



# The Role of the Individual in Land Conservation

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Private Environmental Conservation: How Individuals Are Saving the World

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## Abstract

Private citizens have historically held an important role in land conservation. Many wealthy individuals have donated money to support conservation causes, donated land to create national parks, and created conservation land trusts and easements. These individuals often face many challenges, but their personal drive and passion propelled them to be successful in protecting the land they love.

This thesis hypothesizes that an individual donating to a non-affiliated non-profit would be more successful in protecting and conserving land long term. This is because a non-profit specializing in this work will have more experience and access to expertise that an individual donor might not have. In this paper, I look at conservation efforts being managed and maintained privately, being managed by a large non-affiliated non-profit, and being managed through a land trust reserve. In this thesis, I reconsider my assumptions and look to what we can learn from these case studies as best practices. In doing so I learn that the commitment and interest of the individual dictates how best to conserve these lands. Some individuals want to be incredibly involved and manage the project through their trust or foundation, where others do not have the interest or capability to manage it themselves and therefore donate the land or money to buy the land to a non-profit. In all cases the local government and community play an important role in the success of the projects. The commitment of the land owner and the involvement of local community and government seem to be the key indicators of successful conservation efforts.

## Table of Contents

Chapter I. Background.....	1
What is Conservation?.....	1
History of Conservation.....	4
How Individuals Are Impacting Conservation.....	11
Chapter II. Research Methods.....	18
Methods.....	18
Hypotheses.....	18
Chapter III. Case Studies.....	20
Case Study: Doug and Kris Tompkins and Patagonia.....	20
Case Study: The Land Conservancy.....	28
Case Study: China.....	36
Chapter IV. Findings/Results.....	46
Chapter V. Conclusion.....	50
Appendix 1. Project Assessment Table.....	52
References.....	53

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Land Restriction of Foreign Investment in Rural Land.....	17
Figure 2. Desertification Map of South America.....	24
Figure 3. Jack and Laura Dangermond Preserve.....	31

## Chapter I.

### Background

Conservation has been around for centuries in various forms. Today it is evolving to meet the needs of a fragile environment and a complicated world. In exploring why conservation is important, how it can be defined, and its history, we are better able to look at how individuals are contributing to environmental conservation today.

#### What is Conservation?

The accelerating pace and scale at which humans are having an impact on the environment is creating a more pressing need to protect biophysical systems around the world. In the past century human impact has evolved due to changes in political relations, economic activities, as well as the social and demographic profiles of the global population. Along with these changes of how humans live, so have views of how to handle human impacts on our environment. One particular area of focus has been that of conservation: we are seeing an increase in individuals purchasing land and either donating this land to non-profits or acting as conservational custodians managing the land through conservation easements.

Land conservation, although not new, has been increasing in recent years according to a study done by Forest Trends' Ecosystem Marketplace. Forest Trends is a non-profit that looks at market-based approaches for environmental conservation and has been studying the investment trends in conservation for over a decade. Their research has shown a large increase in conservation investments in recent years (Woolworth, 2017).

Results indicate that the pace of investment in conservation has accelerated. Between 2009 and 2013, investors committed an average \$0.8 billion of capital per year (Woolworth, 2017). In 2014 and 2015, this average doubled, with investors committing an average of \$1.6 billion each year (Woolworth, 2017). There was also indication in their results that the top 10 investors made up 66% of the \$8.2 billion (Woolworth, 2017).

These investments are being made by both private citizens and companies. In this paper, I look at some of these top conservation investors, some of whom include Laura and Jack Dangermond, Doug and Kris Tompkins, and He Qiaonv. The commitment these contributors have made shows that there are specific investors that have made this a top priority and are increasing the amount spent on conservation each year.

The term “conservation” means “a careful preservation and protection of something... especially planned management of a natural resource to prevent exploitation, destruction, or neglect” (“Conservation,” n.d.). This term has been used widely when it comes to protecting the environment; however, the application of this term seems to greatly vary depending on location and date. For this research thesis, I am using the term conservation to apply to land protection through conservation easements, trusts, and land purchases.

There are also specific legal statutes and definitions of conservation that are important because they define how governments and organizations protect specific areas or things. In the United States, there are federal and state environmental conservation laws. A few of the major federal laws are the Endangered Species Act, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the Comprehensive Environmental Response Comprehension and Liability Act, and the Wilderness Act (Cornell Law School, 2019).

