Chapter 3
Why History Matters in Conservation Planning

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Abstract Temporal scale analysis is important to fully understand a place and the multigenerational connections that form the basis of local resident's reaction to any conservation plan. Environmental history and conservation social science, specifically qualitative methods are useful to uncover and reveal important information regarding the history of land use and place attachment in a particular region. This study used both tools with an embedded case study designed to examine an intense conflict related to a conservation initiative in the heart of the Appalachian/Acadian ecoregion. Primary data for this study came from interviews with 21 opinion leaders in the region. The data were explored using a three part conceptual framework; cultural memory, essentialized images and vernacular conservation. The findings revealed clear fixed points in time, cultural memory, that define the local narrative of place. Not knowing these may have caused undue conflict from misunderstanding between conservation planners and local residents. Evidence of essentialized images escalation of the conflict was found, and clear examples were found, that may have helped form a conservation initiative rooted in the vernacular of the place. Understanding these elements can lead to a better process and ultimately one that preserves the dignity of local residents while creating a resilient conservation plan.

Keywords Cultural memory • Environmental history • Qualitative methods • Temporal scale • Vernacular conservation

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S.C. Trombulak and R.F. Baldwin (eds.), *Landscape-scale Conservation Planning*,
DOI 10.1007/978-90-481-9575-6_3, © Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2010

3.1 Introduction

Conservation is more than a matter of protecting ecosystems: it involves cultural associations that give the land a sense of mystery, adventure, peace, tranquility, and beauty – associations produced by multi-generational memories of work and recreation. Understanding the story of conservation in a particular landscape requires one to develop or use tools to uncover the often hidden meanings of place and the historical narrative of the people in a particular place (Kruger 2001; Wagner 2002). This chapter attempts to answer the question of why environmental history and conservation social science matter in conservation planning, and further, why such histories must consciously consider the relevance of spatial scale. Conservation planning has increased in scale due to a need for a global perspective and scientific collaboration to maintain biological diversity and plan for large-scale changes from natural and anthropogenic causes. This increase in scale can create a contest over the meanings of place that will influence acceptance of conservation plans (Cheng et al. 2003). Conservation is ultimately a social act, and its success depends on understanding the connections that people have to landscapes at multiple scales that may span generations (Black et al. 1998; Marcucci 2000; Runte 1997).

The landscape that people live and spend time in builds their identity. The emotional bond people have with a landscape is often through particular places; a single tree, a trail, or a point of land. However, when scientists target a region for conservation action, they often focus on much larger scales; the ecological importance of the entire region, a grouping of habitats, or the range of an important species. These different scales of perception and time make communication between conservation scientists and local residents difficult if not impossible (Black et al. 1998). Even worse, a dismissal of these local connections to place can be interpreted as a dismissal of the people who have knitted them through time across landscapes (Schenk et al. 2007). This in turn can lead to the loss of dignity of the people living in a region and thus promote fear that can lead to irrational or conflictual actions (Berkes 2004). An in-depth understanding of the conservation history of any area should reveal connections and values useful in communication and collaboration at small scales that will in turn lead to a more resilient large-scale conservation reality (Foster et al. 2003).

The use of multiple scales, including the temporal, is complex and has been used by conservation planners in a variety of ways. Black et al. (1998), for example, used data on land-use history to identify areas of conflict between conservation and development in order to steer the search for solutions on a less volatile path. Foster et al. (2003) called environmental history 'an integral part of ecological science and conservation planning' by helping us understand land-use legacies and how they may express themselves in the future, reveal previously unseen cultural connections to natural areas, and reduce 'missteps' in conservation planning (Foster et al. 2003). Participation by anthropologists in conservation planning has been called for to better understand local communities and their social definition of conservation, as well as to build local partnerships to strengthen large-scale conservation efforts with

small-scale incentives (Brosius and Russell 2003). This all takes a considerable number of people and amount of time to incorporate this type of qualitative data, and although efforts to quantify such incorporation have been made, specifically related to place attachment and meanings (Williams and Vaske 2003), some researchers have found this will not 'uncover' or 'reveal' hidden meanings that may determine the ultimate success of conservation planning (Kruger 2001; Schenk et al. 2007).

In 1994, a proposal for a new national park of 1.3 million hectares in Northern Maine, the heart of the Northern Appalachian/Acadian ecoregion, fostered extreme reactions from residents in the region and surrounding landscape due to an apparent lack of understanding of the local perspective by those making the proposal. An examination of this case provides an excellent example of why understanding the environmental history and the social meaning of place is an important step in conservation planning. The case that follows traces the environmental history of the proposal for a new national park, as well as reactions of opinion leaders in the region. The primary data for the case are drawn from interviews conducted with 21 opinion leaders in Maine reflecting a pluralistic set of values regarding conservation planning at the landscape level in Northern Maine. These interviews were used to gain insight into the complexity of the land-use dilemma facing Maine. These data were supplemented with document analysis and informal meetings with state and non-profit groups between July 2003 and January 2006.

