian and Philippine fishing villages. And, in Yu’pik villages along the Bering Sea, we work with indigenous educators to



monitor toxicity levels and develop programs in ecological education.

These are examples of the ways WWF embraces local human needs and aspirations as part of improving the ecological integrity of the planet. There are many more.

Drawing on this record, we’re optimistic about working with others to find new and better solutions to complex human ecological problems. Our starting point will be the three institutional commitments outlined above.

To read our policy on indigenous and traditional peoples and for a more detailed discussion addressing the inaccuracies of “A Challenge to Conservationists,” please visit our website at <http://panda.org/people/worldwatch>.

CARTER S. ROBERTS
Chief Conservation Officer, WWF-US

CHRIS HAILS
*Program Director,
WWF-International*

From The Nature Conservancy

World Watch’s recent article by Mac Chapin, “A Challenge to Conservationists,” raises important issues regarding

the fundamental need to involve indigenous and traditional communities in conservation efforts.

An open dialogue is critical to strengthening the collaboration among indigenous communities and conservationists.

For more than 50 years, The Nature Conservancy has depended upon partnerships with local peoples to conserve some of the most biologically critical and threatened ecosystems on Earth.

Most of the world’s biodiversity exists in areas inhabited by people. The Nature Conservancy knows that effective conservation cannot be achieved unless the people who live and rely on those lands are an integral part of the process.

Among The Nature Conservancy’s core values is a “Commitment to People,” which states that we “respect the needs of local communities by developing ways to conserve biological diversity while at the same time enabling humans to live productively and sustainably on the landscape.”

The Nature Conservancy works in all 50 of the United States, as well as in 28 countries around the world. In more than 30 of those programs—nationally and internationally—the Conservancy is working with indigenous communities to help protect their traditional lands.

From Colombia, where we have helped indigenous tribes reacquire their sacred lands, to Alaska, where we are working with Native Alaskans to incorporate traditional knowledge and subsistence activities into conservation plans, Conservancy employees strive to embody that value in everything they do.

Mr. Chapin’s underlying premise—that large international conservation groups are by their very nature incapable of effectively working with indigenous and traditional peoples—is simply incorrect.

Such a premise suggests that any organization working in disparate locations around the world and receiving significant individual, governmental or corporate support should not even attempt to work in areas with indige-

nous populations for fear of imposing foreign priorities and irreparably harming traditional lifestyles.

On the contrary, organizations of every size should use their resources to reach out to all segments of the world to form partnerships to conserve critical ecosystems.

Mr. Chapin states that “indigenous peoples and conservationists have very different agendas.” The reality is that indigenous people and conservationists struggle against many of the same challenges—from expanding global trade and epidemics to the effects of climate change and irresponsible corporate activities.

Only through working collaboratively can these challenges be confronted. Just as indigenous communities have unique knowledge of their land that is essential to conserving biodiversity, organizations such as the Conservancy have scientific and financial resources that are needed in today’s global society to help conserve wildlife and local ways of life.

Mr. Chapin suggests that as conservation groups increasingly rely on science, they grow increasingly dismissive of indigenous populations. But science and social responsibility can—and must—go hand in hand.

Science helps The Nature Conservancy determine *where* we work to protect critical habitat, but science does not confine us in *how* we work to conserve those lands.

Each community is unique. Our tools, such as participatory conservation, enable us to listen to community concerns and develop joint solutions that have scientific credibility. We build long-term relationships with communities, continually refine our plans, and jointly assess our activities.

But we recognize that more must be done.

The Conservancy in recent years has expanded our staff and investment in international programs to address local issues more effectively. We have established networking groups to allow our staff collaborating with international communities to share strategies and lessons learned.

The Conservancy also encouraged the creation of a year-long Global Partnership Dialogue to be launched at the 2004 World Conservation Congress in Bangkok to bring together indigenous, local, and NGO leaders from around the world to discuss how to improve partnerships with conservation groups.

And the Conservancy’s philosophy of adaptive management drives us to continuously review our activities. Regular conservation audits evaluate the effectiveness of partnerships with communities and other stakeholders.

Learning the unique cultural complexities of indigenous groups is a continuous process. Just as learning the complexities and methods of conservation is an evolving science.

But neither science nor community involvement can be ignored, and both are essential tools in achieving the common goal of conservationists and indigenous populations: preserving the Earth’s natural resources and ecosystems that will sustain our children, grandchildren, and beyond.

To learn more about The Nature Conservancy’s work with indigenous and traditional communities, visit www.nature.org.

STEVEN J. MCCORMICK
President & CEO,
The Nature Conservancy

From the Ford Foundation

Mac Chapin’s article “A Challenge to Conservationists” (November/December 2004) addresses a number of issues the Ford Foundation has worked on for many years and which we consider key to our efforts to reduce poverty and injustice among indigenous and rural communities around the world. The article raises important questions about the relation of biodiversity conservation and community development. We agree that these matters need to be discussed and analyzed.

However, the article contains factual errors and is generally misleading in the way that it portrays Ford’s and other donors’ work to generate a constructive dialogue about the development implications of large-scale conservation approaches. First, the

article implies that a Foundation-funded inquiry on large-scale conservation and community development is primarily about indigenous peoples and conservation. This ignores the range of issues related to large-scale conservation trends that were examined, and does not capture the Foundation’s concern for other local communities—in addition to those of indigenous peoples—which are central to our community-based natural resource management programs.

The article is also incorrect in its depiction of the nature of internal Ford discussion about the inquiry, particularly regarding the involvement of two Foundation trustees, Kathryn Fuller and Yolanda Kakabadse. The discussion among Foundation staff and trustees, which took place at our regular board of trustees meetings, focused exclusively on the ways we could best achieve the goals of the inquiry. Ford staff drew on the expertise of Kathryn Fuller and Yolanda Kakabadse and were pleased with their willingness to promote engagement of their organizations and others in a dialogue that explored concerns about large-scale conservation. Contrary to Mr. Chapin’s claim, at no point did either trustee try to suppress the release of the report resulting from this inquiry. The fact is that the report was released last June to the participating donors, the conservation organizations, and other interested parties.

In analyzing the Foundation’s follow-up grant-making and responses to the dialogue between conservation NGOs and the group of funders collaborating on this effort, the author failed to verify with the Foundation the steps we have taken. The author fails to mention that in addition to the grants to WWF and IUCN, Ford is also providing support to the International Institute on Environment and Development for a dialogue that will involve a range of stakeholders. Moreover, had he contacted us, we would have made clear that the approval process for any proposed grant to an organization with which a trustee is affiliated includes review by an inde-

pendent committee of the board.

Lastly, the author makes misleading remarks about funders' perceptions of indigenous peoples. In no way do they reflect the views of the Ford Foundation. We find these remarks particularly troubling because we have long supported the development work of indigenous groups in many parts of the world and remain engaged in this effort. While Ford continues to support the community-based natural resource management projects of international conservation organizations, the bulk of our funding focuses on supporting the work of those closest to the problems, particularly the organizations of low-income rural and indigenous peoples. In fact, a recent review by Harvard University of funding for indigenous groups in the United States identified the Ford Foundation as the largest source of private funding, with over \$72 million in grants in the last decade. Outside of the United States, we have provided in the last three years over \$26 million in grants specifically focused on indigenous peoples. Readers of Mr. Chapin's article would be left with a very different impression.

