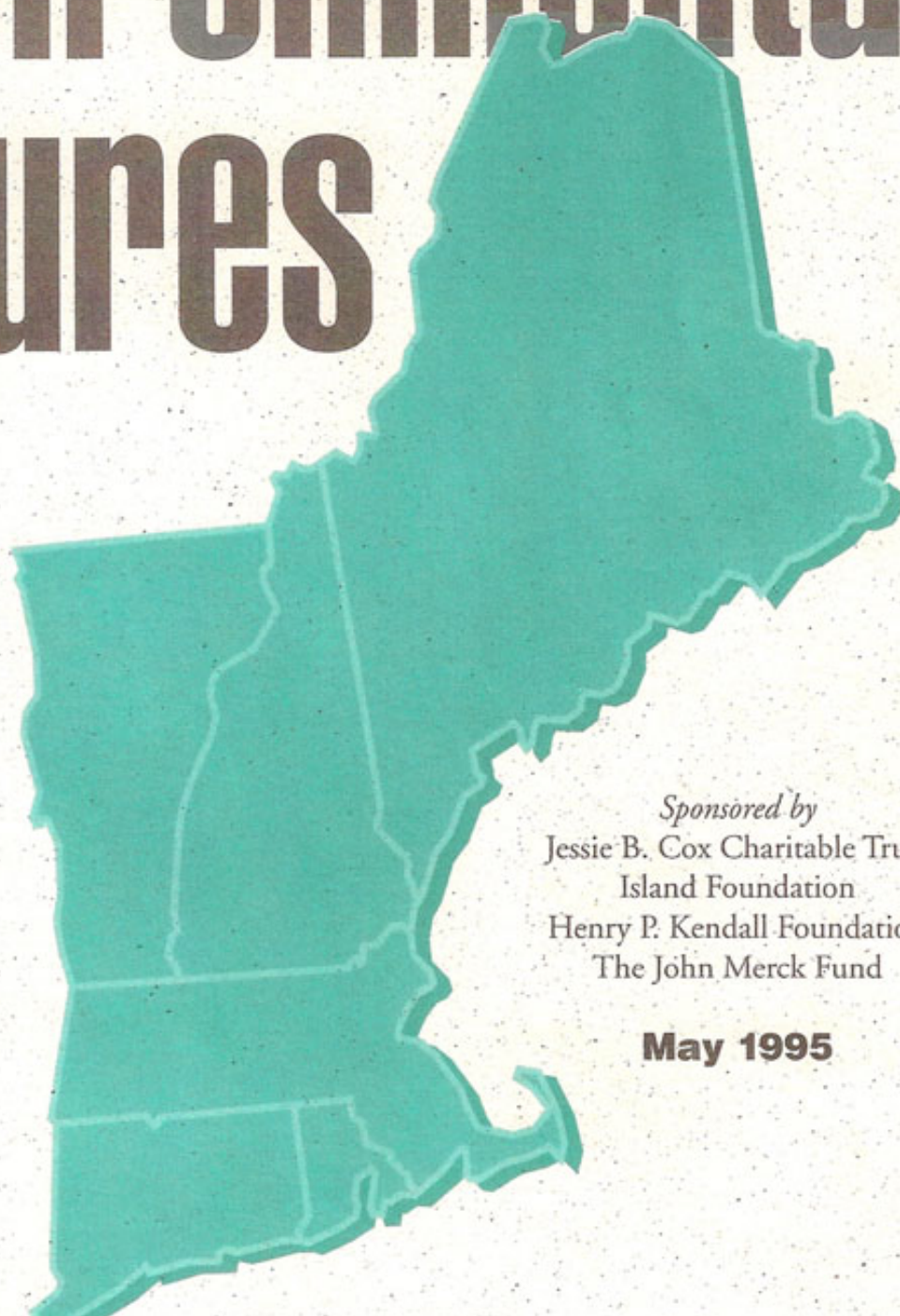


*New England's*

# Environmental Futures



*Sponsored by*  
Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust  
Island Foundation  
Henry P. Kendall Foundation  
The John Merck Fund

**May 1995**

# New England's Environmental Futures

An Inquiry into the Status and Future of the  
New England Environmental Agenda

May 1995

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## Sponsors:

Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust  
Island Foundation  
Henry P. Kendall Foundation  
The John Merck Fund

Kenneth T. Hoffman, Rapporteur



## Executive Summary

Is the environmental movement at a crossroads? Are the national concerns about the state of the environmental movement shared by the environmental community in New England? What are the current concerns of environmentalists in the region? And what are the perceived needs of the environmental community at all levels of activity? These are some of the questions which the Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust, Island Foundation, the Henry P. Kendall Foundation, and The John Merck Fund attempted to address in a series of six meetings with environmental practitioners, held in January and February 1995.

These meetings, called "New England Environmental Consultations", consisted of six lively two-hour sessions. Participants, ranging in number from eight to eighteen, represented various constituencies of the environmental community in the region: board members, staff members, urban and public health advocates, grassroots activists, former officials of relevant public agencies, and directors of environmental organizations. In response to facilitated questioning, with no attribution of remarks in the written record, participants were encouraged to speak frankly in open discourse.

In terms of broad analysis, the major findings concerned the recognition of a new era in the environmental movement, characterized by devolution of responsibilities to state and local authorities, the emergence of consensual rather than adversarial methods of conflict resolution, the desirability of presenting resource users and volunteers as organizational spokespeople, the need to counteract the fallacies of the anti-environmental movement and to improve communications generally, and the primacy of the grassroots as the place to set agendas and to build long term, effective constituencies for sustainable economic development consistent with environmental goals.

The participants made detailed action suggestions to enhance the state of New England's environment as a whole. These were clustered around the new political landscape, work in the communities, the role of communications and the media, staffing and leadership, and alliances. In addition, the participants suggested an agenda for the funding community to strengthen New England's environmental community.

