

Landscape Stewardship Conversation Starter Kit



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1. Reframe the conversation about stewardship

We want to:

- Inspire people to think more holistically about what landscape stewardship entails
- Engage people in the work of landscape stewardship in ways that are meaningful to them
- Generate the political will and funding to sufficiently support landscape stewardship for years to come

We want to stop:

- Saying that stewardship isn't sexy.
- Saying that fundraising for land stewardship is impossible or hard.
- Comparing stewardship to protection or acquisition. That frame always puts stewardship in a secondary, less compelling position.
- Thinking that stewardship only happens on public lands. It happens on private and public lands, rural and urban lands.

Talk about the Values of Landscape Stewardship

Weave into the conversation the values that the California Landscape Stewardship Network has identified as important to landscape stewardship.

Interconnectivity

Recognizing that human wellbeing and ecological health are intertwined, we work across geographical, jurisdictional, and social lines to holistically and collaboratively secure thriving and resilient ecosystems.

Inclusivity

By encouraging diverse perspectives on common challenges, we strive to empower stakeholders from all backgrounds to actively engage in the movement and derive a shared sense of hope and belonging. Every human can be a steward.

Empathy

Through deep listening, we seek to understand the complex historical and emotional connections that bind individuals and communities with their environments—and offer ways to care for these places.

Adaptability

Given the rapid rate of change across natural and human systems, we value flexibility and agility to respond to our ever-evolving understanding of land management and community needs.

Creativity

Embracing inspired problem-solving and innovative ways of thinking, we overcome institutional barriers, deepen our partnerships, reimagine our roles, and explore cutting-edge technologies and paradigms.

Efficacy

While respecting and building on the efforts of those who came before us, we focus a keen eye on the future by crafting solutions that are smart, cost-effective, and sustainable for generations to come.

Talk about the Impacts of Landscape Stewardship

Talk about the many tangible, beneficial impacts of landscape stewardship. You can use these or share your own.

Impacts	Examples	Research and data to support
Ecological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration, rehabilitation, and creation of habitats • Increased biodiversity and expanded species distribution/range • Decreased air and water pollution • Improved water quality & quantity • Increased carbon sequestration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data on restoration project numbers, types, impacts, etc. • Monitoring data and reporting • Data on biodiversity: before and after • Data on water and air quality • Improvements to natural infrastructure • Data on litter, trash, dumping reduction, etc.
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased amount of conflict between neighbors or traditional adversaries • Personal transformations • Creation of a deeper connection to nature • Increasing science and environmental understanding • Build self-confidence, trust and gratitude • Increased civic engagement • Increased sense of purpose and of service • Increased opportunities for outdoor education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research on health benefits of time spent in nature • Research on health benefits of connecting with other people and being in community • Research on importance of a sense of purpose on mental and physical health • Research on the value of outdoor education on youth • Case studies and research of stewardship work as a “unifier” in building coalitions & partnerships
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased use of Traditional Ecological Knowledge • Increased involvement of indigenous people, practices and ceremonies • Creating rituals and traditions • Increased participation in advocacy as a result of stewardship activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data on connection between volunteering and increased advocacy & civic engagement • Mental health benefits of having a sense of purpose • Data on value and impact of cultural rituals and traditions • Research on children spending time in nature and school performance, overall health
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased flooding risks to infrastructure • Increased water quality & quantity • Professional & career development and workforce development • All the economic benefits and value of land and the ecosystem services • Collaborative leveraging of funding through grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports on economic value and benefits of nature (see East Bay Regional Park District, Trust for Public Land, Santa Clara Open Space Authority, National Park Service) • Data on employee morale after volunteer days • Cost savings of natural infrastructure versus cleanup of floods and other natural disasters
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing the ways things were inherently done • Collaboration between organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research on collective impact model and importance of collaboration

Talk about the 21st Century Approach to Stewardship

Talk about the new way we are thinking about landscape stewardship.

Before we thought _____. Now we know _____.

We need to reconsider older models of conservation in order to deal with the threats and challenges we now face. For example, before some conservationists thought that protecting land from development was the end goal. Now we know that protecting the land from development is only one step.