Today, close to 6% of Maine's forestland is publicly owned, and state ecological reserves are a only small fraction of that total (Lansky 2001). However, the legacy of the large industrial landowners in Northern Maine has been one of quasi-public land (Irland 1999); although privately held, public access to any part of Northern Maine was guaranteed unless posted. During the 1980s, much of the land in Northern Maine went up for sale (Chap. 5), a sign that anyone with the money might own a piece of the 'North Woods of Maine' or the 'Maine North Woods,' the traditional names for the northern 50% of the state. Although much of the land that changed ownership was simply transferred among different pulp and paper industries, some was also sold to private individuals, some for business investments, and others for conservation goals. Many of the new owners were not familiar with the long history of the traditional open access people enjoyed in the North Woods of Maine or did not care to accommodate it. For the first time in recent memory, Maine people began to feel restrictions on their access to the North Woods. This change, coupled with a depressed regional economy, created an opportunity for conservation advocates to participate in the debate about the future of the North Woods of Maine once again (Harper et al. 1990).

3.2 Methods

We used a qualitative case study approach for this research, which relied on both the environmental history of conservation in the region to discover the 'story,' as well as an examination of the motivations of different players and divergent meanings

of the area. Tools from environmental history help one concentrate first on the collection of stories of place, as opposed to focusing on a problem to be solved (Cronon 1993). This starting point helps a researcher begin with an open mind regarding the actors. These stories, revealed through documents and interviews, can illuminate the context of a region at multiple scales, which may be critical in understanding a holistic narrative of place or the different ways people connect to and define themselves and their relationship to a particular place. National, regional, and local historical trends regarding these relationships can also be useful for developing this understanding and lead to more sensitivity on the part of the conservation planner and in turn lead to the building of trust from data sources, and thus increased validity of data.

The analysis of the case is organized in a conceptual framework of three themes: (1) cultural memory – fixed points in history of reference for people in a locale; (2) essentialized images – stereotypes built and supported for political power and gain; and (3) vernacular conservation – conservation design that includes the 'native' perceptions of place in its design. Integrating techniques to build a more holistic understanding of an area is an incredible challenge and may never be perfected, but working toward that end may lead to greater acceptance of conservation planning and, in turn, may help lead us out of the paradigm of seeing people in a region solely as a threat to conservation instead of as partners for achieving it (Brosius and Russell 2003; Marcucci 2000; Schenk et al. 2007).

3.3 Environmental History: A Modern-Day National Park Proposal in a Mostly Privately Owned Forest Landscape

In 1994, the newly formed environmental advocacy group RESTORE: the North Woods (RESTORE) proposed a 1.3 million-hectare national park in Northern Maine's mostly industrial forest of nearly 5 million hectares (Irland 1999). The proposed Maine Woods National Park and Preserve was based on an area proposed for protection in the late 1980s by the Wilderness Society (Watkins 1988). Increased clearcutting in Maine during the 1980s and large land sales created a fever of anxiety about the future of Maine's forests (Rolde 2001).

Land protection often generates conflict because it challenges the values and associations people have about the land. Popular associations are sometimes contradictory, involving assumptions about wood and wood fiber, hydropower, mass recreation, or wilderness, but they nevertheless are tangible cultural attachments that must be recognized if conservation efforts are to succeed. In an effort to mitigate conflict, models of compromise have been developed, particularly multiple-use management and large-scale conservation easements (Rondinini et al. 2005). Yet there have been criticisms of both of these models in their effort to be a win–win solution to the conflict of land protection and socio-economic uses of the land (Merenlender et al. 2004; Pidot 2003; Trombulak 2003).

Maine is a rural state, dependant on a natural resource-based economy, and faces challenges of conservation in a mostly worked, humanized, and private landscape that can offer national lessons about new models of conservation (Judd 2003). What follows is a description of the setting of the park proposal, the opportunity perceived by park advocates, a description of the conflict that ensued, and the context for the conflict at multiple scales.

3.3.1 Setting

The state of Maine covers nearly 8 million hectares, and the North Woods of Maine is a little more than half that size. This northern half of Maine is also called the 'unorganized territories' and is managed by the state's Land Use Regulation Commission (LURC). It is mostly private land, which has historically been managed for timber and later pulp and paper production. It includes one large (80,000 ha) state park, Baxter, surrounding the highest point in Maine, Mt. Katahdin.

European settlers moved to Northern Maine in the mid-1800s (Barringer 1993). Most early timber harvesting was done in the southern half of the state and along river corridors of the north (Irland 1999). Harvesting of single trees was the trend in the early years, with harvesting conducted in the winter. It was not until the 1920s and 1930s that machines allowed harvesting to occur year-round in Maine (Rolde 2001). Chainsaws came into use in the 1940s, and the combination of the skidders and chainsaws led to early road building. The last log drive down the Penobscot River took place in 1975. It was during this period (the late 1970s and early 1980s) that extensive clearcutting, road building, and herbicide spraying occurred as a consequence of technological advances and an outbreak of the native spruce budworm (*Choristoneura* spp.). These practices began to raise an alarm with environmentalists (Lansky 1991) just as the state's new Department of Conservation took over the forestry division, and political power began to shift to southern Maine (Rolde 2001). With their attention now on the North Woods of Maine, the public got its first views of the results of heavy cutting from films like the *Paper Plantation* and presses like the *Maine Times* and the *Northern Forest Forum*. The first of several large land sales and layoffs in the paper industry started shortly after this in the mid-1980s, and this gave the conservation community the idea that if these lands were for sale then the time was ripe for a new plan for how they could be managed (Klyza and Trombulak 1994).

