

A Vision of Success

Perspectives from Kevin McAleese, Sand County Foundation

The Sand County Foundation's mission is to advance the use of ethical and scientifically sound management practices and partnerships for the benefit of people and the ecological landscape. The roots of the Sand County Foundation are private action inspired by the Leopold Land Ethic, using responsible voluntary means to improve habitat. Today, the role of the Sand County Foundation has expanded from caretaker of the Leopold Memorial Reserve in Wisconsin to advising the managers of hundreds of thousands of acres of land in several countries. The Foundation works with private landholders to improve the quality of their lands through science, ethics, and incentives.

There is a long tradition of designating oceans, lakes, and rivers as common pool resources. This is partly due to historical political expediencies, and partly due to a lack of reliable systems for demarcating and enforcing rights to fugitive resources. There are however models from around the world of customary rights for aquatic resource harvesting that have worked quite well and increasing numbers of rights-based fishing in modern times functioning in regionally or nationally controlled coastal areas. This new context, and the concurrent policy environment, open the way for more experimentation with "dedicated access," and call for the application of ethics, science, and incentives to get the mix of rights and responsibilities right.

It is the Sand County Foundation's view that even the most well intentioned government-directed resource management will ultimately fail if it does not account for the motivations, aspirations, and socio-economic realities of the resource harvesters. We have, therefore, created opportunities that encourage commercial fishermen to engage in cooperative research and learning. We have witnessed the power of innovation that arises when motivated leaders from industry, together with a limited set of donors, researchers, and government managers assemble in a low stress and well organized venue. And we have documented their stories to be shared more broadly. We've hosted a couple of sessions ourselves, and have supported or participated in a number of other such events.

It is our hope that the workshop on Private Marine Conservation Agreements will (1) expand the set of available tools for coastal and fisheries peoples to have a more direct role in management of natural resources; (2) recognize that need for functional and accountable governance institutions where resource management boundaries include multiple rights holders; (3) consider applicability of such agreements to those who by tradition or desire share communal rights to local resources; (4) operate on a free and fair market basis; and (5) generate sufficient revenues to support on-going monitoring and research necessary for resilient management.

Links to the SCF report on fisheries can be found at: <http://www.sandcounty.net/programs/cbcn/fisheries/>.