

written. The transcripts also add the workshop flavor to the publication and remind the reader that the issues are not resolved, but continue to appropriately trouble historic preservation practitioners in Florida and everywhere else.

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*Reconstructing Conservation:
Finding Common Ground*

Edited by Ben A. Minter and Robert E. Manning.
Washington, DC: Island Press, 2003; xiii + 417 pp.,
notes, index; cloth \$55.00; paper \$27.50.

Reconstructing Conservation: Finding Common Ground presents a series of 21 essays on future directions in the conservation of cultural landscapes. The authors base their writings on personal insights and collective reflections from a symposium convened by the National Park Service's Conservation Study Institute in 2001 to discuss the history, values, and practice of conservation.

The workshop gathered prominent practitioners and academics to discuss how the theory and practice of conservation is changing, and what the changes portend for the future. In contrast to some contemporary assessments that the future of conservation is in danger, symposium participants felt strongly that cultural landscape preservation is flourishing. They identified key ingredients of change that are occurring in response to and in spite of obstacles presented by changing land uses, values, and ownership.

Reconstructing Conservation argues that conservation is undergoing a major transformation from a centralized, narrowly focused, top-down activity to a locally driven, highly democratic, multidisciplinary strategy for balancing growth with the human need to connect with the land. Local distinctiveness

is another component of the way that communities and their partners approach conservation, as is the trend to link natural and cultural preservation goals in a long-term vision. Essays explore these major transformations through case studies and through the history and policies that have influenced the evolution in conservation thinking and action.

In the opening chapter, "Conservation: From Deconstruction to Reconstruction," editors Ben A. Minter and Robert E. Manning present background for the authors' contributions, reflect on the symposium and its timeliness, and outline the major concepts authors will address. In "Finding Common Ground," the final essay, the editors offer a series of principles upon which they believe the future of conservation hinges. The essays in-between reveal theoretical and practical perspectives about how and why the field is changing.

The book's mix of theory and practice lends credence to the argument that the two approaches must by necessity influence one another in order for the field to mature. The book also argues that the field has taken a more multidisciplinary approach to include advocates of community, history, culture, and heritage to achieve landscape conservation goals. In contrast with more traditionally focused environmental studies, the book invites preservationists, ethnographers, social scientists, and historians to see commonalities among disciplines. The conservation history threaded throughout provides sufficient context for a reader with little prior knowledge of the conservation field to understand the sequences that lead to reevaluating current conservation history and practice. The book also reiterates the local, publicly driven, and democratic approach that conservation is taking as communities adopt conservation tools to preserve their natural and cultural resources.

Reconstructing Conservation builds upon the work of over a century of environmental advocates and practitioners and, more recently, William Cronon's collection of essays entitled *Uncommon Ground*.¹

It refutes the work of Cronon and his predecessors who criticized the "laziness" and ineptitude of conservation efforts. The authors' perspectives require that the reader move beyond traditional definitions of conservation to embrace the complex and multidisciplinary approach that conservation is taking in the 21st century. The movement is evolving to include landscapes with cultural and historic resources and is embracing the strengths that communities and other disciplines provide. In *Reconstructing Conservation*, the contributors frequently cite the work of earlier advocates including George Perkins Marsh and John Muir as precedents for current practices.

Due to the inevitable redundancies created by multiple authorships, sampling chapters provides adequate information to reinforce the major concepts and principles described by the editors. The various contributions give readers an opportunity to explore different approaches to conservation that match or complement their own interests. Readers with an interest in theory will enjoy essays such as Stephen C. Trombulak's "An Integrative Model for Landscape-Scale Conservation in the Twenty-First Century." Practitioners will appreciate Rolf Diamant, Glenn Eugster, and Nora J. Mitchell's "Reinventing Conservation: A Practitioner's View." Academics and practitioners can benefit from reading essays that complement their discipline. For readers interested in a supplement to the book, the symposium report, *Speaking of the Future: A Dialogue on Conservation*, provides important case studies and a discussion of the thinking that led to the conservation principles outlined in *Reconstructing Conservation*.³

Reconstructing Conservation is an excellent entrée into conservation for those who seek to understand the state of the field and how current thinking can enhance their work. The writings seek to embrace a broad, multidisciplinary audience by avoiding technical language and by providing historical context for current conservation practice. The book invites preservationists, social scientists,

managers, and community leaders to embrace an open-minded approach that respects and engages new voices in protecting cultural landscapes. This engaging book is a useful contribution to the conservation field for its thoughtfulness, inclusiveness, and forward-thinking approach. It provokes the reader to think about how and why the conservation field is changing and argues for continuing to embrace new disciplines and local voices to enrich the policies and practice of conservation.

Suzanne Copping

National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers

1. William Cronon, *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: Norton, 1996).

2. Nora J. Mitchell, Leslie J. Hudson, and Deb Jones, eds., *Speaking of the Future: A Dialogue on Conservation* (Woodstock, VT: National Park Service, Conservation Study Institute, 2003).

EXHIBITS

Our Peoples: Giving Voice to Our Histories

Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC. Curators: Paul Chaat Smith, Ann McMullen, and Jolene Rickard

Permanent exhibit

The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), which opened on September 21, 2004, is situated on the nation's "front lawn," the National Mall. The newest of the Smithsonian's 16 museums, NMAI seeks to weave voices previously missing from our historical texts into the national narrative. The new museum presents the story of Native Americans as active agents in shaping the cultural landscape of the Americas throughout the centuries. Even its architecture is part of the story, meant to convey American Indian connection to the natural world through its representation as rock shaped by wind and water.

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