PABLO J. FARIAS

*Vice President, Asset Building and
Community Development Program,
The Ford Foundation*

From the Amazon Alliance

[on "the unsupported belief that indigenous peoples cannot be trusted to take care of their own resources"]

I would like to commend *World Watch* for its courage in publishing Mac Chapin's article, "A Challenge to Conservationists" and for taking on the contentious issue of conflict between large conservation organizations and indigenous peoples. Working for an organization that is charged with sustaining a coalition between indigenous peoples and environmentalists, I feel that this is an issue that deserves as much attention now as it did in 1990, when indigenous organizations and environmentalists agreed to work together to protect the Ama-

zon through the legal recognition and defense of the territorial rights of indigenous peoples.

Indigenous peoples still believe strongly in this goal. They are less convinced, however, of the commitment of the largest conservation organizations to help them achieve it, particularly as they face growing threats to their territories from oil and gas extraction, mining, roads, and agricultural expansion. They now see conservationists advocating the formation of national parks on their traditional lands, providing technical assistance to logging companies that harvest timber where there are uncontacted tribes, and partnering with oil companies—in effect giving a green seal to drilling in the most culturally and environmentally sensitive places in the world.

Nonetheless, there have also been some valuable alliances between conservationists and indigenous communities on campaigns against destructive mega-projects such as the Camisea gas pipeline in the Peruvian Amazon. These few examples show the power that coalitions can have in challenging international companies and financiers to protect biodiversity.

Large imbalances in economic and political power naturally weaken alliances between indigenous and conservation organizations, but more troubling is the persistence of the unsupported belief that indigenous peoples cannot be trusted to take care of their own natural resources. I find it much more plausible that indigenous peoples should distrust governments and NGOs with ties to oil and timber companies to safeguard their ancestral territories.

This debate deserves much more attention in order to bring about more socially responsible conservation and I hope that it will continue not just in closed NGO meetings, but also in communities and always with indigenous peoples present at the table.

PETER KOSTISHACK

*Co Director, Amazon Alliance
for Indigenous and Traditional
Peoples of the Amazon Basin*

From a Grassroots Conservation Group

I am the former founding director of The Nature Conservancy's Baja California/Sea of Cortez Program, and currently the executive director of a small grassroots conservation team that helps local NGOs and rural communities in Mexico to strengthen and protect communal land and marine tenure. Mac Chapin should be applauded for

Large imbalances in economic and political power naturally weaken alliances between indigenous and conservation organizations.

urgently calling for large NGO accountability in the arena of global conservation.

It concerns me that global conservation NGOs are largely absent from the front-line battles to protect local resources from predation by governments, speculators, multi-national predators, and resource pirates. The irony, of course, is that these organizations often make deals with the very entities who most threaten the natural resources local communities depend on for survival.

SERGE DEDINA

*Executive Director, WILDCOAST,
International Conservation Team,
Baja California Coastkeeper
Project Director*

From a Researcher on "Conservation Refugees"

I read "A Challenge to Conservationists" with particular interest, as I have just returned from a month in South America researching a book on the history of conservation refugees—people evicted or otherwise displaced from traditional homelands in the interest of conservation. And my last book was a history of American philanthropic foundations, an intriguing subplot of Mac Chapin's article.

As I'm sure *World Watch* readers are aware, the practice of evicting natives from "protected areas" began

in the United States a century and half ago after the creation of Yellowstone and Yosemite National Parks, when a dozen or so Indian tribes were summarily removed from the parks, often by force. That process, incidentally, was not stopped until 1969, when the last free-standing Miwok village was evacuated in Yosemite. The creation and defense of “fortress conservation” was in fact inspired by many of the forefathers of American environmentalism. So it should be no surprise that Chapin finds residues of that philosophy in

The practice of evicting natives from “protected areas” began in the United States a century and a half ago after the creation of Yellowstone and Yosemite National Parks, when a dozen or so Indian tribes were summarily removed, often by force.

some large American conservation NGOs. That said, I believe the situation is changing, and that at least at the field level in South America, the staffs of CI, TNC, WCS, and WWF are acutely aware of what Chapin alleges—that the spirit of exclusionary conservation survives in the headquarters of their organization alongside a subtle but real prejudice against the “unscientific” native wisdom of indigenous peoples.

However, in key cities of the Amazon watershed and throughout the basin itself, I found and interviewed people who worked either for or in partnership with CI, TNC, WWF, and WCS. While there remains a palpable level of hostility toward “the BINGOs” (Big International NGOs), concerted efforts are being made to improve relations with indigenous peoples and their representatives, often at the insistence of foundation funders. Are relations good? No, neither between native peoples and the NGOs nor between field staff and NGO leadership in the U.S.

I was heartened to hear local executives of the big four in Quito, Lima,

and elsewhere admitting that serious mistakes had been made by their organizations in the past three or four years, and particularly to hear Erick Meneses, director of Conservation International’s Vilcambamba project in Peru, acknowledge that his employer had gotten far too close to Camisea, the huge Peruvian gas exploration company that was actively drilling wells and building pipelines in the very area CI was trying to protect. I come home persuaded that Mac Chapin is right to observe that the field staff of the BINGOs are aware of the social problems created by fortress conservation, and that slowly, ever so slowly, they are beginning to reach their leaders.

I head next to Bangkok, where I look forward to listening in on Yolanda Kakabadse’s promised roundtable on this topic at the IUCN quadrennial convention. There I expect to hear a lot of promising rhetoric and more of the sincere declarations of good intention toward native peoples that have been such a large aspect of this ongoing controversy. Whether change or action follow will remain to be seen. They will depend on the growing power of indigenous activism and the sincerity of global conservationists.

As for the endless and intractable debate as to whether or not close relationships with extractive corporations will permit fair treatment of indigenous peoples, the jury remains out. What seems clear, however, is that when those “partnerships” involve money, in the form of generous contributions to non-profit organizations, and particularly in exchange for seats on their boards, it becomes increasingly difficult for those organizations to do the right thing in the areas of the planet where directors and their corporations have economic interests.

MARK DOWIE

University of California

From The Rainforest Foundation UK

Mac Chapin raises some very important points in his article “A Challenge to Conservationists.”

Our own experience as an organi-

zation that has worked for the last 15 years to help indigenous communities throughout the tropics to secure their territories and protect their environment has been that ill-considered strict conservation projects are increasingly undermining the efforts of indigenous peoples. Indeed, many delegates to a recent international conference of indigenous representatives stated that the activities of conservation organizations are now the single largest threat to the integrity of their lands.