A unique aspect of Maine's people is that they know their land-use history. They may not know all the details, but the legacy of the landscape providing a livelihood and recreation are part of the psyche of Mainers (Judd 1997). Natural resource issues find themselves on the front page of the local newspapers daily. Mainers are adamant about local control of their natural resources and fear any loss of this to outside interests of any kind. The 'outside' lumber, timber, and pulp and paper companies caused concern just before the turn of the last century but are no longer considered by most as 'outsiders' (Bennett 2001; Irland 1999). Maine has a group of experienced

professional outdoor guides licensed by the state, called Maine Guides. One such guide, who prefers to remain anonymous, said ‘by a happy coincidence of history the industrial ownership has been good for Maine people for the past 100 years, but that is all ending, and people just don’t want to see this.’ Another said, ‘They (Maine people) have a fear of the big system collapsing on them and yet they worship it; we come from a culture of victimhood, and you can’t change that.’

3.3.2 Opportunity

In 1988, the Wilderness Society, after surveying the lower 48 states of the U.S., chose three places where they believed opportunities remained to protect or restore natural ecological coherence (Watkins 1988): the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, the Southern Appalachians, and the North Woods of Maine. The first two places were already predominately in public ownership, but Maine was mostly privately owned. After this call for protection, the Wilderness Society opened an office in Maine to study both the potential for a reserve and the array of conservation tools available to protect this area from perceived conservation threats.

In 1988, after an article in their magazine (Watkins 1988), the Wilderness Society began to investigate options for protecting the North Woods of Maine. In March 1989, they produced a report called ‘*A New Maine Woods Reserve: Options for Protecting Maine’s Northern Wildlands*’ (Kellett 1989). This report identified over-harvesting and large land sales as key threats to the region. With the premise that the future of the North Woods of Maine was in jeopardy without a bold vision or a comprehensive conservation plan, the Wilderness Society called for immediate action, beginning with further research into the complexity of the issue and the best options to bring about a solution to protect their identified 1.1 million hectares.

Michael Kellett, the author of the 1989 report, left the Wilderness Society in 1991, and in 1992 he founded RESTORE: the North Woods. He began working immediately on a larger reserve or ‘green line’ area of 1.3 million hectares (similar to the 1.1 million hectare area identified in the Wilderness Society plan) that encompassed Baxter State Park. Kellett traveled to towns and schools with Jym St. Pierre, formerly of Maine’s Land Use Regulatory Commission, to promote this concept. During these meetings people seemed to be confused by the ‘green line’ concept. Over the months that followed, RESTORE refined their proposal to its current form, the Maine Woods National Park and Preserve.

In 1994, the proposal outlined five proposed outcomes of a new national park and preserve in Maine (Kellett 2000):

1. Restore and protect the ecology of the Maine North Woods.
2. Guarantee access to a true Maine North Woods wilderness experience.
3. Interpret Maine’s cultural heritage.
4. Anchor a healthy economy in Northern Maine.
5. Raise national awareness of the Maine North Woods.

Our research used the five proposed outcomes as a basis for interviews with decision leaders in the state in order to explore both the understanding of the goals as well as the perception of the process that RESTORE followed to achieve these goals.

3.3.3 Conflict

The 1994 proposal came in the midst of great controversy about the future of the North Woods of Maine. During this time, other groups launched their own visions for the area: the Northern Forest Alliance rolled out their list of important areas, The Nature Conservancy launched their plan of large-scale easements on industrial forestland, and the Forest Society of Maine began purchasing large easements in the Northern Forest and on the West Branch of the Penobscot River through the National Forest Legacy program (part of the U.S. Forest Service). Initiatives were launched by National and Maine Audubon, the Sierra Club, and the Natural Resource Council of Maine as well as other smaller groups with an interest or perceived stake in the North Woods of Maine.

The RESTORE proposal was described as having ‘shaken the region’ (Rolde 2001). For the first time, the environmental community could imagine some level of control of part of the North Woods of Maine. Proponents of the proposal believed that a national park was the best way to protect natural values, while providing a desperately needed economic surge and diversification. The idea of a national forest was discarded early in the planning because of the road building and harvesting that occurs in national forests. The North Woods of Maine is an area where road building has been on the rise since the 1970s, when heavier equipment made logging inland possible and roads replaced rivers as the method for timber transport (Irland 2000). However, it is still an area with relatively low road density compared to the rest of the Northern Forest landscape (Ritters and Wickham 2003).

Four excerpts from the *Bangor Daily News Letters* section of the paper reveal some of the issues and tensions expressed in public opinion.

> National Park Potential, from the *Bangor Daily News*, June 6, 2003
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> Walter Plaunt Jr. (BDN letter, May 26) seems to think that because he is against a Maine Woods National Park everyone else in Maine thinks the same way. If Plaunt would leave Trescott Township long enough, he might discover that many citizens think a national park would be of great value to this state….This is particularly true of the area around Millinockett. The only thing keeping that area viable is Baxter State Park. A National Park encompassing northwestern Maine would be a shot in the arm for this region. It might even inspire the state and federal government to extend Interstate 95 to Fort Fairfield.-John Blaisdell, Bangor.