The Endangered Species Act exemplifies how some of these laws influence how we define and look at conservation efforts. The U.S. Congress declared that the Fish and Wildlife Service and Commerce Department's National Marine Fisheries Service would administer a law to protect and recover endangered and threatened plants and animals (Fish and Wildlife Service, 2019). In section 4 of the law Congress identified the following factors in considering if a plant or animal is endangered and threatened: “(A) the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range; (B) overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes; (C) disease or predation; (D) the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; or other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence” (Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2019). In the Wilderness Act, the U.S. Congress created the National Wilderness Preservation System in 1964 to ensure that there were protected wilderness areas set aside for present and future enjoyment of Americans (Wilderness Connect, 2019). They defined “Wilderness” in the following way in section 2 of the Wilderness Act:

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions... (The Wilderness Act, 1964)

Having these types of definitions at a federal level assists with having a commonality at a state and local level. Most states have adopted policies themselves to support the national environmental policies. There are, however, challenges when working internationally as you are dealing with different national and local laws and different definitions when it comes to environmental protection. In 1948, an organization called the International Union for Conservation of Nature was formed to encourage and support collaboration across the world when it comes to environmental conservation. IUCN is one of the largest environmental networks made up of 1,300 members from non-profits and governmental agencies from 170 countries. This type of collaboration assists in finding common ground when it comes to policy and definitions surrounding conservation (IUCN, n.d.).

### History of Conservation

One can see the definition and idea of conservation evolving overtime. Although examples of environmental conservation date back to the Bible, one of the first times the topic appeared in writing was in John Evelyn's paper, *Sylva, or A Discourse of Forest-Trees and the Propagation of Timber in His Majesty's Dominions*, that was presented to the Royal Society in 1662 (Mulder & Copperlillo, 2005). This paper, later turned into a book, is about the conservation of forests in Britain. When it was being written, logging was depleting the forests in Britain at a very fast pace. Evelyn argued for the depletion of the trees to be managed at a reasonable rate so that the forests do not vanish. The conservation of forests further developed in Prussia and France where more scientific methods were being applied to forestry (Muddler, 2005). The new methods of forest

conservation were heavily used in India by the British in the 19th century when they wanted to preserve the valuable teak trees that the Royal Navy used to make their boats. The need for teak was growing because the Royal Navy was increasing their fleet due to the Napoleonic Wars (Mulder and Copperlillo, 2005). In fact, the first forest officer was appointed to protect the teak forests in 1804 (Mulder & Copperlillo, 2005). However, by the 1850s conservation efforts began to change dramatically in India. With the increase in the use of railroads there was a large need for a variety of types of wood to not only make the train cars, but to also to make the physical railroads (Cpsindia.org, 2019). The British government made the argument for total control over all Indian forests. The demands for the railway wood only grew after the war of 1857, and the focus of conservation began to diminish; however, conservation efforts in the United States were growing (Cpsindia.org, 2019).

Americans were at the brink of the Progressive Era by the late-1800s. People were starting to look at both social and environmental issues through a different lens. The Progressive movement was a response to the fast pace of modernization. Progressives in the United States wanted to get rid of corruption and large monopolies that they saw as a threat to the wellbeing of the American people. They looked to support more labor unions, public health programs, decrease corruption in politics, and support environmental conservation (Lumen Learning, 2019).

There was also overcrowding in major U.S. cities, and Americans were starting to venture out to the wilderness to seek scenic views and a bit of space. Around this time artists and writers were also starting to take notice, and books like *Wild Northern Scenes* and *Sporting Adventures with the Rifle and the Rod*, both written by S.H. Hammond,

were published. However, the tipping point was when Theodore Roosevelt became president and assisted by protecting over 230 million acres of land, 150 acres of which were national forests. Roosevelt was an outdoorsman and saw the American landscape as something that needed to be protected (Mulder and Copperlillo, 2005). American national parks are often seen as an example, for better or worse, of a national conservation program for other countries around the world. According to Theodore Roosevelt conservation is at the heart to the democratic spirit:

Defenders of the short-sighted men who in their greed and selfishness will, if permitted, rob our country of half its charm by their reckless extermination of all useful and beautiful wild things sometimes seek to champion them by saying that “the game belongs to the people.” So, it does; and not merely to the people now alive, but to the unborn people. The “greatest good for the greatest number” applies to the number within the womb of time, compared to which those now alive form but an insignificant fraction. Our duty to the whole, including the unborn generations, bids us to restrain an unprincipled present-day minority from wasting the heritage of these unborn generations. The movement for the conservation of wildlife and the larger movement for the conservation of all our natural resources are essentially democratic in spirit, purpose, and method. Theodore Roosevelt (1916) (The Wildlife Society, 2010).

