

Spotlight on ILA Members

ILA Members are doing amazing leadership work around the world, from starting new degree programs to nurturing young people who make a difference, from running innovative workshops and seminars to fostering organizational change.

Spotlight on Kinship Conservation Fellows:

Leading to Innovative Solutions Bellingham, Washington—June 22-July 23, 2010

By Sarah Knobloch, Program Associate, Kinship Conservation Fellows

The Program

Kinship Conservation Fellows is a month-long professional development program that brings 18 mid-career conservation practitioners together to inspire change. Through focused seminars with elite faculty, collaborative peer working groups, and visits into the field, Fellows gain the innovative tools that are critical to their work. Kinship's mission is to develop a community of leaders dedicated to applying market-based principles to environmental issues. We believe that by investing in individuals with a month of paid training, our program can positively shape the greater conservation community.

Since our inception in 2001, we have hosted 139 Fellows from 33 countries and 6 continents. From sustainable forest management to tribal conflicts with wildlife to social enterprise projects, each Fellow works in the vast overlap between human communities and the environments they impact. During their month at Kinship, Fellows look beyond their technical and scientific capacities to discover the economic

and business contexts influencing the effectiveness of their work. Understanding these broader contexts empowers Fellows to achieve conservation goals in a more meaningful and lasting way; one in which exercising leadership is critical.

“Market-based environmental change isn't for the faint of heart,” said Karen Lehman, an experienced leadership consultant and practitioner who held workshops with Kinship Fellows in 2007 and 2009. “It requires changing systems that in many cases have already survived many earlier attempts. To exercise leadership and achieve the changes they desire, Kinship Fellows will need a set of concepts and tools that go far beyond



Karen Lehman with Fellows in an Adaptive Leadership Consulting Session

personality or trait-based approaches.” For the past three years, Kinship Fellows participated in weekend workshops with consultants from Cambridge Leadership Associates, including Karen Lehman, to learn the methodology of Adaptive Leadership as part of the month-long Kinship curriculum. We find that the Adaptive Leadership framework, developed by Ron Heifetz and Marty Lin-

sky at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, is well-suited to the challenges Fellows undergo. The framework guides Fellows to accept and welcome the interlocking complexity of conflict and change.



Field visit to Cascadian Farms Home Farm

One Fellow's Adaptive Experience

With a background in conservation management augmented by experience in the private equity and business communities, Kinship Fellow Scott Gillilan arrived in Bellingham for the 2009 program as an established leader in his field. Scott's work during the program centered on creating a conservation trust to protect a biosphere for the yellow tail bird species on land owned by the Crow Native American tribe. Scott is charismatic and confident, a self-described skilled speaker and natural networker. As a practitioner already successfully engaging communities to create positive results, what could Adaptive Leadership teach him?

As it turns out, Scott had much more to learn than he had antici-

pated. As the framework puts forward, leadership can come from anywhere—person, situation, time, or purpose. It is risky and Scott learned the full scope of risk involved in his project.

For Scott's unique biosphere proposal, exercising Adaptive Leadership brought awareness of the motivations of many more stakeholders into his planning. Being adaptive requires remaining informed and aware of stakeholders and maintaining an ability to explore unexplored or unorthodox solutions to challenges. Though conservationists rarely assume that their tasks will be easy, most rely upon their character strengths to prevail over obstacles. Experience with Adaptive Leadership turns that reliance on its head, by requiring practitioners to anticipate and interpret pushback to change as a necessary component, and not simply an unfortunate byproduct, of leading. As Scott describes, "In a one-on-one meeting with Karen, we discussed the implications of "failing" – could I walk away from the project if the writing was on the wall suggesting such and still feel like the effort and vision was worthwhile? The answer to that was yes, I could." Adaptive leaders must be able to admit when they are wrong, recognize existing opportunities from unlikely sources, and maintain an awareness of their larger stakeholder environment. For the yellow tail biosphere project, this understanding strengthened Scott Gillilan's professional capacities and allowed him to pursue unanticipated directions, adding significantly to his leadership skills and professional capacities. Although the timeline has changed, "the vision still remains," Gillilan concluded.

Going Forward

Kinship has decided to amplify its

commitment to the framework of Adaptive Leadership and is bringing Karen Lehman to live as a resident faculty member during the 2010 program in Bellingham. "Kinship's commitment to developing a strong foundation in Adaptive Leadership will serve them well," said Lehman. "This framework will help Fellows develop the skill to diagnose what is happening in the system they seek to change, manage the disequilibrium their efforts will produce, and lead diverse stakeholders through the necessary process of learning what environmental challenges require. Our commitment is to help Fellows build the capacity to lead significant change for decades to come, not to pour their hearts into something they care passionately about, only to burn out or be marginalized in a couple of years, and thus, ultimately, to be lost to the field."

We look forward to welcoming the 2010 Kinship Fellows cohort this summer. Composed of 18 individuals from 11 countries and 5 continents, each 2010 Kinship Fellow will bring a distinct perspective to Bellingham, as well as a unique leadership challenge. We are confident that Adaptive Leadership will continue to aid them in interpreting and confronting these challenges.

2010 Program

- Month-long program in the Pacific Northwest
- Core instruction in market-based strategies
- Leadership, business, and economic tools
- Hands-on project development
- Renowned international faculty
- Connection to global Fellows network
- \$6,000 stipend, lodging and meals

Kinship Conservation Fellows

Mission: To develop a community of leaders dedicated to applying market-based principles to environmental issues.

Vision: Kinship Conservation Fellows will continue to grow as a world-class conservation leadership program. It will provide practical, hands-on instruction in market-based approaches and business principles to select groups of high potential individuals who seek to hone their leadership abilities.

We envision that Kinship will appeal to mid-career practitioners, who are open to new ideas, who seek real tools to enhance their efforts to implement workable solutions to environmental problems, and who have demonstrated a commitment to the field. We further envision that, as Kinship develops, it will be known for its thriving network of conservationist leaders.

ILA members, Get Involved!

Spread the word about Kinship Fellows among your local conservation communities.

Visit the website at www.kinshipfellows.org to learn more about the work of Fellows around the world and how market tools are changing conservation!