> Legal Land Transaction, From the *Bangor Daily News*, July 7, 2003
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> Do the no-park protesters really believe that groups that want a national park to be established in Northern Maine will steal the required 3.2 million acres from their current owners? If these groups obtain the necessary acreage, it will likely be perfectly legal, through willing-seller and eager-buyer transactions. Since we can’t tell the landowners to

whom they can sell their lands, the worst thing that could happen is they would sell it to developers…and it will be posted…Those who cling to the dream that the current situation will forever remain the same could be disappointed. While the current landowners are generous in the area of public access, though for a fee, who says future landowners will feel obligated to follow this tradition?-Irvin Dube, Madawaska.

Who Needs Devastation? From the *Bangor Daily News*, July 22, 2003

A feasibility study is required before Congress can establish the proposed 3.2 million-acre North Woods National Park….Once a feasibility study is in hand, Congress could establish a park here as soon as the political climate is favorable….in spite of opposition from the public, the state government, and the state's congressional delegation….In actuality, such decisions are made [access, logging permits, snowmobile use and hunting] by federal park staff officials, Washington legislators and by the environmental organizations with the money and political clout to influence both groups….A North Woods National Park would be financially devastating for Maine.-William J. Peet, Harfords Point.

Many park opponents, from the *Bangor Daily News*, May 31, 2004

I read the editorial 'Conservation Conversation' (BDN, April 29), calling for an economic study of the north woods economy, including the possibility of a new national park. Contrary to the BDN's ending comments, the supporters and opponents of a park have not found 'common ground' around this issue…The Maine Woods Coalition was formed more than 3 years ago with the primary purpose of stopping the park. A thinly veiled study that would include the park possibility is of no interest to those of us who live in the area of its impact. A serious study that would look at the Northern Maine economy in a comprehensive manner and build on our existing strengths and opportunities should be further discussed.-Eugene J. Conlogue, Chairman Maine Woods Coalition Steering Committee, Millinocket.

3.3.4 Context

Opposition to national parks has a history as long as that of parks themselves. Gifford Pinchot wanted the first national parks to be open for timber harvesting, and he battled with John Muir to keep preservation values out of the public estate (Nash 2001). History usually presents park detractors as materialistic, and those in favor are usually characterized as forward-thinking (Hampton 1981). Hampton (1981) also noted that 'Both sides in the many specific controversies based their positions upon identifiable values that – despite changes in social and economic factors – have remained fairly constant over the last century. Both have relied upon polemics and propaganda, and both have appealed to arguments and values that are strikingly similar.' This dualism between utilitarian and preservation agendas related to land use is a two-century-old debate in the U.S.

An economic argument has often been made for the establishment of national parks on private lands (Pierce 2000). Pierce (2000) explains that the peak of the timber removal in the Southern Appalachians, and the following decline of the timber industry, led advocates for Great Smoky Mountains Park to extol the financial success of the western parks as a remedy for their rural region tied to its natural resources. The Great Smoky Mountains became a park in 1938 but not until after

intense debates that lasted for 40 years and after the park service allowed for some lifetime leases of land inside the park boundaries. However, access to hunting and other extractive practices were now under the regulation of the federal government (Runte 1997).

Concerns about the RESTORE proposal have their roots in a long tradition of state sovereignty and anti-federalism that at times has become very strident. The perception of the federal government as a threat to local sovereignty has again complicated Maine preservationist policy. This is illustrated by events in Maine's land conservation history. The first example is the 1911 passage of the Weeks Act that set in motion the federal purchase of eastern forests. There was resistance to this in Northern Maine. Later, in 1931, 'when Congress proposed federal acquisition of tax-delinquent timberlands for a national forest in Maine, as was occurring throughout the eastern United States, Maine declined to be part of the plan. In fact, the proposal was so unpopular that no state legislator would sponsor an enabling bill' (Judd and Beach 2003).

A second example is the resistance to the number of attempts throughout Maine's history to create a national park in the heart of the North Woods of Maine. Although the Millinocket town council did support a plan for a Roosevelt National Park in the current proposal area, World War II derailed this proposal and it did not move forward (Rolde 2001). Probably the most well-supported initiative was the 1937 proposal for a Katahdin National Park in the area that is today Baxter State Park (National Park Service 1937). The federal government supported a feasibility study of the area, but it did not get congressional support, and many worried that inviting too many people to the North Woods of Maine could change its character forever (Irland 1999). Additionally, the authors of the report did not all agree on a national park designation. The Branch of Forestry representative, John F. Shanklin, supported instead a national monument, citing legislation that stated that a national park is land 'essentially in primeval condition,' and noting the evidence of human use on the landscape (National Park Service 1937). Percival Baxter, past governor of Maine, had his own plan for the region, which he began working on in 1931 (Rolde 2001). He eventually bought land and deeded it to the State of Maine for an 80,000-ha state park with a clear mandate and management structure.