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# New England's Environmental Futures

## An Inquiry into the Future of the New England Environmental Movement

### I. INTRODUCTION.

In January and February 1995, four private foundations -- Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust, Island Foundation, Henry P. Kendall Foundation, and The John Merck Fund -- convened a series of six meetings, called "New England Environmental Consultations." All four foundations have environmental grantmaking programs in New England and are concerned about the effectiveness of the environmental movement in the region.

We suspected the tools that had served us well for twenty years were reaching a point of diminishing returns, especially at the federal level. So we asked for objective opinions, unvarnished and not for attribution, from six constituencies of the environmental movement. They were board members of environmental groups, staff members, grassroots activists, urban and public health advocates, former public agency officials, and executive directors of environmental organizations. Each group met on its own. All attendees are listed in the first appendix to this report.

Our goals were broad. First, we hoped to stimulate new thinking and action about the objectives and methods of the environmental movement in New England. Second, we wanted to advance our own understanding of the environmental priorities most in need of attention.

Although we sent a few articles to the participants ahead of time, no formal preparation was requested. Instead, a facilitator posed broad questions to the group and helped to direct the flow of conversation. The sponsors were present throughout the meetings and even occasionally made comments. But their chief function was to listen. A rapporteur made notes of the vigorous, and sometimes conflicting, opinions.

This report tries to capture the main points that emerged. It does this in two ways. First, an analytical section presents a synthesis of the discussions. Second, a session-by-session description tries to capture the flavor of the individual meetings. There were tremendous differences in style, energy, and usefulness. The report concludes with suggestions for action.

Our feeling now is that there is one, clear imperative. To succeed, the New England environmental movement must project a broad and compelling vision that will persuade large numbers of people that they are **stakeholders** in the formidable

effort to build a sustainable future. This effort must begin at the local level. If environmental protection is imposed upon people, we will surely fail. But if it is accomplished with, for, and because of people, we may succeed.

We appreciate the time and effort of everyone who has helped in this project. We look forward to continued partnerships with environmental advocates and stewards throughout the region.

Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust

Island Foundation

Henry P. Kendall Foundation

The John Merck Fund



## II. ENVIRONMENTAL FUTURES.

The November 1994 election, with its reversal of Congressional control after forty years, brought many changes. It also created great concern in environmental circles. But it was not an election about the environment. If anything, the movement has generally failed to deliver substantial votes or contributions. Its direct impact on politics lately has been small.

The national election was definitely about the role of government. That meant it affects how citizens -- and by extension, their environmental groups -- can work for the improvement of environmental standards in the U.S. and beyond.

### **A New Era in Environmental Activism**

Environmentalism has changed. Many laws were put on the books in the 1960s. During the 1970s and 80s, centralized regulation accomplished much of what it set out to do in limiting large, point sources of pollution. Now the focus is on **decentralized, consensual action** at the state and local level, where the struggle for sustainable resource use will occur. Building community support for outcomes is essential.

To meet the challenge, the movement needs **new theory and practice**. Policies must address economics directly, in part because of the anti-environmental lobby's shrill impact. Cooperative efforts are needed. Communities will look to environmentalists to propose sound, sustainable economic development.

As a result, environmental organizations must reconsider what kind of **funding and staffing** makes sense in an arena quite different from just five years ago. That adjustment is not necessarily an easy one to make for the movement's professional leadership, who were apprenticed when adversarial action and top down regulation predominated.

Another necessity for the new era is **grassroots activity**. While it has always received lip service, now it has moved to the fore. And yet grassroots work costs more, takes more time, and produces a less certain result than more focused programs. The ideal is to produce a broadbased constituency that pursues its own agenda, not a constituency that supports someone else's agenda.

### **Alliances and Communities**

New Englanders appear to remain concerned with the environment. But fewer of them are affiliating with environmental organizations. The phenomenon is even more pronounced at the national level. For the most part, the movement has not done



well at **enlisting its natural allies**, the resource users like farmers, foresters, commercial fishermen, and sportsmen. Part of the problem is that these individuals often feel attacked personally when resource issues are debated. Another problem is the difficulty of communication between those with sometimes generations of experiential and anecdotal information, who know by doing, and the legally or scientifically trained staff members of environmental organizations, who know by learning.

An even larger gap exists with **urban environmental issues**. The constituency has barely been mobilized. City dwellers are the majority of the population and have environmental concerns. Those concerns are difficult to address because of the interplay of issues and the number of interests affected.

Another ongoing weakness of the environmental movement is in **communication**. In recent years, the anti-environmental crowd has served up an intoxicating mix of flawed facts and myths. This has not been answered effectively. Fortunately, there is good news to report. For example, strong environmental standards are good for business. Germany has shown the way, where strict environmental standards are embraced and have forced innovation; in the US, by contrast, standards are being weakened and innovation lags.

The very **language** of the environmental movement creates problems. The word "environmentalist" carries unnecessary baggage. Until "the environment" includes where anyone lives, even urban dwellers, the term will continue to exclude the largest segments of the population and a disproportion of minorities. If the language can embrace the subject of human health, then the movement will begin to speak to all citizens.

### **Implementing and Paying for the Changes**

The environmental movement needs to change its **financial basis**. Up to now, faced with competition for the same dollar, the route to financial stability has been specialization in staff, project, and result. This reduced collaboration among the environmental groups. It also suppressed collaboration with community groups. In both cases, consensus based projects took a back seat. New funding mechanisms are essential. They might include profit-making subsidiaries or joint membership drives. Funders are well placed to encourage change in this sphere.

Yet there are dangers in change as well. Projects at the community level need wide support. A given neighborhood may be ready for an anti-littering campaign, but is not ready to embrace large scale recycling. The most effective vehicle for community work is the well-established **neighborhood organization**. These may not have environmental records, but that is less important than a history of effectiveness and trust. At its heart, any campaign must be working from the priorities defined by



constituents, not on goals imposed from above. So the role of external funders and state or regional organizations requires tremendous sensitivity when moving into communities.