Some conservation organizations adopted more progressive policies towards indigenous peoples during the 1990s and early 2000s. However, these seem to have been, at best, only patchily applied on the ground or, at worst, simply abandoned altogether. For example, a recent survey estimated that some 54,000 indigenous people have been evicted or expropriated from 12 protected areas in the Congo Basin region, most of them run by the big international conservation organizations.

In some cases, by disregarding the rights of local people, conservation groups appear to have acted in breach of the laws governing official assistance (such as the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act), and the guidelines of their major private donors.

Increasingly, it is becoming evident that conservation programs that fail to respect indigenous peoples’ rights are likely to be unsustainable, and possibly counter-productive. We ignore them at our own peril.

SIMON COUNSELL

Director, The Rainforest Foundation UK

From a Former Member of the CI Board

As a former board member of Conservation International, I read with interest Mac Chapin’s article on the difficulties that the large international NGOs seem to be having in reconciling their interests in biodiversity preservation with those of the local indigenous tribes.

While much of what Dr. Chapin writes could be discounted as his per-

sonal opinions, there was one statistic that jumped out at me as being quite objectively verifiable: that while the guidelines of CI's Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund stipulates that at least 50 percent of its grants be made to small independent organizations working in the field, in the first two years of CEPF's Latin American program only 22 percent were, with many of those grants going to CI spinoffs. As this statistic was derived from CEPF's annual report it does seem quite solid, and therefore worrisome.

My own experience with CI is that while it marshals a tremendous amount of muscle to do good work in the world, it often marches to its own drum, which can lead to clashes with elements of the larger environmental community. I particularly recall CI's rejection of the very concept of sustainable forestry in the tropics while at the same time undermining the Forest Stewardship Council's independent certification program by supporting the North American forest industry's self-certification program. I suspect that the issues that Dr. Chapin points out in his article could stem from a similar stance of CI doing what it believes right without being overly swayed by external views and opinions.

ADAM ALBRIGHT
*President, ARIA Foundation,
member, Worldwatch Board
of Directors*

From Colleagues on Three Continents

[on conservation as a social and political process]

Mac Chapin's "A Challenge to Conservationists" raises a number of important questions about current approaches to international conservation that deserve wide and open discussion. We thank the editor(s) of *World Watch* for having the foresight to provide a forum for such a dialogue. We wish to emphasize that, while the effort to understand biodiversity loss falls mainly within the realm of conservation biology, the process of slowing and hopefully reversing the decline sits predominantly in the human organiza-

tional realm. We thus want to emphasize the many key process-oriented issues that may be lost in the reaction to Chapin's article.

How shall we organize ourselves to both protect nature and promote human wellbeing? A number of important methodological issues require much greater attention by all major conservation and development organizations (not just the BINGOs). These include prior informed consent, just and timely compensation for appropriated land and resources, public debate and representation of environmental concerns, transparency and accountability in decision-making (including mechanisms for democratizing eminent domain decisions), and the relationship between conservation, human rights, and property rights.

While governments must have the authority to acquire private land for public purposes, including biodiversity conservation, such takings should be a last resort, not a first response. With little vacant and idle land in many countries, such acquisitions often have significant and adverse effects on local people, especially the poor and disenfranchised. Community-based management and multiple use zones are proven alternatives to protected areas that promote local development and wildlife management.

Without addressing both the institutional and methodological issues, conservation will not only continue to be challenged and perhaps lose credibility; its essential function will be compromised. Much greater third party analytical and empirical work and open public debate on these issues is urgently needed if we are to improve conservation over the next decade.

Please note: The opinions expressed in this response are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Resources Institute (WRI), the International Resources Group (IRG), the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), or any of the other organizations and universities listed.

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While governments must have the authority to acquire private land for public purposes, including biodiversity conservation, such takings should be a last resort, not a first response.

From American and Bolivian Colleagues in the Field

We are writing a response to the provocative article "A Challenge to Conservationists," by Mac Chapin. We have each been involved in the field for over 30 years; one of us is an American currently working for The Garfield

Foundation and Field Museum, previously with World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and USAID, and expert consultant to the Global Environmental Facility, with experience in Asia, Africa and the Americas. The other is a Bolivian who has worked on projects bridging indigenous and nonindigenous peoples, consulted for various international organizations, and founded several NGOs. We are writing this letter as concerned professionals, and are not

New paradigms of collaboration are needed to address this crisis, not more catchwords.

representing the views of any organization. We believe the article raises global issues that merit careful, public discussion. We hope that the discussion of the key issues in the article will not be lost in the controversy over the details about particular individuals or institutions. There are many examples of conservation organizations working well with indigenous communities, but it is good practice to reflect on serious issues and failures in honest and constructive ways.

Why are these issues so important? Indigenous peoples' territories overlap with the remaining high biodiversity areas of the world. Indigenous communities and their remote territories are under tremendous threats from many quarters—including, at times, from those promoting conservation. Mac Chapin sketches some of the serious conflicts, raising issues from human rights violations to failures to conserve biodiversity. These are not new issues; since the 1970s a handful of concerned conservationists has written and talked about these failures from insiders' perspectives, and offered solutions. Global forums have brought donors, conservation organizations, and indigenous organizational representatives together to seek solutions to this problem, and analyses have documented the problem. But the pattern has continued, probably due to inertia against major

organizational changes and internal organizational politics. In different regions of the world, the specifics and scale of the violations vary according to the ways that international conservation organizations have engaged with, and/or tacitly supported, national governments and international corporations to ignore or run roughshod over indigenous rights. Organizations' development departments use photographs of indigenous people to sell "success" and raise funds, yet they are rarely held accountable against their record on the ground in specific places. The organizations have added programs that contain the catchword "governance" to quiet increasingly vocal external and internal critics, instead of making a serious investment in the structural changes and budget allocations necessary for collaborating with indigenous peoples.

If we are truly concerned about the loss of biodiversity, new paradigms of collaboration are needed to address this crisis, not more catchwords. For collaboration to proceed, non-indigenous society needs to acknowledge the challenge of representation and communication across cultures, and make a continuous effort to maintain processes whereby conservationists and donors can understand the perspectives and desires of indigenous people and vice versa—i.e., use different processes than the usual project "participation" and "consultation" processes. Only by departing from this recognition will it be possible to position indigenous leadership at the decision-making table, as collaborators with different traditions of communication and analysis, and thereby discover a new way forward.

We recommend that the first step to reduce tensions, before any more studies are initiated, would be off-the-record open roundtable regional discussions—facilitated by an indigenous organization, funded without donor intervention and without imposed deadlines—along the lines of the Coloquios in the Gran Chaco, based on Bolivian Guarani indigenous practice for problem solving, similar to "leveling off" processes in Southeast

Asia. The roundtable would follow rules of engagement whereby all parties respect and listen to each others' perspectives and experiences. Followup would come naturally; there would be no pressure to produce results at these meetings. Bringing together conservation organization CEOs, indigenous leadership, and representatives of affected communities in a serious venue to openly discuss their experiences and perspectives could clear the air in a less public forum, while beginning to build more respectful collaboration. At the IUCN World Parks Congress, held in Durban, South Africa, in September 2003, a "Peace and Reconciliation" process was recommended as a more high-profile alternative for addressing past abuses and conflicts between conservation organizations and indigenous peoples. While an interesting proposal, like the IUCN proposal that Mac Chapin mentions, it runs the risk of being another global event run in non-indigenous ways, out of touch with local processes, and further polarizing the situation. Global events allow the conservation organizations to check off the requirement without affecting their business in remote sites, away from the scrutiny of anyone but local indigenous people who do not participate in global events.