A third example of a federal initiative, ultimately turned over to the state, is the Allagash Wilderness Waterway. The plan to build a dam and flood the Allagash Valley brought to a head the debate about the future of this wild river (Judd and Beach 2003). The ideas for protection included a national park and a river protection corridor managed by the state. Preservation groups and industry landowners joined forces in opposing federal designation, citing the increase in outside visitors that would bring about more development and increase the tax base for industry landowners. They and some state officials promoted the idea of a 'working wilderness' (Judd and Beach 2003; Rolde 2001). The waterway was established in 1966 by the Maine legislature, and in 1970 it became the first state-managed unit of the Wild and Scenic River System (Judd and Beach 2003; Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands 2005; Rolde 2001).

Beyond the anti-federalism, it is also useful to specifically examine the perception of the concept of 'wilderness' as presented in the original Wilderness Act for three distinct reasons. First, unlike classic western 'wilderness,' most of Maine's 'wilderness' is privately owned but with legal traditions that secure public access dating from the early colonial period and with the added understanding that landowners make these access concessions so that the state will not employ eminent domain to ensure public access rights. These traditions have complicated the preservation debate enormously in Maine.

Second, there is no pretense of 'purity' in Maine wilderness; these lands have become part of a traditional working rural landscape, and they have been shaped and reshaped by cultural and economic transformations like changing wood markets, agricultural decline, and a growing appreciation for the spiritual and recreational significance of wilderness landscapes. Wilderness is a viable tradition in Maine but under a much different guise than manifested in Western North America. Western wilderness involves vast natural ecosystems that are visually and culturally perceived as devoid of almost all human impact. Maine has no such 'pristine' environments; nor does ecological succession fit the Western wilderness ideal, where severe climate, altitude, and competition for soil moisture create open, park-like forests of relatively stable composition: forest succession in Maine is 'messy,' since the forest is so much more dynamic (Seymour et al. 2002). These considerations again complicate the debate over preservation.

Third, the North Woods of Maine is proximate to some of the most urbanized portions of North America, and this has enhanced its cultural significance and sharpened the political debate over its use and preservation. In contrast, Western wilderness is typically very remote from urban areas and abstract. The thinking about the North Woods of Maine has been shaped subtly by a century of urban wilderness fantasies – portrayed in volume after volume of travel-adventure books and tourist literature. Thus, the North Woods of Maine have been a cultural icon at least since the mid-nineteenth century Romantic era and the advent of tourism as an industry in the Northeastern U.S. For this reason, it is a natural feature with immense cultural significance not only for those who live nearby, but for the entire region. Here at the interface of two vastly different value systems – rural and urban – debate over forest use and preservation is a matter of wildly conflicting expectations.

The RESTORE approach – wholesale, blanket preservation – challenged a history of low-keyed conservation policy in Maine that began with the arrival of the paper industry and the portable sawmill in the 1880s. These developments touched off a long (and continuing) debate among Maine people about climate and watershed effects, stream flow, fish and game conservation, visual scars, the maintenance of small local woodworking mills, forest fires, and the fate of the tourist industry. In short, Maine harbored a tradition of subdued conservation consciousness that was predicated on state and private initiatives, small-scale conservation projects, pressure from women's clubs and fish and game associations, and subtle adjustments through year-by-year legislative acts, beginning with the 1909 Maine Forestry District. Most of this effort was premised on the idea that wildlands would be left at least to some degree in the hands of private owners. How much of this old conservation legacy remains is difficult to say, but it does need to be acknowledged in present-day policy

debate: Maine people are not averse to conservation initiatives, but they are not very expansive in their thinking about it.

3.4 Results and Discussion

The environmental history explored in the previous section at both state and regional scales can now be used as the context for understanding the interview data. As described above, the interview results will be explored through the conceptual framework of three themes: cultural memory, essentialized images, and vernacular conservation. Qualitative data analysis built on an understanding of the stories of the region is helpful in interpreting motivations and will lead to greater understanding of the interwoven cultural and natural context for a more lasting and relevant conservation plan to be built upon. William Cronon emphasizes that all human history has a natural context, neither nature nor culture is static, and all environmental knowledge is culturally constructed and historically contingent (Cronon 1993). The findings are, for the most part, critiques of RESTORE. However, there has been recognition of their role as a catalyst for the discussion that is now on the table: the future of conservation in Northern Maine and the entire Northern Appalachian/Acadian ecoregion.

3.4.1 Cultural Memory

Cultural memory has to do with the memory people in a community have of events and fixed points in time that define ways of knowing. It has been defined as collective memory based on fixed events that define behaviors; it is repeated through generations and falls outside of everyday memory (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995). Taken as an a priori set of knowledge claims in a community or region, the cultural memory of any place or collection of places is important to understand in order to develop any type of conservation initiative. Exploring the history of any region in depth and the people living there can reveal these fixed points in time that define later reactions to policies and events. This can be done with both documents and interviews, looking for stories of important events that reveal the collective identity people share with each other in a region.

As described earlier, events in Maine have shaped a fear of the federal government, a more utilitarian view of conservation as well as suspicion of all outsiders. Reasons for this may be Maine's geographic isolation at a large scale; Maine is large enough to have had its own economy based on private lumber corporations, and the people chose to shape policy and sentiment to support their businesses. The interviewees strongly perceived that RESTORE did not fully understand Mainers' fear of the federal government and other historical factors that created the firestorm around the proposal. Another perception was that RESTORE knew the history and chose to ignore it in their urgency to ensure land protection. Many felt that if this

was the case, RESTORE underestimated the resolve of Mainers to fight outside control of their region and lifestyles. The following quote illustrates this point.