All of these proposed changes require **implementation by strong leadership and staff**. The record so far is not encouraging. With seemingly endless numbers of new recruits for scarce staff positions, the organizations have had the luxury of burn 'em up/spit 'em out. Not even the leadership has been given opportunities for reinvigoration. In part, this has occurred because today's generation is the first one of environmental professionals. Much of the non-profit world, particularly its boards of directors, still looks on work for charities as a privilege, which the workers should subsidize. There is a lot to be learned from the private, corporate world on nurturing staff excellence.

If environmental organizations are to fulfill their potential as power devolves to the local levels, they need **new staff configurations**. Policy and legal training are overrepresented. The unmet need now is for resource economists, community organizers, and media specialists. Support for them requires new financial resources. Grassroots work is more labor intensive, and so more expensive, than policy design or litigation.

The future holds tremendous promise. Just as corporate America restructured to emerge from recession, the environmental **movement needs to reorganize** itself for a new era. The hallmarks of change will be in economics, consensual programs, education, work in the communities, and partnerships at all levels with business, other NGOs, and community groups.

A detailed list of suggestions for actions is in Part IV of this report.



### III. SUMMARIES OF THE SIX MEETINGS.

#### A. Consultation #1: Board Members

The thirteen board members trooped in with a lot of experience behind them and wearing a lot of hats. Most seemed to know each other. Some had been on the New England environmental scene for forty years; many were currently serving on two, three, or more boards. The facilitator went right after them. She presented a picture of the movement -- if there is a movement -- which was grim: lacking regional or national political leadership, tending to organize around easily identified catastrophes like the groundfish disaster, suffering erosion in membership, and reeling from an environmental debate translated solely into economic terms.

The most defiant response was the first one: "We should not join the debate on economics. We should continue to use litigation to focus attention. And we should not abandon the emotional appeal of issues that have been central to environmentalism since the nineteenth century."

But most of the other board members weren't so sure. "The political arena demands an economic basis. We must be able to switch among our arguments, from the emotional to the political -- and the political is often economic." At the same time, several feared that just taking part in a debate establishes an undesirable **connection between the environment and government**, "with all the baggage of anti-government feeling."

"There is no escaping our **image**, though. We are seen as elitist, distanced from the man on the street. Just look at the cluster of endangered species: always found in the highest concentrations of idle naturalists." Another said, "The whole environmental movement is seen as anti-economy, even though that is wrong as a matter of fact. We have got to involve more people." One way to do that is to include urban environment issues, which "builds media and public support, but maybe not finances."

"A big part of the New England movement's problem is the **national environmental groups**. They've taken more extreme positions than those of us in the region." "Yes, they've gotten way ahead of their members." "No, they haven't. It's just the opposite: they're much too soft and accommodating. They're part of the establishment now."

But does it matter anymore what Washington says, either in public interest or government? The energy is shifting **away from the national forum** to the local. "It's unlikely anything will come out of Washington for awhile." There was a lot of agreement on the need for local leadership to take over. The state and regional groups should recognize that credit for conservation success is best given to the **local**



**groups or local corporations;** that's the way to build for the future. And the best spokespeople for the movement -- heads nodding in agreement throughout the room -- are the resource users themselves, farmers, fishermen, sportsmen. Above all, no matter what the project, it will probably be resolved in a consensual fashion.

So the goals might be the same, but **the method is changing**, to cooperation and consensus. "Just the commitment to cooperate will change perspectives." That was acknowledged by a board member who also had years of staff experience. He praised grassroots work, especially where it could function with the specialized skills of statewide or regional groups. But he also warned of the inherent costs of collaboration: you need years of work in communities. "And funding doesn't work that way. The funding cycle is a year or two."

The facilitator brought up the **role of the board of directors**. There was some embarrassed acknowledgment of the struggle between pursuit of diversity in order to serve the mission and community and the pursuit of high net worth. No matter what role was taken, though, there appeared to be general agreement on board volunteerism. It was especially important when resources are tight. "They are excellent ambassadors for the movement, whether for funding or for government. They are compelling."

"**But what is the board's role?...to lead?...follow?**" One director thought the "board needs to fill several roles: professional class members who relate best to staff; activist members who are crucial to bring reality home; and wealthy members...well, you know why they're important." Through it all, there will be tension. "It's a good tension, board vs. staff, just as it is in the corporate world."

With all the variety of groups, even in a small region, there wasn't much expectation of a consistent **New England message**. Perhaps all environmental messages are local. Yet there remained a nagging sense that some regional message was important, so that national events, for whatever they might be worth in the coming years, could still be influenced from New England.

#### B. Consultation #2: Staff Members.

Nine organizations sent a total of eleven representatives to the staff members consultation. The facilitator started them off with a slow pitch: "Tell us about your **successes**." Though everyone knew it would lead to a later request for failures, the response was quick and enthusiastic.

"We have found the interest of local landowners exceeds our resources to help them." Similarly, some of the Northern Forest Study hearings had brought out



"tremendous participation by the public", more than had ever been seen in some rural areas. This was helped, unexpectedly, by "the subversive energy of children's interest in the environment", cheerfully haranguing their parents on the importance of recycling or not smoking.

One veteran of legislative battles reminded the group of the "small to medium size successes hidden in legislatures and regulatory bodies." Another spoke of victory even in defeat, where "a ballot question might lose, but still build overall public attention by moving the agenda forward."

Overall, the staff members' perceptions of success were diverse. There may even be some aspects of a regional environmental movement, as one of the several lawyers present suggested. But it exercises essentially no national leadership and it offers no consistent regional vision. What did exist, for sure, was a consistency of effort: the New England home team is made up of many organizations and their staffs who had worked together for years.

Inevitably, the facilitator asked for the **weaknesses** of the environmental movement. There were several broad strands in answering. **Communication**, in one form or another, concerned most of the staff. But the particulars varied. Some staff felt the message had to be as simple as possible; some, that economics held the key. Others said that there was too much emphasis on economics.