As a second step, independent investigations could put to rest the current rumors and accusations (which have aroused foundations' concerns), and lay the basis for moving forward on a more positive footing—but only if a sincere effort were made to do this in a different manner driven by indigenous time, perspectives and processes, rather than in the very western analytical format and processes typically used by outside expert teams working with their narrowly focused concepts, i.e., specialists in "corridors."

Concurrent with the collaborative investigation, a third step would be for interested indigenous leaders to host regional workshops to build the capacity of donors and conservation organizations to work effectively with indigenous communities (an inversion

of the usual workshop where donors and conservation organizations build capacity of locals to do what the project expects them to do). Indigenous leaders would share their perspectives on why good-intentioned outsiders are failing, and how conservationists and donors could better work with indigenous communities to protect their lands and resources into the future. Conservationists would need to commit to actively work alongside indigenous organizations to promote creative use of existing legal instruments and ILO 169 [an International Labor Organization convention that recognizes indigenous rights] in order to protect indigenous territories in nations where governments are ignoring or oppressing indigenous peoples. This would also establish a more equal footing for true collaboration, if all parties entered into the workshops with open minds, willing to learn.

Finally, if more donors would take the risk to directly support indigenous organizations' efforts to conserve their own territories, rather than only funding them through big conservation organizations, and more closely monitor the outcomes of their big grants to large organizations, this would help recognize the organizations and projects that have good records, and nurture an organizational culture more supportive of those cadres of professionals who have been trying to make reforms from within these organizations for the past decade, but who may not publicly criticize the current status quo, because it could be inconvenient for their careers. What is at risk is nothing less than the future of biological and cultural diversity.

J. ALCORN AND A. ZARZYCKI
United States and Bolivia

From Tom Lovejoy, Heinz Center for Science, Economics, and the Environment

[on lauding the science-based approach]

In 1989 at the request of COICA (the Coordinating Body of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon), I

chaired that body's very first meeting with conservation organizations in Washington. It marked an important transition from an era where indigenous groups had been represented largely by anthropologists to one in which they not only represented themselves but also had formed their own organization. Since then, the role of indigenous peoples with conservation has grown and become more complex.

The picture presented by Mac Chapin in the last issue is of close to uniform failure of large, powerful, and rich NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) to engage seriously with indigenous people. I know first hand and from on the ground that that is far too monochromatic a picture and that NGOs take these issues seriously.

Except in areas where there are no indigenous people, it is impossible to succeed in conservation without taking indigenous and local people into account. It is not surprising that there are failures and that it is not easy. As a field, environmentalists are very prone to false dichotomies, such as whether Integrated Conservation and Development Programs (ICDPs) work or do not. Some do and some don't, and lessons learned should help the prospect for favorable future outcomes.

All of us, including indigenous people, have a stake in a planet that is biologically healthy, functional, and diverse. Without it, there can be no sustainable development or long-term poverty alleviation. Sustainable development will require protected areas in which people are essentially absent as well as vast inhabited areas to be managed and used with a gentle imprint. Where indigenous peoples are involved, we should celebrate their strong connections with nature, but be careful not to rob them—in Peter Matthiessen's words—of "their humanity" by viewing them through a nouveau-Rousseau-esque lens.

We are trapped everywhere—not just in indigenous situations—in the interplay between the urgent and the important: short-term human needs will always trump the longer-term ones such as environment and biodiversity

conservation. Rather than begrudge conservation organizations their success in growing big, in garnering substantial funds, and thinking—at last—on a large scale, those of us driven first and foremost by social concerns should celebrate and emulate their success.

Similarly, the science-based approach of the major NGOs should be lauded and not portrayed as opposed to the interests of indigenous and local people. It is the only sensible way to set priorities to maximize conservation and avoid missing important elements as we strive to slow the early stages of the sixth great extinction. Such science-based conservation priorities must be integrated with the socio-economic matrix to achieve successful programs.

Sustainable development will require protected areas in which people are essentially absent as well as vast inhabited areas to be managed and used with a gentle imprint.

All these conservation efforts will fail without engagement of both governments and the corporate sector. Funds from corporations are useful of course, but far more important is improvement in their environmental behavior. NGOs that do work with the private sector and government may well be somewhat less likely to battle their partners publicly in some aspects. That is where it is important to remember the value of division of labor in the environmental community. Conservation as a whole is more effective when it acts with a mosaic of approaches, including strong advocacy and centrist pragmatism, as noted years ago when EPA Administrator Russell Train remarked that then Sierra Club President David Brower made him "seem reasonable."

The most important point is that conservation is very much an exercise of learning by doing. We should not be surprised by mistakes nor by heated

viewpoints in the course of acting for change in an overly crowded world. “Silver bullet” solutions are very rare and we all need to spend more time talking to each other. Above all I think we need to both think big and be big-hearted, and—without falling into any traps of expediency—to adhere to Paul Nitze’s principle of not letting the perfect get in the way of the possible.

THOMAS E. LOVEJOY
*President, H. John Heinz III
Center for Science, Economics, and
the Environment*

From Jack Vanderryn, the Moriah Fund

In his article “A Challenge to Conservationists,” Mac Chapin has raised important issues that need debate and constructive discussion. We appreciate publication of his article for this purpose.

The key point we have raised in the dialogue that we have participated in with the large international conservation organizations is that any conservation projects that are planned to take place on indigenous lands or lands owned by local peoples, particularly the large scale efforts that are currently under way or under consideration, need to be planned and designed from the outset with the full participation on an equal partner basis by the affected local and indigenous communities. This is also true when

any such negotiations from the outset.

Often these large conservation organizations indicate that their policies and actions fully respect indigenous rights, and that they work closely with their local partners in the developing world in planning and executing conservation projects. But too often their partners are not the affected groups who have inhabited their territories for hundreds of years. On-the-ground practices of the large conservation NGOs vary, often influenced by their in-country representatives, who may or may not, as individuals, be sympathetic to the rights and needs of the local and indigenous groups. Much more needs to be done by the top management of the large NGOs to change the culture of their organizations so that they recognize the current unequal power balance between them and the affected local and indigenous groups and act to redress some of this imbalance. An important step in this direction is to involve local and indigenous peoples from the outset as equal partners, as difficult and challenging as that may be.