> But you see people's perceptions about a lot of issues, at least the people here. They have some of these things in their minds, arguments about snowmobiles in parks, debates about whether there should be more motorized access. Even proposals that have been made to ban motors from Allagash Lake or to ban flying in and out of Allagash Lake because of the violation of the solitude of the people that work there, that's out there. That goes back a long time, it has been heard of, but the point is that people who then address this new issue of a park from this area have that stuff in the back of their mind. They remember. So they are going to have a view or they are going to have some distrust of other kinds, this brings in baggage for them, whereas…an eager, young kind of pro-national park activist who shows up out of who knows where, they don't even know about it...in a way they haven't interacted with the community, they haven't figured out what the culture contains, what experiences are out there that relate to this, and they have something to do with how people react to some of this stuff.

This person was referring to the controversy over a request to allow snowmobiles in Baxter State Park, which was eventually denied. Local people have wanted the restrictions in that park to ease. This was given as an example of the history and identity of the region the interviewee believed was ignored by RESTORE. There was also a sense of grief that came out in many of the interviews; grief for the loss of a life that is changing at record speed and what that means to local people in Northern Maine. The following quote refers to the ownership of large tracts of land by philanthropist Roxanne Quimby and her decision to make her land open only to non-motorized recreation, a source of great tension.

> …But in that deeper rural Maine public consciousness, one could enjoy the fishing, the hunting, the recreation, the timber, the logging, the jobs – and all of that was embedded deeply in these interior counties at the community level and the family level, for that matter. And all of this in the last decade has introduced a picture that is perceived as relatively unstable compared to the long-standing prior history. And the national park proposal, RESTORE and Roxanne Quimby are lightning rods. And it gets particularly, I think, problematic, even for me, who is conservation-minded, I mean; when snowmobile trails are closed off with new owners…I think Roxanne happens to be the lightning rod because she's out there and she's visible. So that's, you know, where things show up.

The following quote notes that decisions about land use are often based on a value-driven response that comes from the meaning of place and fear of the unknown. It is important because RESTORE relied heavily on an economic argument for the park.

> I don't think you can ever explain it [the RESTORE proposal] enough in a general public way to get people to sign onto it. I don't care what economic studies you come out with; they are not going to believe them.… People don't care; they wouldn't care if the governor said that a national park would put $5,000 extra into your pocket every year. People don't care. They don't believe it. They don't want to hear it and they don't care because what they care most about is their bias, their political perception, and the way it has been done, i.e., we don't like change.

Another interesting quote came from a long-time resident in Maine reflecting on some events that signaled a change in the North Woods of Maine that may have been early sources of opportunity for some and sources of great fear for others.

> You could make a case that when Great Northern announced in 1986, after the defeat of the Big A project that it was going to be downsizing. That was really the clanging bell, the first one that things are going to be different here in the North Woods and I well remember Bob Bartlett who was the president at the time, making that announcement that they were going to be reducing their work force severely over the years, and life was not going to be the same. As of that moment, 1986, this was before the Diamond Occidental fell, that was really big news, that was the biggest news in that decade in a way, because it said our history as we have known it for the last 100 years up this way is going to be changing and...so that began the circumstances and events that lead us up to today. Because, let me say this, because people could have thought it would be great to have a park, but if nobody was willing to sell they sure weren't going to get it from eminent domain, and so with the sales and the downsizing, first of all the mills, and then as more people got involved in looking at, well, do you really need to own all this land, that's when it became possible for a willing seller and a willing buyer to get together … until the Diamond sale, I don't think there had been any other major investing in land, but that was the first time that I think people might have let the hairs get raised on their back with excitement that maybe this was the start of something really big and maybe these lands would be up for sale for the first time since when.

3.4.2 Essentialized Images

Essentialized images is a simplistic characterization of a person, group, or community of people used as a means to build political power, and can allow conflicts to spin out of control into intractable situations that are ultimately destructive to conservation and to the local people in an area, creating 'brittle' arguments for conservation initiatives (Redford et al. 2006). The term 'essentialized images,' means the use of images in a way that objectify and dehumanize (Brosius 1999). This in turn may allow actors holding such images to ignore the contributions and different ways of knowing or creating meaning about a particular landscape. The only way to understand this multiplicity of place values is through discourse, either through research or as community meetings where real effort is made to understand, not stake one's claim to the landscape either through science or tradition.

The most controversial issue regarding RESTORE was their process and not the content of their proposal. The leaders interviewed felt that RESTORE was in a rush, and that they acted as if they were riding in to be the hero of the North Woods. This in and of itself worked against RESTORE's fifth goal for the park, which was to build pride. How can local people have pride in something that they did not participate in creating? They acted with a perception that the local residents needed to be saved from 'outside,' not as part of a conversation about how protection of shared values might be achieved. A specific example that created a focus on essentialized images in this case is a brochure RESTORE released to look exactly like an actual national park brochure (Fig. 3.1). Although this helped RESTORE communicate their vision, the brochure had the opposite effect on the local population as evidenced by the following interview responses:

> …it was clear to me early on that their aspirations are to establish a national park. And I'm a photographer on the side, right? So I appreciate the value of images. And I have to admit, I took them to task at one point, one-on-one, I said, 'What kind of b.s. is this, you know?'