Regardless of the message's content, one fear was, "we focus too much on staff-to-staff work" and that the solutions we offer "point to malefactors, obstacles, or an enemy." The danger is twofold. First, the days of confrontation may be ending; second, attacks on resource users are "taken to heart as personal attacks" -- driving away the very people who, above all, must embrace the conservation message.

Several times, speakers bemoaned the resource users' lack of **self-identification** with the environmental movement. "Why don't the farmers and fishermen identify with us?" The most intriguing answer was a sociological one. "It is the clash of scientific knowledge with experiential and anecdotal knowledge", or between "those who know by doing and those who know by learning." The two had to cooperate, in a regulatory system that allows local people to take part in resource use decisions.

Yet the goal of local control introduces a conundrum which no one could resolve. If the residents of a timber rich township in Maine make the final decision on use of "their" resource, then private ownership "from away", however distasteful, loses its rights, as do fellow citizens at the state and national level. "In New England, many issues are based on the dichotomy that those who own the land are not those who use the land."



One suggestion was to make sure that the "the movement must be a **stakeholder** in local success, not the other way around where we try to convert local interest into our organizational success." For those of a more theoretical frame of mind, the key is a complete **redefinition of infrastructure**. "Make the primary infrastructure our natural environment and the secondary infrastructure the bridges, utilities, and concrete, and you will have a sensible priority for a sustainable environment." You will also create a measure of the true cost of unsustainable development.

A number of the staff members took an even broader perspective. They see the environmental movement as just one variety of nationwide **social movement**. In that sense, it experiences macro cycles and is a hostage to large influences. Campaign financing is one, where vast amounts of corporate money are distorting the electoral landscape. But in the midst of that, there are still great changes in environmental focus. One characterization of the change:

We are moving from a point source to a **non-point source pollution** approach. In the past, we focused on industry generated point source pollution and it was removed. We didn't have to change our life styles. But now, if we continue making the environment cleaner, we need everyone's involvement. Now, we need to change.

There are promising leads to follow. No one -- in a room full of staff people -- disagreed publicly that "**the best advocates are people who work with the resources** -- the farmer and fisherman are listened to" by the public and legislators. Which was not to say that the professionals didn't have a role. They are ideal for policy, research, and testimony. But as spokespeople, the professionals are considered a special interest.

### C. Consultation #3: Urban & Public Health Advocates/Specialists.

The fourteen urban and public health advocates/specialists offered many examples of the challenges they saw ahead. As a group, they are somewhat outside the environmental mainstream. And they were ready to criticize the movement.

"We need to combat alienation and cynicism about government, but also the mistrust of exaggerated environmental warnings." They see many flaws in the movement. One person said it "lacks local credibility"; another, "We take blame too readily for failed environmental solutions"; and a third saw "a perception that the environment is limited to the world removed from where people live."



There were suggestions for improvement. The one that came up several times was **language**. "Environmental language is not useful in an urban setting. It should describe health, everyone's highest priority." In embracing health, the environment "should be defined by where people live," not by "the measurement of air, soil, and water." "Environment has to be seen as the broader community. It takes a whole village to raise a child."

So the first step might be a redefinition of environment that includes urban life. That would begin to "create an effective platform for collective action." Yet those in the movement, including the funders, must listen closely to understand what can be done effectively. For example, litter is an environmental issue -- perhaps not the most profound, but an urban issue with great local impact. It can lead to concern for recycling. As the movement expands its scope to cities, understanding the special needs of urban areas will be essential.

New issues will bring opportunities for **new alliances**. "We need to organize with non-traditional partners." That requires an understanding of how neighborhoods work. They often depend on multi-purpose non-profits with local credibility. For example, community development corporations are non-traditional environmentalists, but bring together many different people. The best alliances are transforming. But "transformation is not a 12 month process; it doesn't fit a grant cycle." "Local organization building is a necessity."

The challenge to the funding community is great. One activist said, "Community needs must align with **funding priorities**" instead of the other way around. "Funding usually isn't available for a process without a known outcome." Nor do the community groups feel they have the ear of the funders; there is no long history of working together. The communities must identify their own needs, not have them identified by the foundations. The needs are often multi-dimensional. For example, prenatal care can be combined with lead paint education. But "it's hard to fund such a mixed position."

Combining tasks has pitfalls. "Collaboration is all the rage now, but it's not a panacea if it's driven by the funders." The danger is "one group gets the money and the other gets the work." Or the collaborative model is set up on "a 1:1 basis instead of a network where one expert teaches 10 CDCs at the same time -- very effective and very expensive."

The **funders** were given a list of what they could do:

- help get other support
- encourage and support diversity
- develop people with multiple capacities
- support skills at building collaborations
- help with disseminating information on networks.



The funders' role is crucial. They already see the needs. They have the means to change things for the better. But with that power, they must remain sensitive to the differences between the mainstream environmental movement and the urban/public health setting.

#### D. Consultation #4: Grassroots Activists

**We need access to the government agency processes and especially to the agencies' hearings. Ordinary people have everyday time commitments. We're not available Monday to Friday from 9 to 5. But that's when the hearings are scheduled.**

**Too many battles. How can we build bridges?**

As fifteen grassroots activists from Massachusetts and northern New England came into the conference room, you could feel the excitement. For one thing, these were people working in their own backyards, with little outside help, slight funding, few contacts to the foundation world -- and a chance to speak out. For another thing, the room was awfully small.

The facilitator started with a broadbrush question about the meaning of the New England environmental movement. It didn't fit the mood and she jokingly remarked, "Reaching for general consensus at a meeting like this is nonsense." That opened up a different way of answering: in personal anecdotes about individual successes, which illustrated either broad principles or useful tactics.

The stories came in all shapes and sizes. They were about malls, a local land trust, northern forests, transportation, incinerators, toxics. The locations changed, but the process was similar: a tiny cadre of volunteers, a small budget, and an ironclad determination to make a difference in a proposal or decision that the activists thought was wrong. The stories had themes in common.