Artist and author George Caitlin has often been credited with being one of the first people to vocalize a vision of a protected wilderness area in the United States. He did this in his 1841 book, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*. In his original concept of national parks, Caitlin envisioned

the protection of this great natural beauty without the disruption of the Native Americans who were occupying much of the land he wished to protect. Describing what he hoped to see in the future, he said, “For ages to come, the native Indian, in his classic attire, galloping his wild horse, with sinewy bow, and shield and lance, amid the fleeting herds of elks and buffaloes” (McNamara, 2017). However, shortly after Yellowstone was created, Native Americans were removed from the new national park (Mulder and Copperlillo, 2005). The emphasis switched from preserving nature the way it was to create scenic viewing points that people could easily access.

Private citizens have played a large role in the creation of national parks. Their dedication, forethought, and perseverance have led to the creation and protection of some of the most iconic protected lands. One can see this with the creation of the Acadia National Park. Acadia National Park in Maine is located on Mount Desert Island and has been the home of explorers, painters, fisherman, farmers, and some of the wealthiest families in history. In the late 1800s there was a movement of artists and writers that came to this area for inspiration. The Hudson River School and other influential groups of painters began to retreat to this rugged and dramatic coastline of Maine. The images they created began to make their way to the homes of the wealthy and into cities, which increased people’s interest to visit this place. At the turn of the century many wealthy American families would come to what is now Acadia National Park to escape the heat in New York City and Boston. They would purchase large parcels of land to build “cottages.” These “cottages” were, in fact, mansions, but the owners called themselves “rusticators” or “cottagers.” The Rockefellers, Vanderbilts, Morgans, Fords, Carnegies, and others bought thousands of acres and built enormous “cottages” for their summer

homes (Repanshek, 2008). Although many people now come here for recreation, many of these wealthy families are to thank for the national park. George B. Dorr, who came from an upper-class family, fought tirelessly to preserve the natural beauty of this land. He created a land trust for Hancock County which was the start of that we now know as Acadia National Park. John D. Rockefeller Jr. gave 11,000 acres of land (Repanshek, 2008). Today there are over 47,000 acres protected for future generations thanks to those that began the effort in the early 1900s (Repanshek, 2008).

In the 1920s there were new patterns of development and infrastructure in the U.S. that were disrupting wilderness areas. In 1921, American Conservationist Brenton MaKay suggested in an article that the Appalachian Ridge become a recreational trail and also a connecting wilderness area (Tabler, 2016). This idea of planning wilderness areas into the inevitable expansion of the American footprint was an innovative thought that led to the creation of the Wilderness Society in 1935. The Wilderness Society successfully lobbied for the National Wilderness Preservation Act, which was passed in 1964, and has protected more than 94 million acres of land (Wilderness, n.d.).

The creation of organizations devoted to preserving wild areas in the United States has been a critical element in the success of protecting open and wild areas. It is inevitable that any population will change and evolve over time and so will their environmental footprint. In having agencies and groups like the National Park Service and The Wilderness Society there is a concerted effort to protect areas while still allowing populations to evolve and change around them. They also assist with lobbying for funding and legal protection for these areas.

The United States has 2.4 billion acres of federally protected land in over 50 states (Congressional Research Committee, 2009). The protection of these lands is to maintain health, diversity, and productivity of these public lands. The projects to maintain these lands requires inter organization and agency coordination. There are four main agencies that help to manage the federally protected land: the Forest Service (which falls under the Department of Agriculture), the Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service (which fall under the Department of the Interior) (Congressional Research Committee, 2009).

Protected areas fall into a few categories by the Department of the Interior, one of the four groups that helps to oversee these lands. The categories include: national parks, national forests, national wildlife refuges, national conservation areas, national monuments, wilderness, national historic sites, national memorials, national battlefields, national recreational areas, wild and scenic rivers, national seashores and lakeshores, and national trails (“America’s Public Lands Explained,” 2016). Each of these designations have their own criteria and their own federal protections. Having federally owned and protected land is important because there are dedicated resources and laws to protect this land for generations to come. It is important to note that land designated as a protected area can be changed by the Department of the Interior, as we have seen in recent years.