Fig. 3.1 Maine Woods National Park and Preserve brochure, created by RESTORE: the North Woods as part of their promotion campaign for the park

> They've got the north Maine woods, the national park in the same format, the same color-scheme. You can call it what you want, but I said, 'That is bogus. That is misleading.'

Another interviewee commented on the map created in the format of the National Park Service as having the result of making the local people look stupid. They were the ones explaining to visitors that there was no national park. This in turn created a deeper divide, leading locals to believe there was no room for compromise. The interviewees saw RESTORE as wedded to their proposal, not interested in adapting it.

> This isn't coming from me – I've had people who work in the visitor-tourism sector [who] said they have people that have showed up going, 'Where's the park?' And that does us a big disservice and I never quite got to the core of this until today, though. And you know people come with expectations. It misled people and it's like, they land in our dooryards and what? In consciousness, the realization light goes on, 'Boy, there's no national park.' And…who and where do they associate that with? They associate here. They don't associate that with RESTORE. We're the ones that wind up taking the heat.

The following comment came from someone present at a meeting to debate the park that included what were at the time the opposite sides of the issue, represented by the Fin and Feather Club in Millinocket and RESTORE. This 1995 meeting was sponsored by the Maine Wildlife Society. This quote is evidence of the deep divide that seemed to create an impenetrable barrier to discourse.

> …if you really listened to what they were all saying, it was incredible common ground; incredible common ground. Yet they're up there hating each other, …they were caught on points of rhetoric and they weren't listening to each other, I felt. And I just, I was like, 'My gosh, they're arguing over here and over here, but if they really listened that there was so much mutual interest in seeing the future of the North Woods secured,' if they could ever just sit and get through that and talk, what great allies. …after the meeting broke up…they were packing up and…I gave them my feedback. I said… 'I don't know if you heard that because you were caught up in it.' 'But it's incredible in terms of how much common thinking there is.' And I said, 'From what I could hear,' I said, 'it's just simply this question of it being a national park. You know, if it was somehow something other than a national park, all of the functions that you're talking about wanting to protect, are exactly all of the functions and values that the Fin and Feather Club want to protect. You know, some very minor little tweaking,' I said. I said, 'My – if you can see your way to do that, if you could somehow just shed the national park as the big handle – because that's what people…seem to be responding so negatively to – and really focus on what the values and functions are you're trying to protect,' I said, 'I think you probably have one of the strongest allies in the world right up there in these folks in Millinocket and you could make this all work. It could happen. Just don't make it a national park…get rid of the park as your goal and focus on the values you're trying to protect.' And it fell on deaf ears. It fell on deaf ears.

This interviewee is a prominent member of the conservation community in Maine and said at this point they realized that RESTORE had no intent of including locals at all. The overwhelming finding from the research interviews regarding essentialized images is that all interviewees generally agreed with the RESTORE goals but disagreed so much with the process that RESTORE followed that a proposal for a large protected area would never move forward if it was promoted by RESTORE. Their perceived lack of regard for the local people left locals suspicious and distrustful of their motives.

> Nobody would disagree with the values and goals on this list. However the fact that they are advanced by RESTORE and the way they have been advanced doesn't necessarily suggest that that's what's intended.

3.4.3 Vernacular Conservation

Vernacular conservation is a term to describe the use of the common or native (vernacular) meanings of place as a basis of conservation. Pimbert and Pretty (1995) define it as 'conservation based on site-specific traditions and economies; it refers to ways of life and resource utilization that have evolved in place and, like vernacular architecture, is a direct expression of the relationship between communities and their habitats.'

Just as the scale of conservation initiatives is increasing to more regional and continental approaches, so too is the recognition of historical and qualitative data that

builds our knowledge of conservation at temporal and small spatial scales. Resources for conservation always exist in a place, one that will be imbued with many other meanings they will come to bear on any conservation initiative related to that place. Many of these meanings are tied to self-identity, a powerful force that is necessary to understand in any place or assemblage of places in order to create more resilient approaches to conservation (Cheng et al. 2003). This has also been called cross-scale conservation in recognition of the challenge of the social-ecological system within which decision making takes place (Berkes 2004). The following quote explores one such option for incorporating the cultural and social aspects of place more explicitly:

> I've been kicking the doors around here saying, 'For God sakes, the Maine Woods Forest Heritage. What the hell have we been about forever?' I mean, this is, to me, this is the opportunity. We need to get a limited study group of yea sayers and nay sayers, and put together a learning agenda, develop them into a learning community;…go visit some of these areas and look at what the tangible issues are that people have to deal with, and look at what the costs or benefits are and then come back and report on that. If it makes some sense, fine. If it doesn't make sense, fine. Or if it's a split report, fine. But we're interested in that, admittedly, because from a more selfish perspective, in the region, we think that they don't have the constraints that go with the national park. But what that brings us is maybe some additional resources, some visible recognition, and some financial resources to help us do our diversified economic development work here, at the same time protecting the rural life that we appreciate.