Just taking part in the **process of environmental decision making** is harder than it looks. The operating hours of most public agencies are incompatible with the working person's schedule. If the agencies won't change their meetings, then they should provide funding for professional intervenors, lobbyists and lawyers to represent the citizens excluded from participation. It was hard, though, to imagine a state agency budget for citizen intervention costs.



Improvement in process was not just for regulators. The activists offered many areas to **increase their own effectiveness**. For example, more diverse staff representation in race, ethnicity, class, and gender all make for a stronger presence on an issue. Alliances are key to strengthening the movement, such as with small businesses. Small business is mythically linked with big business, yet the small are often threatened by the large. The most surprising suggestion for an alliance was from one activist who had gone nose-to-nose with anti-environmental forces. "No one supports federal 'takeover' of land. It's a common fear that can even bring together conservationists and anti-environmental types -- if the issue is structured right."

Another area for improvement was in use of **volunteers**. The group was worried about replacing the current generation of activists. At least the primary and secondary school children were getting the environmental message, judging by the suggestions kids were giving their parents. But the activists weren't so sure about those from 20 to 30 years old, who were conspicuous by their absence from the table.

**Scarce resources in money and personnel** were mentioned again and again. The difference could come down to a few hundred dollars, enough to pay a phone bill; or a thousand dollars to buy a computer; or more, to hire a lawyer to represent a small citizens coalition. These were amounts that typically wouldn't justify a foundation proposal under most guidelines. But grants of that size offered tremendous potential to leverage volunteer efforts.

The activists also hoped for **cooperation among groups**, at two levels. First, the different grassroots groups, to judge by the level of enthusiasm at the meeting, had a lot to offer each other. A grassroots computer network could stand on its own, but, better yet, should be coordinated through a regional clearing house for grassroots activity in New England. The network could provide e-mail, information exchange, and access to volunteer or hired specialists.

Second, the grassroots groups still need the state and regional environmental organizations for the technical expertise of scientists and lawyers, especially where a state policy needed change. A single community and citizens groups could object to an imposed transportation plan, but it takes a larger organization to tackle a statewide transportation policy. At the same time, the grassroots people saw how they provided a crucial base -- even if limited to one portion of one state -- for the bigger organization. No one had a simple answer, though, on political clout. How could the environmental movement make up for its failure to deliver votes?

#### E. Consultation #5: Former Public Officials

Of the six groups who met, the former public officials offered the most theoretical and most radical perspectives. Their service, in Massachusetts and Maine,



seems to have convinced many of them that profound changes are required -- particularly in thinking about the movement's role and how it might accomplish its goals.

From the start, they doubt the existence of an environmental movement, in the sense of unity and coordination. Instead, they see a collection of disparate groups with little strategic ability.

One factor forcing change is the apparent temporary success of anti-environmental forces. There are good suggestions for counter measures. For example, the power of ideas could help the environmental movement by holding up, as models, the ethic of stewardship and the strength of community action. These are just as viable in "the making of a nation" as are taming the frontier and the individual entrepreneur. The ideas must be "more creative than mere enforcement; we must work with other areas -- transportation, urban issues -- to provide broad leadership." "Cooperation is more important than making environmentalists more effective as advocates for the environment."

One participant claimed the "environmental movement is not about changing goals, but about changing means." That requires "decoupling environment from economics." The relationship of the environment to government is a ticklish issue. "Don't abandon government, but find a way to engage it creatively" was offered to support reforming, not abandoning, the Safe Drinking Water Act, especially finding a way to reduce unfunded mandates. But that view came up against an opposite opinion. "The movement needs to distance itself from government, especially policy setting, and move to grassroots and educational work." "There is vast antipathy to government, vast ignorance of the big picture, and anxiety about economics and local communities, especially where remotely owned corporations are downsizing."

The underlying **goals** of the "movement", even a very loose movement, were debated. Should the goals remain focused on classic environmental concerns? Or does a truly effective agenda require broader goals like sustainable communities? Can the movement extend itself to embrace social justice, which offers great opportunities for connecting with local people, but is an uncomfortable area for board and staff?

Even if goals were agreed, new **alliances** are needed. One participant said, "Industry has to lead the movement" because they are the entity with the most potential to combine environment and economy. Frequently dismissed as anti-environment, some businesses in fact have remarkably positive records. German industry offers a model where tough environmental standards have forced industrial innovation, which created profits. Yet this isn't a magic solution. Cooperation with industry requires "identifying the most likely early business 'adoptors', as not all are equally ready to participate." One possible industry ally is health care, a big presence



in New England. "Learn from the human services movement", especially in its cooperative ventures, urged one participant.

There are big **stumbling blocks** to change in the movement. Individual competition is ingrained in the American psyche. It will take generations to modify. The education system is oriented to work in tiny compartments, a barrier to understanding complex systems. Environmental organizations themselves are not configured correctly. They are designed for the adversarial past. Instead, new staff trained in other areas, like resource economics, would help balance legal and policy staffs. Media training would help in effective communication. The leadership could be retrained. The public officials also suggested changes in foundation behavior. Longer term goals, emphasis on education, and rewarding collaboration were all recommended.

#### F. Consultation #6: Directors

To judge by the warm greetings, it certainly looked like there was a New England environmental movement when eighteen directors of environmental organizations, from all six New England states, came into the meeting room. For the most part, they know each other well. So it was a good group to take the facilitator's opening question: what **lessons did the November 1994 national election** hold for the movement?

The most optimistic reply was that fiscal conservatism offered a way to avoid massive, costly, destructive projects. But was the election a rejection of environmentalism? "No, it was a **rejection of authority** from the top down." "It institutionalized the shift of powers to the states." As a result, "Environmental progress will increasingly come from local actions, developed at the community level."