The demand for protection of public lands has been a balance between public demands, political interests, and federal resources. In the 1950s, there was intensified pressure put on the public land system because of both an increase of those using the land and individuals wanting more protection for it. This resulted in the passage of laws in the 1960s and 1970s that were intended to help strengthen science-based agency practices

and create more opportunities for litigation (Public Lands and Their Administration, 2017). An example of this is the National Forest Service wanting more administrative rights to protect land from those seeking to produce higher crop yields from this land. They were able to get Congress to pass legislation that identified the five purposes of forest lands: recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish. Each of these five purposes were equal in helping with management decisions of the protected forests. This law, the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 (MUSY), helped create a balanced management system for forests (Public Lands and Their Administration, 2017). Shortly after this law was enacted the Wilderness Act of 1964, National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA), Endangered Species Act of 1973, and The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NMFA) were put in place. Having the legal framework, that many of these agencies wrote and lobbied for, assists them with protecting and managing these lands. This is critical as there are more pressures put on these protected lands.

In 1966, the 50th anniversary of the National Park Service (NPS) in the U.S., the NPS invested \$1 billion to update and modernize the national park system (National Park Service, n.d.). In 1980, Alaska National Interests Lands Conservation Act contributed more than 47 million acres of land to the National Park Service, more than doubling the size of NPS. In 2000, there were 286 million annual visits to American national parks, having grown from one million annual visits in 1920 (National Park Service, n.d.).

Although there have been many Americans visiting U.S. national parks annually, there are still land right disputes between Native American tribes and the NPS. In recent years there has been some progress with the creation of the NHPA and AIRFA statutes being created. The American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) states that the U.S.

government must respect Native Americans rights to practice their religions. This means that Federal agencies must consult with native tribes regarding projects that might affect their ability to practice their religion (National Park Service, n.d.). The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) establishes a policy favoring the responsible use of historic property. In respect to Native Americans, it allows for them to have more influence and say regarding land to which their tribe might have a historical relationship. Although there will never be complete reconciliation for many of the lands that are now national parks that were once home to native Americans, there are at least some policies in place that allow them certain rights (National Park Service, n.d.).

The United States has developed a comprehensive land conservation approach as seen by the work of the agencies and legislature mentioned above. This model has helped to influence other countries when it comes to land conservation. One way in which the U.S. has impacted conservation around the world are the tax incentives for the donation of land conservation easements (LILP, 2019). These land easements are a way in which individuals can be incentivized to donate land for conservation.

### How Individuals Are Impacting Conservation

As attention to conservation grows, so does the role of the individual in protecting land for future generations. Individuals using their wealth to purchase land for conservation usually use one of two methods: they either purchase land and donate it to a non-profit to manage it, or they manage the land themselves through conservation easements. According New York State Department of Conservation, a land easement is a:

Voluntary, legal agreement that protects the natural resources of a parcel of land by restricting future land use and/or development on the property “in perpetuity” (permanently). This agreement is held between a landowner and a government agency or land trust, with the landowner maintaining ownership. The conservation easement can either be sold or donated, resulting in a variety of tax benefits for the landowner. The easement is recorded with the property’s deed and transfers to all future landowners (Conservation Easements, n.d.).

It is important to note that every conservation easement is unique as they are tailored to the property that it is protecting. It can also be of unlimited duration and can be terminated or changed. In the United States, most states have their own conservation easement laws. Many of these laws are influenced by the Uniform Conservation Easement Act of 1981. The states have adopted the Uniform Conservation Act are Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming (Uniform Conservation Easement Act – Environmental Law, 2019).

Something that is unique about the Uniform Conservation Act is that a third party can enforce its terms. The third party must be a governmental body or a charitable trust, association, or corporation (Uniform Conservation Easement Act – Environmental Law, 2019). Conservation land easements is a way in which people can protect open spaces, protect agricultural integrity of the land, and help to protect biodiversity to name a few things. In the United States it can also greatly assist in estate, property, state, and federal tax benefits. Many other countries have developed their own local laws and incentives for

land conservation easements. In Belize, for example, there is no specific legislation for civilian conservation contracts, however the government will draft contracts on an ad hoc basis between private landowners and the government (Marsan, 2004). Belize and many other countries around the world recognize conservation easements and have some legal framework in place, although each country is slightly different in implementing them. These conservation easements allow for individuals to protect part or all of their land in ways that are specific to their needs and vision. These land conservation easements are an important tool to protect the environment, but also often have financial benefits to the landholder and their family.