The quote above was one of many that explore alternative large-scale conservation options to a national park that may fit better within the region. There was consistent support from the many different viewpoints that a large-scale conservation vision was needed and that even the goals of the RESTORE proposal were a good guide, but that the fact that they left local wisdom out of the design was a direct insult to the local traditions and culture.

> If there's going to be a new entity here, the people need to be a major, major part of it. They need to say what's in their hearts and what their fears are and help to offer solutions.

And another interviewee echoed this sentiment in regards to large-scale easements:

> Easements are a direct response to the public interest in conservation of these lands, and they are moving us toward better use. However, they do not in any way say that we as Maine citizens are masters of our own destiny.

This last quote explores the pride and dignity that can come from a conservation plan that includes the local vision of place. This can create a sense of empowerment and can indeed be used to help foster long-term support of a conservation initiative even after planners are long gone from a region or on to the next initiative.

3.5 Lessons Learned

The conclusion among decision leaders in Maine today is that there is no political will in the state for the RESTORE proposal for a Maine Woods National Park. There is also a sense that RESTORE did not listen to the local people or pay enough

attention to the cultural memory of the region that reacts vigorously against all things federal. This is not to say that locals did not notice the rise in unemployment, closing of schools, and increased regional tension and insecurity. There was and still is a palpable grief felt by the people in the North Woods of Maine as they continue to lose a life they thought was their birthright. The RESTORE proposal made many residents of Northern Maine feel like RESTORE was there to save the day and that this took away the last shred of their dignity, which arguably was central to the manner with which they confronted the sea change in social realities the region faces. As a result, the proponents of the RESTORE proposal were perceived as enemies independent of what the goals of the proposal actually were.

RESTORE's relentless pressure was based on a deep love for the North Woods of Maine, but it made local people fear conservation. The debate became one of Park vs. No Park, and participants somehow lost the ability to take a few steps back and define common goals and visions for the region and to look at the alternative options for large-scale conservation that could protect the myriad values and definitions of place. One interviewee summed this point up nicely:

> We'd be well served to get to the point where we started talking about how much and where instead of yes or no. That's the problem with the park debate – the park debate is yes or no, and never what's the good of the park proposal and what is the bad of the park proposal. What's the good of the way industry, tourism, and recreation use the forest and what is the bad of the way they use the forest?

This information is valuable for any advocacy group interested in conservation initiatives in a rural region. Without a deep understanding and respect for the local people, their lives as well as their values, insurmountable obstacles will remain in the path of conservation. Conservation cannot be done to people; it has to be done with them.

This research suggests that RESTORE, in its urgency, left out an important step in any planning process, which is to include the local players before you have a plan. However, many argue that the discussion about conservation only becomes real when we draw 'lines on a map' (Trombulak 2003), and so in RESTORE's defense they were bold enough to draw these lines. How can RESTORE's work and passion be used to help inspire a twenty-first century model for conservation in a forested landscape? The competing definitions of place and value systems in the North Woods of Maine are important to include in any forest management or conservation initiatives in the state.

On the issue of the North Woods of Maine, we never found anyone reluctant to speak with us. There was great interest in the 'telling of stories' about the landscape. Too often, people don't really listen to one another. Using tools and working with historians and conservation social scientists will help develop this understanding and social meanings of place. These ties to the land, which form the basis of identity of self, family, and culture, will ultimately be the stories that protect the landscape for the long term.

Our experience with this case study taught us some specific lessons:

First, it is important to be a student. Come to a place to learn from the 'natives,' as one would learn about an important member of their family. What is the story of

place and how does one's conservation knowledge fit into the narrative of place? How can it be made relevant? This includes learning about local institutions and gatekeepers of information that will be useful in gaining both understanding and credibility. It may be too hard to talk to a large number people in an area, but if one talks to the *right* people, they usually can convey information that represents many perspectives in the locale.

Second, a holistic view of knowledge needs to be developed. People must often argue or present what they value in the context of others' values. This, to be done well (meaning that other value systems are respected), requires one to understand the story and context leading to those values in an open, transparent manner, using research methods that are free from emotional judgments but that can measure them. Environmental history and qualitative inquiry are two such tools and, if done well, will benefit all parties – scientists and planners as well as local residents. People will not support what they do not understand, and when the conservation planners are gone to a new place in need of their skills, it is the local residents who remain. Their partnership is essential. Therefore, earning their respect is, too.

Finally, flexibility is essential. A landscape-scale conservation initiative needs to be based on the context of the different cultures represented in the entire area. The fine line will always be how to incorporate the best possible science driving a conservation plan with local people and their intense love of place, however they display it. Understanding the cultural memory, the essentialized images, and interest or potential for including vernacular elements in the conservation plan can lead to a better process and ultimately one that preserves the dignity of local residents while creating a resilient conservation plan.

The greatest resistance to conservation in North Woods of Maine came out of fear of a loss of access to places important to people. Interestingly, it was the number one reason given by those who supported large-scale conservation in the region as well. Think for a moment of a place that is embedded deep in your soul, part of your identity, a place you will never see again, and is with you only as a memory. The fear of this loss is a major social driver that conservation planners engage with either unwittingly or in a fully cognizant way that builds compassion. It is this compassion that can drive the interest in a fully interdisciplinary approach to conservation planning that can be good for ecosystems and people.

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