To **respond** to the change, one director recommended a strategy of limiting the number of issues and choosing fights carefully, but being willing to take some losses. A more theoretical suggestion was to "treat the movement as a political movement, not a policy making exercise." "Let's think how we can marshal environmental strength politically...like the NRA or AARP." A more technical recommendation was to use "different theories of analysis, like comparative risk rather than cost/benefit."

Several directors mentioned the importance of **language and message**. The environment and jobs need to be linked intelligibly and positively. And the movement simply must reach more people. Existing language rarely embraces the grassroots in rural areas and hardly ever urban constituencies. To gain support, the



movement's goals should be interpreted through "most citizens' chief concerns: health and safety, their children's future, and participation in the political process."

The role of **marketing and the press** drew mixed opinions. One director was dismissive, joking that the "best thing about freedom of the press is owning one." Others were more concerned, saying that the movement had to "expand from preaching to the converted." At the same time, at least some organizations are responding to a new assertiveness of the members, who want benefits available locally in return for contributions. The question we are getting is, "What can we do for the members versus what can our members do for us?"

Many of the directors, acknowledging the shift away from the national/policy-driven to the local/specific, wondered when **foundation funding** would follow suit. National funders still seemed focused on policy in Washington; local funders supported policy at the state level.

One director warned that a shift to local emphasis could be costly if it required sharing credit for the results. Individual contributions could be affected. Equally alarming was the prospect of a grassroots movement -- or many local movements throughout the region -- out of control. To support action at the local level could require years of building institutional strength, but with **few guarantees of results**. Local groups are volatile. This was in contrast to the security of dealing with established organizations.

The existing environmental movement could use some **personal renewal**. Many of the directors had years of experience, but never an opportunity to step back, think, and write. A retreat or sabbatical program could yield a lot of good material to benefit the region.

The question of financial **competition** among groups was an awkward one. Several of the directors wondered if the shift in emphasis from Washington to the states meant that foundation grants would be similarly redirected. But there was an unstated fear. Grassroots activism was desirable. But it meant more groups pursuing the same dollars. How would the established organizations maintain their funding, even expand it to meet new concerns, when they were to give up credit for action to local groups? New funding sources seemed few. Corporations seemed the best bet, but that would require a less adversarial approach to many issues.

In the end, the environmental organizations' directors certainly said that business should not go on "as usual." In that awareness, one could hope that the necessary adjustments will be made.



#### IV. SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION.

The following suggestions by and for the New England environmental movement came out of the six meetings.

##### A. The New Era.

- 1 Recognize that health and job security are essential elements in environmental policy choices.
- 2 Be wary of too much reliance on regulatory solutions and top-down, centralized approaches, especially where a cost is imposed on those who are regulated (the "unfunded mandate").
- 3 Counter the anti-environmental facts and myths. The strength of community cooperation and the ethic of stewardship are more appropriate to the present era than taming the frontier and an unbridled entrepreneurial spirit.

##### B. Working in the Communities.

- 4 Work to promote local leadership. Where a coalition exists, give the credit to the local individuals/organizations/corporations, as this builds a constituency for the future.
- 5 Use combined and cross disciplinary projects, e.g., teach prenatal care and lead paint hazards at the same time.
- 6 Create a regional grassroots computer network and a regional clearing house for grassroots activists, providing e-mail, exchange of information, and access to volunteer or hired specialists.
- 7 Pursue diversity in board and staff, as well as in selecting target communities.

##### C. Communications/media.

- 8 Provide media training to environmental staff.
- 9 Pay attention to language. Make it inclusive.
- 10 Prefer as spokespeople volunteer board members and especially people who work with the resources at stake. They are the most compelling advocates.
- 11 Expand the environmental message to include the urban environment and related health issues.



- 12 Bring people under age 30 into the movement to replace the older generations of activists and staff.
- 13 Learn from other directed publications like "High Country News."

#### D. Staffing and leadership.

- 14 Encourage volunteerism.
- 15 Take advantage of the pockets of environmentally committed people who are always scattered in every public bureaucracy.
- 16 Examine current leadership's ability to function effectively: retrain or replace as appropriate. Use a sabbatical system to recharge leaders' energy.
- 17 Add new skills to complement policy and legal staff: resource economists, community development specialists, media experts.

#### E. Alliances.

- 18 Seek to cooperate with the group with the greatest potential to help realize conservation goals: industry, especially powerful multinational corporations. They will be more receptive than most people expect.
- 19 Resist the temptation to walk away from government. Work with government in a mature and creative way, e.g., to modify the excessive unfunded mandates of a Safe Drinking Water Act, rather than abandoning an essentially good law.

#### F. Funders.

- 20 Listen to, rather than define, the movement's needs, especially with newer environmental elements like urban health.
- 21 Exercise great care in encouraging organizational collaborations, to be sure that they are not grant driven.
- 22 Where collaborations are begun, assess whether funds and workloads are equitably distributed. Do not penalize organizations which undertake collaborations by replacing separate grants with joint grants.
- 23 Undertake urban programs that combine environment with health issues. Fund portions of staff time, so that project personnel can undertake combined programs.

- 24 Consider general support grants, grants longer than three years, and grants with broad goals such as grassroots organizing, rather than more limited goals.
- 25 Be skeptical of creating new non-profits if existing ones can accomplish the job at lower administrative cost. Similarly, examine whether national organizations need New England offices.
- 26 Consider the desirability of shifting funding from Washington to the regions and states.
- 27 Use the leverage of very small grants to grassroots groups, e.g., to buy equipment, cover printing costs, or pay for a lawyer to represent a group of volunteers.
- 28 Find ways to provide grassroots organizations with financial support, technical assistance, and professional resources.
- 29 Offer a 3-day workshop to grassroots organizers on strategic planning, working cooperatively, and building institutional capacity. Provide room and board. Don't charge tuition.
- 30 Think long range: 5, 10, and 20 year horizons.