JACK VANDERRYN
*Senior Fellow,
Environment and Development,
The Moriah Fund, Washington, D.C.*

From an American Sociologist

Thanks to the editors of *World Watch* for publishing “A Challenge to Conservationists.” I expect that Mac Chapin’s article will incite a number of negative reactions. As a result, I would like to offer some thoughts that focus on the big picture of international biodiversity conservation. While Chapin’s article may seem heretical to many readers concerned with protecting the planet’s shrinking biodiversity, his views touch on key debates forming a growing undercurrent within certain sectors of the conservation community. I would like to emphasize three main points that lie at the heart of protecting nature and improving human well-being: core goals, collaboration, and accountability.

Regarding core goals, it would seem obvious that conservation organizations should focus exclusively on the

business of nature protection. And yet when operating in working landscapes, conservation practitioners confront other desired ends such as economic prosperity and social justice. In this context, the question arises of how best to protect nature and human dignity. This is particularly germane relative to the large scale eco-regional approaches espoused by the dominant conservation organizations.

With respect to collaboration, if integrated social and ecological goals best reflect the reality on the ground, it begs the question of how best to pursue them conjointly. The trends show conservation organizations that compete fiercely for funding, jealously guard exclusive “territories,” and shy away from partnerships with indigenous groups or development/human rights organizations. Complex conservation, development, and justice problems require just the opposite: strong cooperation and collaboration.

Finally, on accountability, the intense competition among conservation organizations does not appear to produce the innovation and efficiency that might emerge in other sectors such as private commerce. Rather, despite huge investments and large-scale programs, trends suggest fragmented, sometimes repetitive, efforts. In addition, close relationships with wealthy extractive industries like oil and gas may prevent conservation organizations from critiquing and challenging their corporate donors.

Each of these three issues, among others, requires the type of independent appraisal that Chapin recommends to achieve greater transparency. If the major actors in the conservation movement decide to further circle the wagons rather than engage in an open and honest conversation about the future of nature protection efforts internationally, it is likely that the growing division among groups that should be allies will widen and that little will happen where it matters the most—on the ground.

STEVEN R. BRECHIN
*Professor of Sociology,
Maxwell School of Syracuse University*

Much more needs to be done by the top management of the large NGOs to change the culture of their organizations.

some of the NGOs, such as The Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, and Conservation International, negotiate with oil and mining companies to minimize the environmental impact and potential loss of biodiversity of their operations and to enter into arrangements to mitigate any negative environmental impact that such operations may cause. It is incumbent upon these NGOs to fully involve local and indigenous groups in

From a Garifuna Leader in Belize

Especially of concern, to me, is the continuing decline in the currency of indigenous peoples by conservationists and their friends and supporters. It speaks volumes, especially as the indigenous peoples themselves are losing ground among themselves—here I refer to the growing de-culturation and the quickness to avoid being indigenous. It is as if indigenous peoples themselves have gotten the message and are moving ahead of the international community to shed their identity. My response is that there are embedded cultural norms among us that seem to react against us when we try to deny our true identity. The ancestors respond in various ways to remind us and to guide us. But, as a friend of mine always says, even the ancestors are getting tired—or they, themselves, are modernizing. I am thinking more about the inner being among our peoples. Also, I like your mention of traditional and indigenous peoples. The line is certainly blurred but I prefer it to the new category of being “marginalized” or “poor.”

JOSEPH O. PALACIO, PH.D.
*Founder and former President,
Caribbean Organization of
Indigenous Peoples*

From the Global Greengrants Fund

We would like to thank Mac Chapin and *World Watch* for highlighting some of the challenges facing traditional and indigenous communities not only in Latin America, but around the world. We live in an era when transnational NGOs, corporations, and financial institutions increasingly dominate global conservation. With these power dynamics, the challenge of how funding can effectively flow from north to south, while remaining relatively divorced from the strings of northern-based conservation ideology, is far from resolved.

Here at Global Greengrants Fund we believe that providing small grants to grassroots social and environmental leaders and groups is one of the most

effective strategies for shifting control of capital, and the work it funds, to those who are most knowledgeable of and affected by environmental and social injustices. Grassroots capacity-building on integrated global and local scales is required for creating lasting social and environmental change.

We agree, as Chapin states, “if we are to make any headway, cooperation among groups and sectors is crucial.” Chapin’s challenge to all of us working towards social justice and environmental empowerment is to constructively transform his critique into the basis for new types of collaborations that are based around a *collective* voice.

CHET TCHOZEWSKI
*Executive Director,
Global Greengrants Fund*

From the Congo Basin

[on communities challenged by conservation]

Mac Chapin’s article in the last issue of *World Watch* accords powerfully with the perception of “Big Conservation” held by many indigenous and local communities from Central Africa. Chapin cited few Central African examples to illustrate his case, but the Forest Peoples Programme’s (FPP) experience of working in the Congo Basin shows clearly that his conclusions are as relevant to this area as to the many others he cites. In Central Africa, indigenous and local communities’ rights to access and use their traditional lands are being threatened and denied with the active support of Big Conservation and their donors, in spite of international and national guidelines and legislation protecting them. These internationally driven conservation processes threaten the destruction of indigenous livelihoods due to the imposition, by outsiders, of parks, reserves, and new landscape protection regimes that disregard local peoples’ rights.

Below we provide a description of the context in which Central African conservation processes are being supported by Big Conservation, with a focus on one planned “landscape” overlapping Cameroon, Gabon, and the

Republic of Congo. This is a story of how the “depersonalization” of Congo Basin forests by Big Conservation, with donor support, affects the rights and livelihoods of millions of poor indige-

These internationally driven conservation processes threaten the destruction of indigenous livelihoods due to the imposition, by outsiders, of parks, reserves, and new landscape protection regimes that disregard local peoples’ rights.

nous and local communities.

Corporate Conservation Targets Communities’ Forests

Across Central Africa over 450,000 square kilometers now fall into protected areas, comprising almost 11 percent of its land, an area the size of Cameroon. The total area to be zoned for conservation there is set to grow steeply as ongoing processes to designate new areas are finalized, and other priority “hotspots” are identified. These area advances are due primarily to the efforts of governmental and non-governmental conservation agencies working in Central Africa through long-term conservation efforts to establish transboundary protected areas, and other new “landscapes” to be supported through the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) targeting Central Africa ecoregions that could double the amount of lands zoned for protection in the Congo Basin.

In Cameroon, this new approach is best exemplified by the TRIDOM project, a new transboundary conservation initiative between Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, and Gabon that will join together a tri-national “interzone” bordered by Minkébé, Boumba-Bek, Nki, and Odzala National Parks and the Dja Wildlife Reserve. The TRIDOM project will ultimately lead to a regional land use and management plan that will govern access to and use of forests upon which many communities rely.

In May 2004 the World Bank Global Environment Facility (GEF) approved a US\$10.5 million Full Project Grant towards TRIDOM that, it is claimed, will protect 7.5 percent of the Congo Basin from exploitation. The project is to be implemented by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) will play a key role in implementation on the ground. The GEF is providing approximately ¼ of the total funds for this project, with the remainder coming from a combination of national and international funding sources. This project is thus a corporate venture of huge magnitude that will fundamentally affect the livelihoods of indigenous and local communities.

