Smart Prosperity Institute

uOttawa
Institut de l'environnement
Institute of the Environment

Economics and Environmental Policy Research Network

Research Symposium

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Session Notes for Panel I: Species at Risk and Market Based Instrument Applications on Public Lands

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1. Context of Discussion

This session sought to explore how we can enable the use of economic instruments to support conservation and species at risk efforts on public and Indigenous lands.

Key themes discussed in the session include:

- More than a decade of the existence of the Species at Risk Act (SARA) in Canada has provided a number of insights. SARA appears to result in a lot of time being spent identifying species, but not necessarily enough time spent actually protecting them. The lack of a "take" permit has proven problematic for certain stakeholder groups including Indigenous people and fishermen. Furthermore, knowing that once identified, critical habitat faces many restrictions in terms of activities conducted on it, means that SARA can spur pre-emptive action.
- Conservation on Indigenous lands is particularly difficult as the policy processes described in SARA do not necessarily take into account factors like consultation commitments and Indigenous knowledge.
- SARA provides the framework for both incentives encouraging certain desirable behaviours and penalties discouraging others. It is unclear to what extent we have the balance of these right and where we should be doing more.
- The federal bureaucracy is typically good at achieving what they are told to do. This means that it is crucial for conservation efforts at the federal level to be informed by clear, well-defined and appropriate objectives and goals. E.g. What is the stated purpose of the Fisheries Act?
- Further to the previous point, there is a need to improve our ability to measure success in this area. How well are we doing in our conservation efforts and how have these outcomes varied over time? This question of evaluation is severely hampered by the lack of publicly available data in Canada. This in turn has major implications for research and policy development.
- Furthermore, there are gaps between the individual fields of research related to conservation and biodiversity. For instance, research on climate change does not necessarily relate well to research on the management of forests as natural capital. These kinds of conversations held in silos would benefit from a greater degree of integration and would become more relevant to policy as a result.
- Underlying a discussion of biodiversity and conservation, there are many questions of equal access right to nature and environmental justice. A discussion of market based instruments for conservation cannot be separated from questions of who gets priced out of the market, the links

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between usage and damage, and the encouragement of participation and broad-based concern for nature.

- Finally, there was much emphasis in the discussion on a learning by doing approach through carefully selected pilot projects.

2. Research Questions Identified

- Knowing that once identified, critical habitat faces many restrictions in terms of activities conducted on it and can therefore spur pre-emptive action, **what changes are needed to the SARA permitting process if we want people to incentivize people to identify critical habitats?**

- **How can we support private companies to sell ecosystem services on public land?**

- **How can SARA better incorporate factors relating to Indigenous peoples, including the integration of Indigenous knowledge, use of traditional knowledge indicators and the need for consultation and consent?**

- **What do Indigenous-led conservation initiatives (SARA etc.) look like and how can others learn from them?**

- **How does a conservation-focused research agenda line up with Reconciliation goals in Canada?**

- **How could we measure the effectiveness of our conservation efforts and how these outcomes have varied over time? What data would be needed for this?**

- **When it comes to market based instruments for conservation, should SARA be the incentive for using such instruments? How do we effectively integrate incentive programs and punishments? What are the impacts/successes in designing programs around the globe as more incentive or punishment based?** E.g. comparing approaches taken in US, EU and Australia.

- **When it comes to market based instruments for conservation, how do we design instruments in such a way that the goal is not just survival of a species or habitat, but their flourishing?**

- **When it comes to property rights, how conflicting are legislations on allocating these rights? To what extent are they merit based?**

- **How do you estimate "true" opportunity costs and willingness to accept?** Should it be done on a case by case basis? Through reverse auction? Without subsidization? Market value of environmental problems?

- **How do we shift from a system that is looking to identify and compensate for damages to one that is based on more of a risk management approach to prevent damages in the first place?** i.e. how do we move beyond crisis/risk management and more into preventing undesirable outcomes before they occur?

- **There may be competitiveness issues resulting from certain conservation decisions. Should firms be compensated and if yes, how?** However this is a slippery slope as compensation often opens the

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discussion of more compensation for other things. **How instead do we create and brand economic value around leadership in conservation?**

- **What could Canada learn from conservation efforts in other historically resource-driven economies such as the UK and the Netherlands?**

- **How is climate change affecting the efficacy of SARA efforts?**

- **Using the recently update caribou legislation as an example, how should our institutions be changing to stay accountable and keep abreast of such changes? What new institutional structures are needed to drive the kinds of change being discussed and how would these occur?**

- **How can we better deal with some of the inefficient regulations currently in place that impose enormous costs and prevent adoption of best practices?** For instance, could we pilot fast track approval for certain projects? A flexible approval process? Allow different approaches to apply to oil sands? Changing calibrating royalty schemes?

- **How can we use research to partition out the different moral and normative concerns that people have?** E.g. Conservation as an objective — many people do care about it, but likely from very different perspectives - hunter vs. conservationist. **Can polls give us an indication of what matters and to whom? How do these public sentiments then relate to research and policy?**

- **How do we balance moral versus economic arguments in support of conservation? Do we need to choose?** i.e. Are we good ancestors vs are we maintaining our capital for future generations?

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