## Table of Appendices

### 1. Attendees

- A. Board Members
- B. Staff Members
- C. Urban and Public Health Advocates/Specialists
- D. Grassroots Activists
- E. Former Public Officials
- F. Directors

### 2. Notes on the meeting format

### 3. Sponsors and rapporteur



APPENDIX 1

The following pages contain attendance lists for each of the six meetings.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTATIONS  
Board Members Meeting

Participants:

Joan Abrams  
Save the Bay (Rhode Island)

William Constable  
1000 Friends of Massachusetts

Peter B. Cooper  
Connecticut Fund for the Environment

R. Montgomery Fischer  
Vermont Natural Resources Council, ex-officio

Horace A. Hildreth, Jr.  
Conservation Law Foundation (New England region) and Island Institute (Maine)

Don Perkins  
Friends of Casco Bay (Maine)

Susan Peterson  
Buzzards Bay Coalition and Plymouth Wildlands Trust (Massachusetts)

Samuel F. Pryor, III  
Appalachian Mountain Club (New England region)

Peter Quesada  
Maine Coast Heritage Trust

Steve Saltonstall  
Green Mountain Forest Watch (Vermont)

Peter Stein  
Appalachian Mountain Club (New England region)

Greg Watson  
Ocean Arks and Boston Urban Gardeners (Massachusetts)

George Wislocki  
Environmental League of Massachusetts



**Facilitator:** Melissa Middleton Stone  
Boston University School of Management

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTATIONS  
Staff Members Meeting

Participants:

Steve Blackmer, Director of Conservation Programs  
Appalachian Mountain Club (New England region)

Walter Graff, Director of Education, Conservation Programs  
Appalachian Mountain Club (New England region)

Stephen Holmes, Deputy Director for Policy  
Vermont Natural Resources Council

Will Hopkins  
Sustainable Cobscook Community Alliance (Maine)

Ronald A. Kreisman, General Counsel  
Natural Resources Council of Maine

Lewis Milford, Esq., Senior Attorney  
Conservation Law Foundation (New England region)

Sandra Neily, Outreach Coordinator, Northern Forest Project  
Maine Audubon Society

Richard Ober, Communications Director  
Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests

Caroline M. Pryor, Vice President  
Maine Coast Heritage Trust

Rob Sargent, Legislative Director  
MASSPIRG (Massachusetts)

Brendan Whittaker, North Woods Project Director  
Vermont Natural Resources Council

Facilitator: Catherine Porter, Executive Director  
Consultative Group on Biological Diversity



**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTATIONS**  
**Urban and Public Health Advocates/Specialists**

**Participants:**

**Terry Backer, Executive Director**  
**Long Island Soundkeeper Fund**

**Valerie Burns, Executive Director**  
**Boston Natural Areas Fund**

**Cynthia Ward, Executive Director**  
**Commonwealth Institute**

**Richard W. Clapp, Director**  
**JSI Center for Environmental Health Studies**

**Peter Forbes, New England Regional Director**  
**Trust for Public Land**

**Joseph Kriesberg, Assistant Director**  
**Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations**

**Lee Ketelsen, Massachusetts Director**  
**Clean Water Fund**

**H. Patricia Hynes, Research Associate**  
**Boston University School of Public Health**

**James Hoyte**  
**Environmental Diversity Forum**

**Shannah Kurland, Executive Director**  
**Direct Action for Rights and Equality**

**Gretchen Latowsky**  
**JSI Center for Environmental Health Studies**

**Amy Perry, Director of Solid Waste Program**  
**MASSPIRG**

**Stephanie Pollack, Senior Attorney**  
**Conservation Law Foundation**

Russ Lopez, Executive Director  
Environmental Diversity Forum

Facilitator: Robert Hollister, Director  
Lincoln Filene Center, Tufts University



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTATIONS  
Grassroots Activists Meeting

Participants:

Barbara and Richard Alexander  
Craftsbury Common, Vermont

Steven Bradish  
Williston, Vermont

Chris Coombs  
Arrowsic, Maine

Bob Cummings  
Bath, Maine

John Glowa  
Augusta, Maine

Cathy Hinds  
Sabattus, Maine

Lowell Krasner  
Burlington, Vermont

Larry Lack  
Machias, Maine

Bob Loring  
South Weymouth, Massachusetts

Irwin Marks  
Acushnet, Massachusetts

Peggy McLaughlin  
Dover, New Hampshire

Ben Ptashnik  
Norwich, Vermont

Linda Segal  
Wayland, Massachusetts

Bob Tarasuk  
Sandisfield, Massachusetts

John Tuthill  
Lempster, New Hampshire

Facilitator: Catherine Porter, Executive Director  
Consultative Group on Biological Diversity



**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTATIONS  
Former Public Officials Meeting**

**Participants:**

**Cathy Abbott, former Deputy Commissioner for Resource Conservation  
Department of Environmental Management, Massachusetts**

**Hon. Tom Andrews, former Member  
US House of Representatives (D-ME)**

**Dick Barringer, former Commissioner of Conservation and Director of State Planning  
Maine**

**Harvey Carter, former State Senator  
Vermont**

**Tony Cortese, former Commissioner  
Department of Environmental Quality Engineering, Massachusetts**

**Paula W. Gold, former Commissioner  
Office of Consumer Affairs, Massachusetts**

**Daniel Greenbaum, former Commissioner  
Department of Environmental Protection, Massachusetts**

**Paul Levy, former Commissioner  
Department of Public Utilities, Massachusetts Water Resources Authority**

**Evelyn Murphy, former Secretary  
Office of Environmental Affairs, Massachusetts**

**Peter Nessen, former Secretary  
Office of Administration and Finance, Massachusetts**

**Facilitator:     George T. Shaw, Trustee  
                      Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust**

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTATIONS  
Directors Meeting

Participants:

John M. Byrne, Executive Director  
River Watch Network (Vermont)

Everett B. Carson, Executive Director  
Natural Resources Council of Maine

Philip W. Conkling, Executive Director  
Island Institute (Maine)