Conservation Damages

Its Reputation

One can gain a sense of how this project is likely to be implemented by examining the way other conservation projects fundamental to TRIDOM are currently managed. This includes in particular the Dja Wildlife Reserve and Boumba-Bek National Park that, with Minkébé National Park in Gabon and Odzala in the Republic of Congo, roughly demarcate the new CBFP landscape that TRIDOM will help to establish.

The Dja Wildlife Reserve is a World Heritage site that overlaps the traditional lands of indigenous Baka who are mostly now moved out of the park. Their expulsion from the forest and continuing marginalisation in the management of the forests around them is well documented. The continuing persecution of these indigenous communities by government ecoguards as they carry out subsistence activities, contrasted against the unmolested traffic of bushmeat out of their areas by commercial operators, is one root of a profound resentment of conservation authorities.

"They (the park managers) have the right to arrest people. But when they confiscate our only antelope, them, those bosses (those high up), what are they thinking? Do they think that they ought to take the antelope that I killed? The

antelope that I must use to feed my family? They did not forbid us to eat meat!"

Around the new Boumba-Bek National Park to the east, park boundaries were predetermined by outsiders, without the knowledge or consent of locals, and hunter-gatherer Baka Pygmy communities are now threatened with exclusion from hunting and gathering areas that they have used since before colonial authorities arrived. These people are almost entirely reliant on hunting and gathering for subsistence. Remarkably, and unlike elsewhere in Cameroon, Baka around Boumba and Nki are in a majority.

Campo Ma'an National Park, which is not part of the TRIDOM project, is managed by WWF, lead implementers of the Minkébé-Dja-Odzala project. There Bagyeli Pygmy hunter-gatherers face persistent persecution at the hands of ecoguards, including over the past few years the burning of a village, illegal arrests, and the confiscation of subsistence products, whose collection is protected by Cameroon law. The Government of Cameroon previously established the Campo park through another GEF-funded initiative. It is now supported by WWF, using funds established for this purpose by an oil company, as Campo Ma'an now represents one of the environmental offset projects for the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline Project. In Campo Ma'an there is now no doubt that indigenous Bagyeli were marginalised from discussions over the management plan for the park, even though it is now categorically proven that their subsistence livelihoods are inextricably linked to hunting and gathering activities within it. Recently approved park management plans threaten further serious impacts against them.

Central African communities' negative experiences with conservation means that many now associate plans to protect biodiversity with forced expulsion from their lands without compensation, the elimination of their rights over their traditional lands, the pro-

gressive destruction of their livelihoods, the loss of their identities, and increasing socio-economic marginalisation.

This is a serious problem that is now well documented all over Africa. TRIDOM risks repeating this error of community alienation, to the detriment of conservation agendas and reputations, as well as the rights and livelihoods of local communities.

Donors and Conservationists Are Not Adhering to Their Own Standards

GEF funds are to be used for activities aiming to protect the global environment in six focal areas, including biodiversity, the key focus of its funding to TRIDOM. The GEF's Public Involvement policy and other Operational Policies require that these activities ensure local participation and address the needs and interests of affected communities, with their prior and informed consent. The twin themes of participation and consultation run through the ethos of GEF Operational Strategies, and GEF-funded projects must also comply with the World Bank's mandatory policy on Indigenous Peoples, in addition to UNDP's good practice Indigenous Peoples Policy and guidance related to implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity for which the GEF is the financing mechanism.

Given the GEF's key role in funding 25 percent of the cost of the TRIDOM initiative, there is no doubt that these policies should have been applied during the preparation of the various project elements to which it is contributing. However, as explained above, adequate consultation with affected communities was not undertaken during TRIDOM project planning, something which FPP highlighted to the UNDP/GEF in 2002, when the project was already receiving preparatory support from the GEF, and to WWF in 2003, when project preparation was nearly completed. The project is not conforming to GEF and World Bank operational policies. In their failure to conform to their own rules, donors are not alone; conservation organisations are also failing to

live up to their own standards.

FPP recently examined the degree to which conservation agencies were applying key principles protecting communities' rights in African protected areas, which were agreed at the 1992 World Conservation Congress, and put into implementation over the last 10 years by guidelines drawn up with the support of the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), the World Conservation Union (IUCN), and World Wildlife Fund International. These guidelines recognise the rights of indigenous peoples to use, own, and control their traditional territories, and protect their traditional knowledge and skills. They also espouse the development of working partnerships with indigenous peoples based upon the principle of full and informed consent, and that they gain equitable shares of conservation benefits. Many of these widely agreed principles are also embedded in the internationally binding Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), now ratified by over 170 countries, including all those in Central Africa.

Conservation guidelines were further strengthened at the Durban World Parks Congress in September 2003. The theme of the 2003 Congress was "Benefits Beyond Boundaries," and the Accord and Recommendations which were agreed set important new standards for the rights of indigenous peoples living in and around protected areas, recommending specific targets and actions for governments and protected areas. The Durban Recommendations and Action Plan call on countries to undertake reviews of existing conservation laws and policies that impact on indigenous peoples, and to adopt laws and policies giving indigenous peoples and local communities control over their sacred places.

In Central Africa, conservation policy reviews set out in the WPC Action Plan should lead to revision of old legislation that now limits indigenous communities' participation in the management of their forests, especially in and around parks. Legal harmonisation and coherence are also key components of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan,

as is the establishment of several trans-boundary conservation zones such as the TRIDOM landscape, and support for necessary legal reforms is also included in the TRIDOM project plan. There is therefore a key opportunity now in Central Africa to reform legislation concerning forests and conservation that is incompatible with international norms of human rights.

Conservation Practices Must Change for "Landscapes" to Become Sustainable

The horrendous gap between the rhetoric of "feel good" conservation espoused by Big Conservation and the realities faced by Central African indigenous communities struggling to maintain livelihoods must be closed. Big Conservation projects such as TRIDOM that fail to adequately consider the rights and welfare of communities living in biodiverse areas are doomed to failure because they alienate local populations from participating in measures to protect their forests, and as a corollary protected areas become difficult to police. This can become further complicated as communities begin to take legal steps to counter threats to their lands and livelihoods. Even where legal challenges from communities are deemed unlikely, the increased militarization of the Congo Basin forest stemming from a "guns and guards" approach to protected area management is likely to lead to further human rights violations. This will result in increased negative publicity that will further damage the reputation of Big Conservation. This is likely to contribute to reduced donor incentives to release funds to conservation, and this could also affect the availability of funds for poverty alleviation. This would be an undesirable outcome for both conservation and communities.

Experience in Africa and elsewhere shows that indigenous communities whose rights to forests are confiscated by conservation projects will not become an ally of conservation organisations, even when they share the deep desire to protect their forests from unsustainable exploitation. Most communities will not be swayed by prom-

ises to deliver "new income sources" in order to compensate them for the loss of forest access and use if these projects do not deliver. Recent experience in Central Africa suggests that communities are right to be skeptical. Even so, they are often very willing to participate in meaningful discussions about the future of their forests.