All lands need to be taken care of.

Urban parks, ranches, forests, public parks, and private property all need to be taken care, and are currently being stewarded by many people across the state. Stewardship happens on public and private lands, urban pocket parks and large rangelands. It happens everywhere.

Inaction comes with significant risks.

The time is now. Global warming and all of the impacts of it require that we take action now. We cannot wait until we have more information. We cannot depend on historical models to predict the future.

Stewardship is inherently inclusive.

Everyone — regardless of their socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities, citizen status, gender identity, and other identities – can participate in stewardship. Stewardship can be picking up trash, advocating for policies, pulling weeds, monitoring a creek for bats, planting trees, carbon ranching, and so much more. While purchasing a property and making it a park, for example, is done by a limited number of people, rolling up the sleeves and taking care of the land can be done by everyone. When we think expansively about what stewardship includes, it is much more inclusive than exclusive.

Collaboration is key.

Property and organizational boundaries often define how we care for our land, air, and water. However, the needs of the people, animals, and plants that depend upon those resources often do not fall within those same lines. Moreover, our largest and most pressing collective challenges—such as climate change, the need for clean air and water, and rapidly changing population and economic dynamics—are happening at a scale and a pace that demand that we use our collective resources to meet and exceed them.

Protection, acquisition, and stewardship.

Purchasing land to ensure it does not get converted to a shopping mall is one way to steward the land. It is an act of taking care of the land. We need to stop talking about them as separate, sequential activities. We also need to stop associating stewardship with “protecting” the land. Land does not need to be “protected” to be stewarded, e.g., privately owned ranches, forests, farms, etc.

2. Start a New Conversation

Start with a Question

Start by learning about your audience. Your audience's answer will tell you a lot about what they care about. For example:

- Where is your favorite place to explore nature?
- What are your memories of playing outside as a child?
- When you think about caring for land, how does the word “stewardship” make you feel?
- What excites you about being out on the land?

Listening Points

Instead of talking points, let's start with listening points. How can we be better listeners? Let's seek to understand. Consider the following:

- What are your reactions to what you heard?
- What stood out or surprised you?
- What points of connection or commonality did you hear?
- What did you hear that challenges your assumptions about this person?

Tell a Story

Share a story about your connection to landscape stewardship. In addition to what you now know of your audience, the following questions can guide which story you tell, and how you tell it.

- What is a successful stewardship story that inspires you? How was it successful?
- Was there a problem you were trying to address, or an opportunity that you were seizing? What was it? What information did you have that exemplified the problem?
- What did you do? What stewardship activities did you undertake?
- Who was involved? Who were the cast of characters and what roles did they play?
- What were the outcomes or outputs? How did you know that something changed?
- When did you witness a personal transformation – your own or someone else's – because of participating in a stewardship activity?
- What impact, if any, did the effort described in this story have on the larger community and economy?

Call to Action

Close the conversation with a call to action. How can the person you are talking to get involved and support landscape stewardship? Some ideas are:

- Will you join us at an event, volunteer day, or tour of the landscape?
- Will you support our work with a financial contribution?
- Will you support [insert bill or policy]?
- How can we work together?

3. Resources for Stories about Stewardship

Some examples of stewardship stories that weave together these components can be found at the following links:

The Bay Nature magazine, baynature.org

One Tam, onetam.org

Santa Cruz Mountain Stewardship Network, openspacetrust.org/blog/climate-change/

Do you have an example of an inspiring story that we should consider for the next version of this Starter Kit?

Please share it here: bit.ly/stewconkit

We want to hear from you

This Conversation Starter Kit is part of an effort by the California Landscape Stewardship Network to change the conversation about land stewardship. And it is a work in progress. This is a draft! We want to hear from you about how you have used it and how it can be more effective. Please complete this form: bit.ly/stewconkit

Thank you for your work to take care of the land.

California Landscape Stewardship Network

landscapeconservation.org/california-landscape-stewardship-network

Sharon Farrell sfarrell@parksconservancy.org

Annie Burke annie@anniesburke.com