Jane A. Difley, Executive Director  
Vermont Natural Resources Council

James J. Espy, President  
Maine Coast Heritage Trust

Andrew J. Falender, Executive Director  
Appalachian Mountain Club (New England region)

Douglas I. Foy, Executive Director  
Conservation Law Foundation (New England region)

James R. Gomes, President  
Environmental League of Massachusetts

Ralph H. Goodno, President  
Merrimack River Watershed Council (Massachusetts)

H. Dickinson Henry, Executive Director  
Audubon Society of New Hampshire

Marion McConnell, Executive Director  
Coalition for Buzzards Bay (Massachusetts)

Larry Morris, President  
Quebec Labrador Foundation (Massachusetts)

Susan L. Nickerson, Executive Director  
Association for the Preservation of Cape Cod (Massachusetts)



George Smith, Executive Director  
Sportsmen's Alliance of Maine

Curt Spaulding, Executive Director  
Save the Bay (Rhode Island)

Donald S. Strait, Executive Director  
Connecticut Fund for the Environment

Mathew Jacobson, Executive Director  
Green Mountain Forest Watch (Vermont)

Thomas Urquhart, Executive Director  
Maine Audubon Society

Facilitator: Theodore M. Smith, Executive Director  
Henry P. Kendall Foundation

## APPENDIX 2

### Notes on the Meeting Format

The sponsors of New England's Environmental Futures sought to make the six meetings as effective as possible. Meetings, to a great degree, stand or fall on the personal dynamics among the participants. Nevertheless, the following logistical considerations might prove useful to subsequent conveners.

1. Invitations. Invitations were sent between four and eight weeks before the scheduled event. Four weeks proved too short a notice for a few invitees. Yet favorable responses ran close to 100%, which should come as no surprise. The single most critical decision to the process was the invitation list.

2. Timing. Two hours may have been slightly, but only slightly, too short. Two and one half hours with a brief intermission might have worked better for three reasons, all to do with the break. First, it refreshes all participants. Second, it provides a natural shift from analysis to synthesis. Third, it allows the facilitator to refocus the discussion, if needed, without loss of face to active discussants.

3. Location. Regional transportation hubs are convenient, if somewhat resented by rural participants.

4. Facilities. A large enough table to accommodate all participants is essential. A large, corporate-style board room works well physically, though it appeared to intimidate some of the participants. A large format note pad on an easel was favored by some facilitators, though it did not make a noticeable difference in the quality of discussion. Helpful identification tools: attendance lists, name tags, and place cards with the name on both sides, visible from either side.

5. Presence of sponsors. It would seem obvious that, as to the funder-sponsors, the less obtrusive visually and orally, the better. If they are present as observers, they are best located either away from the table or all at one end, to make it difficult to direct discussion at them. When sponsors spoke up, it tended to draw more attention than was desirable, as the participants, quite naturally, were searching for clues on how to couch future requests for funding. The exceptions to this were the opening and closing remarks, which appropriately and usefully came from the sponsors.



Two alternatives existed. The sponsors could have absented themselves, thereby losing contextual information, though gaining substantially in the candor of the remarks. Or the sponsors could have chosen to join the debate fully, which would have altered the discussion dynamic.

There were obvious group characteristics. Generally speaking, the more corporate or formal the outlook or style of any given participant, the more she tended to answer precisely the question put. Grassroots activists tended to tell their own story. Former public officials tended to make brief, polished speeches, while organizational staff members sounded as though they were giving testimony at a hearing. Nearly all of the participants had their responses constrained by an audience that included not only their competition, but some of their prospective funders.

6. Hospitality. As all the sessions began at 10:00 a.m., hot drinks and breakfast snacks were generally appreciated, particularly by those who had traveled great distances. The informal, buffet style, sandwich lunch following each session was, on the whole, successful. Attendance was high, but not consistently so. Participants with the greatest stake in the proceedings, e.g., all staff and grassroots representatives, stayed to the end and used the opportunity to lobby the sponsors. In contrast, only some board members and very few former public officials remained for the lunch.

7. Size. A total of six, weekly sessions kept the process to a reasonable amount of time, so that the written report did not occur too long after the meetings. As to the size of each session, smaller was better. The CEO meeting was painfully large, 18 participants, and drew private criticism for that fact. The hard political choices were not made to reduce the size of that meeting.

8. Facilitator. All the participants, conscious of the audience, tended to listen very carefully to the questions put by the facilitators. As a result, the facilitator's role was critical in beginning, though not as much in continuing, the discussion.

9. Written products. The sponsors contracted for a written report of the proceedings that synthesized, rather than minuted, the discussions. For this purpose, they obtained a rapporteur who had some professional acquaintance with the issues at hand. He was required to attend all the sessions and to make notes unobtrusively, by hand rather than laptop computer, and without attribution. Part way through the sessions, the sponsors asked the rapporteur to prepare a brief summary of the main points of each session, circulated before the next meeting. These provided a useful recap of the prior discussions.

## APPENDIX 3

### SPONSORS

1. Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust  
c/o Grants Management Associates, Inc.  
230 Congress St.  
Boston, MA 02110  
tel. (617) 426-7172  
George T. Shaw, Trustee  
Ann Fowler Wallace, Administrator
2. Island Foundation  
589 Mill St.  
Marion, MA 02738  
tel. (508) 748-2809  
Jenny D. Russell, Executive Director
3. Henry P. Kendall Foundation  
175 Federal St.  
Boston, MA 02110  
tel. (617) 951-2525  
Theodore M. Smith, Executive Director  
Gary M. Tabor, Associate Director
4. The John Merck Fund  
11 Beacon St., Suite 1230  
Boston, MA 02108  
tel. (617) 723-2932  
Francis W. Hatch, Chairman  
Ruth Hennig, Administrator

### RAPPORTEUR

Kenneth T. Hoffman  
Consultant in Fundraising & Grantmaking  
294 Washington St., Suite 410  
Boston, MA 02108-4608  
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