Big Conservation projects that fail to adequately consider the rights and welfare of communities living in biodiverse areas are doomed to failure because they alienate local populations from participating in measures to protect their forests.

The examples cited above serve to support the thesis that Mac Chapin set out in his "A Challenge to Conservationists" last month, and he and *World Watch* should be congratulated for initiating this debate in the cold light of open debate. Big Conservation needs to be reminded that indigenous communities, such as hunting and gathering Baka from the TRIDOM project area, possess rights that are protected by national law, international treaty, and international agency guidelines. The broad international support for indigenous communities' rights is leading to a greater respect for their role in national government and civil society processes by which their sustained participation in conservation in the Congo Basin will be assured. Mac Chapin is right, conservation cannot be effective without the support and involvement of local people. Conservation should take heed: neglect community rights and needs at your peril.

JOHN NELSON

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From the First Nations Development Institute

Thank you for having the courage and integrity to print "A Challenge to Conservationists" by Mac Chapin. I first

wrote about this issue in the Environmental Grantmakers Association News & Updates Winter 2003 ("A Caution on Soft-Eviction Strategies," www.ega.org/resources/newsletters/win2003/softevictions.html).

The issue of displacing indigenous peoples from protected areas is under heavy debate within the contemporary international conservationist movement. For any conservation organization to claim otherwise is at best disingenuous. In 2003 Dr. Kai Schmidt-Soltau and Professor Michael Cernea published a seven-year study on indigenous people who were displaced in six Congo basin countries to make way for protected areas and national parks. World Wildlife Fund and Wildlife Conservation Society were the lead NGOs involved. The total number of people displaced is estimated to be between 40,000 and 50,000, with approximately half being Pygmies. Schmidt-Soltau and Cernea found that "in contrast to the declared concept of collaborative management, none of the surveyed protected areas had adopted an official strategy to integrate local inhabitants into the park management.... Based on many discussions with park managers our findings indicate that conservationists refused to compensate indigenous forest dwellers because they thought recognition of traditional land titles would put an end to their resettlement schedules and their park" (CIFOR "Rural Livelihoods, Forests, and Biodiversity" Bonn, Germany 2003).

Just last spring, over 200 indigenous people meeting at the International Forum on Indigenous Mapping in Vancouver, British Columbia, declared that "conservation has become the number one threat to indigenous territories." And again, at the International Funders for Indigenous Peoples Annual Conference, where over 100 donors and Indigenous leaders came together, an entire session—"Environmental Conservation and Indigenous Stewardship"—was dedicated to this issue. The president of the First National Organization of Indigenous Women, Señora Dona Teresa Simbana, made a graphic pres-

entation using an 8" by 11" piece of paper to illustrate how much conservation money went to the big NGOs versus the indigenous communities of Colombia. Speaking in her native language, she tore pieces of the paper representing money that clearly represented the amount of conservation funding that went directly to her people. Without the help of rigorous methodologies, Señora Simbana's calculations come very close to the one-sixth-of-one-thousandth of one percent of GEF support that we have so far documented going directly to indigenous communities. Yet in the Amazon alone indigenous people have traditional land claims for over 33 percent of the area. So why are they not receiving 33 percent of the conservation funding?

Capacity is often cited as a concern, but it is a concern that goes both ways. Delivering low-cost, effective grants and technical assistance to local communities requires financial and development capacity not usually found in conservation organizations. First Nations Development Institute, started in 1980 and now the largest indigenous asset-based development intermediary in the world, has been building capacity within indigenous communities through a combination of small grants with technical assistance since 1993. To date our portfolio, almost \$12 million in grants to over 300 indigenous communities, has performed at an average rate of 83 percent of all deliverables fully completed. For us, the pool of eligible indigenous communities is ever expanding. Compare this to CI's Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund. CEPF was created to fund local small community organizations, yet over 78 percent of all awards have gone directly to CI and another 22 percent went to closely held CI affiliates.

The key to this issue is in what is not said and what is not done. For example, the recent World Congress on Protected Areas was organized by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The conference concluded with an Accord on Indigenous Peoples and Protected

Areas. While emphatic that indigenous rights be recognized, the Accord was void of any call to action, such as demanding that the IUCN or the conference censure those governments most viciously enforcing policies of eviction. It did not consider proposing that IUCN decline any Protected Areas within its category system if evictions were conducted. Nor did it question the evident support for Thailand as host nation for the upcoming World Conservation Strategy conference, knowing that in principle Thailand condones evictions.

Human rights abuses associated with Protected Areas have increased over the past 30 years, an increase that cannot have escaped the attention of conservation NGOs. Yet, the collective culture remains complacently amoral. Pious injunctions to respect indigenous rights are cynical, declared in the knowledge that these will be largely ignored by the agencies responsible for such violations. It is their silence that is deafening and their inaction that is deadly. Therefore I speak for many unheard and ignored indigenous communities when I once again thank *World Watch* and Mac Chapin for giving us an honest platform, which must always be the first step to reconciliation.

REBECCA ADAMSON
*President, First Nations
Development Institute*

From the Field Museum

We congratulate *World Watch* for highlighting the importance of the article "A Challenge to Conservationists" on the cover. The issues are serious and of global significance. As Mac Chapin observes, whether immediately evident or not, conservationists, traditional, and indigenous people need each other in the face of grave threats to the sustainability of life on our planet. Conservationists and indigenous peoples need to identify good examples of creative collaborations, at the same time that we reflect on, and move beyond, failures.

The Latin American subgroup of the indigenous peoples representatives at the Durban World Conservation

Congress, in September 2003, pointed out that the high profile accusations against big conservationists were obscuring the voices from those projects where conservationists and local people are collaborating. They are also making it harder for indigenous communities to reach out to conservation organizations for assistance. The indigenous representatives hoped that there could be more recognition of the good examples of their own efforts to protect their biodiversity, and their work in collaboration between indigenous and traditional peoples and conservation organizations.

At Field Museum, we have formed a group that brings biologists, social scientists, and practitioners together to act on the conviction that local and indigenous people living in biodiverse areas value biodiversity. If given the chance and the support, these people will act to conserve their lands. We believe that local citizens are “political actors who can form an environmental constituency” (Chapin, p. 27). With funding from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, the United States Agency for International Development, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, we have worked with communities, local governments, national NGOs, federations, and universities to create new protected areas and indigenous reserves in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador.

Since 2002, we have included a social component in every Rapid Biological Inventory we have conducted to insure that from the very beginning local people are part of the decision-making about long-term stewardship of their landscapes. The last two inventories have been conducted directly in collaboration with and at the behest of local indigenous groups and their allied NGOs in Peru. One was done in the Ampiyacu region with Bora and Huitoto Peoples and the Instituto Bien Comun (IBC). The second, conducted in collaboration with CEDIA and Machiguenga, Ashanika, and other indigenous groups, has resulted in the designation of the Megantoni National Sanctuary. We are about to conduct an

inventory, also with CEDIA in Peru, to support expansion of the communal reserve of the Matses Peoples on the Peruvian-Brazilian border. These inventories have demonstrated clearly that lands known and cared for by indigenous people are highly biologically diverse habitats.

In Peru, we are also collaborating with local NGOs (principally CIMA-Cordillera Azul) to protect cultural diversity and land security, and to integrate improved quality of life into the management of Cordillera Azul National Park. Communities around the Park—including those of migrant peasants, long-established Quechua speaking farmers of the Huallaga valley, and Shipibo and Cacataibo indigenous people of the Ucayali—are collaborating with the Park team to find sustainable ways to boost subsistence practices, manage their natural resources and participate in Park protection activities. With the help of the Instituto Bien Comun, Shipibo communities on the Pisqui River and Cacataibo in the Aguaytia region are in the process of expanding communal reserves and creating a reserve for voluntarily isolated people (the “Camano”). The Park zoning plan calls for a restricted zone inside the Park where the Camano traverse so that all research, tourism, and other activities will be off limits there in order to insure continued freedom for the Camano.

In Ecuador, we have worked very closely with the Cofan Foundation to create the first protected reserve completely under indigenous management. We support the Cofan in their efforts to develop a new way to manage protected areas that incorporates indigenous cosmovisions but commits the government to provide material and legal support for proper security and management of the reserve.

In northern Bolivia, we have joined with Yangareko, (a Bolivian NGO dedicated to conservation and the well-being of local peoples through pluricultural democracy), municipal governments, and the University of the Amazon of Pando to facilitate community-based conservation action through participa-

tory asset mapping, self-assessment, and land-use planning by communities. As a result, in August 2004, the indigenous and other rural communities and associations (small-scale farmers, brazil-nut gatherers) voted to designate the 4.5 million acre area with some of the most intact forests in Bolivia as their Natural Area of Integrated Management (ANMI). The motto of the new municipal government partnership, Union Amazónica Filadelfia-Bolpebra, is “Conservation with Development Is Our Decision.” We are supporting the communities and the municipal government partnership through technical assistance on conservation and natural resource management, active interchange of information, environmental education programs, and scientific and local exchanges.

A successful approach recognizes the strengths, knowledge, and power of local communities, rather than assuming that they are threats to be managed.

We have found that our local collaborators in all of these places—local people, their organizations, and NGOs—are passionately working for conservation. Foundations, large conservation organizations, and other donors should be providing financial and strategic support directly to these local actors.

In summary, we believe that it is entirely possible to conserve fragile ecosystems *and* secure livelihoods, cultural autonomy, and dignity for native, traditional, or rural peoples. Our assets-based approach recognizes the strengths, knowledge, and power of local communities, rather than assuming that they are threats to be managed. This approach has opened productive avenues for dialogue and cooperation between conservationists, scientists, and the local people who ultimately are the long-term protectors of these landscapes. We believe that the dialogue will expand and that more innovative ways can be found for working together for

common ground. Only in this way can we create a just world in a biologically and culturally diverse landscape.

ALAKA WALI
*Director, The Center for Cultural
Understanding and Change,
The Field Museum, Chicago*

From the International Crane Foundation

Congratulations on your excellent article, "A Challenge to Conservationists."

All conservationists from the developed world who work in the developing world must always be aware that they are guests ready to learn more than to teach.

Our culture comes with lots of imperialistic baggage. High on the list of contemporary imperialism is a phenomena I call "intellectual paralysis." Colleagues in the developing world are sometimes paralyzed by the manner in which professionals from the developed world communicate. Undoubtedly, the degree of IP correlates directly with the amount of cash the professional promises. Herein lies the risk for professionals from the big conservation NGOs.

The International Crane Foundation, a very small NGO, has long-term commitments to what we hope are five model projects involving community-based conservation in China, Russia, Nepal, Cambodia, and Mozambique. If you are interested in learning more about these projects, please contact the president of ICF, Jim Harris (harris@savingcranes.org), or conservation historian Dr. Curt Meine (Curt@savingcranes.org).

Thank you again for your outstanding contribution. It opens an extremely important dialogue.

GEORGE ARCHIBALD
*Co-founder, International
Crane Foundation*

The Author's Response

The discussion sparked by this article, which began even before it appeared in *World Watch*, is gratifying. WWF, CI, and TNC all agree that the issues raised in the article are valid and important and need to be addressed. Of the three,

WWF—here represented by the U.S. and International branches—goes furthest in committing itself to three resolutions designed to create more effective partnerships with indigenous and traditional peoples. All of this is a positive sign.

The issues are complex and far from clear-cut, and cannot be adequately addressed in a brief exchange. Open dialogue such as that mentioned in most of the letters, followed by real—rather than token—action, must happen if there is to be any advancement in relations between conservationists and indigenous and traditional peoples. We need to build a more socially responsible brand of conservation characterized by effective, more evenly balanced partnerships, better communication, a regard for the rights of local people (be they indigenous or not), and accountability. At present, all of these are in short supply, but now we have a recognition that something must be done to straighten things out.

My fear at this point is that once the harsh light of reality makes its appearance—something that is all too common the day after resolutions are made and the buzz has worn off—the openness we are all talking about will quietly slink away and go back into hiding. There are strong pressures for this to happen. An official from one of the large international conservationist NGOs recently wrote me, in reference to the article, "I think there are many people within these organizations who share your view, but will not dare say a thing because of their circumstance." If we are to advance, we must work to break down this reluctance to speak out and confront the issues squarely, and we must move beyond the traditional rhetoric to action. This is not impossible, but it will require a tremendous amount of determination, courage, and political will. It will also require, as J. Alcorn and A. Zarzycki point out, "a serious investment in the structural changes and budget allocations necessary for collaborating with indigenous peoples."

Two last points. First, the letters from WWF, TNC, and CI all note that my article is flawed with inaccuracies

and errors, yet they offer no examples. The Ford Foundation is more specific, claiming that I am incorrect in stating that the report it commissioned was embargoed. There seems to be a bit of confusion here, for the full report was indeed suppressed in late December 2003 and is still under wraps. The report cited by Ford as "released last June" is no more than a 10-page, smoothed-over summary of the two studies that made up the full report. Fortunately, I understand that the full report will soon be released at least for limited circulation.

Second, the Ford Foundation's response mentions that there are some remarks in my article that are "troubling" because they in some way reflect badly on the Foundation's support of indigenous peoples. I am not sure which remarks are being referred to here, but I can state with assurance that I have had, over the years, the highest regard for the Foundation's backing of indigenous peoples and their causes. The fact that the Ford Foundation has taken it upon itself to critically examine the deteriorating relations between indigenous peoples and conservationist NGOs is but one example of its concern for the rights of indigenous peoples.

—MAC CHAPIN

Mac Chapin is an anthropologist who has worked with indigenous communities on three continents as head of the Center for Native Lands (now a part of the Environmental Law Institute). He has held positions with USAID, the Inter-American Foundation, and Cultural Survival, and is a Pew Fellow in Conservation and the Environment.

WORLD WATCH welcomes your letters.

Please include your home town, country, and phone number (not for publication). Letters may be edited for clarity or brevity.

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