The other common method for private individuals to donate land for conservation is when they donate land to a charitable organization like The Nature Conservancy to manage. In cases like this, the owners relinquish responsibility to control the property, however many donors set up funding mechanisms to allow for enough financial resources to be allocated to properly manage the property.

Both methods of managing conservation properties have challenges, and there are not always perfect solutions for every donor or piece of land. Some of the largest challenges for these projects are local communities, especially when foreigners or outsiders to the communities are making land purchases. The term “Eco-Colonialism” has been used by some to describe land purchased by a foreign individual or group and then turned into a conservation project (Zaitchik, 2018). In each case study the treatment and reactions of the local communities will be discussed in the context of these land purchases. Considering challenges like those of working with the local communities and

governments, one might ask why an individual or organization would want to take all of this on? What is the motivation for these projects?

In the examples explored in this paper one can see that there must be a deep passion and appreciation by the individual regarding the particular project. For the individuals in this paper there is a personal mission that they are looking to accomplish. Many of these individuals not only financially sponsor a project, they become an advocate for conservation.

Doug and Kris Tompkins spent decades in Patagonia trying to find the best ways in which to protect this remote area. They came up against smear campaigns, politicians, energy companies, and concerned locals trying to stop their purchases. Many of the concerns were legitimate. It took years of working with the community, government, and key stakeholders to make traction towards their goals of protecting as much of Patagonia as they could. Much of their success has been due to their support of local non-profits, community outreach, and developing partnerships within the government. Their persistence from the initial backlash of their land purchases proved to be fruitful.

Laura and Jack Dangermond had a little less opposition, but still needed to find an organization to purchase the land on the California coast using their donation. Luckily, The Nature Conservancy was able and willing to take on this new project in California. The Dangermonds were motivated to protect this piece of California coastline as they had a personal connection to it; they had spent their honeymoon there in the late 1970's (Atlantic, 2017). An important part of the Dangermond's donation was that they also donated an endowment for conservation research to be done on the land through the local university. This investment in the local community was not only beneficial to the

university but will also assist in continuing our understanding of this particular environment. They might have had an easier time convincing the local residents because the previous owner had the intention of developing this pristine and locally beloved coastline.

The last example discussed in this paper there are private citizens in China that are finding ways to work with the government to support conservation efforts within the country. China is not a country many associate with land conservation problems, as most people just hear about the air pollution issues that have plagued their cities. The interest and ability to support conservation efforts in China are evolving. One female billionaire in China, He Qiaonv, is contributing \$1.5 billion to conservation efforts in China (Ekstein, 2019). Her passion came from her upbringing and studies at a Beijing Forestry University (Ekstein, 2019). She is also not alone—other wealthy Chinese individuals are working with the government to assist in managing conservation land trusts. The examples in this paper represent different ways in which private citizens are trying to contribute to conservation efforts. They all have their challenges and strengths, but the passion and dedication from these individuals is deeply rooted in a connection to the projects they are championing.

Many of these individuals have a sense of responsibility to do something for the greater good of the planet. This sense of duty is at the root of why they chose to endure so many challenges to protect an area, as highlighted in Jonathan Franklin's article in the *Telegraph*, "Save the Planet? Buy It." In this article, Franklin discusses something that many philanthropic conservationists believe, which is that they are not preserving land for themselves or for a country, but that they are protecting land for the global

community. This feeling of responsibility is something that drove Laura and Jack Dangermond, co-founders of the geographic information systems software company ESRI, to donate \$165 million to The Land Conservancy to purchase and protect 24,000 acres of undeveloped California coastline (Fallows, 2017). It is also the reason why Doug and Kris Tompkins purchased their land in Patagonia (Butler, 2018). In many cases, the people purchasing the land also have a personal connection to it and have a sense of responsibility to protect it. For both the Tompkins' and Dangermonds' the land they chose to protect are places they visited often that had a profound effect on the way they viewed the world.

In some cases, governments welcome the protection of these lands because they lack the funds or resources to do it themselves. However, in some cases governments see such purchases as a threat to their sovereignty and interests, like in Brazil. Some of these governments have put in place restrictions on whether and how much land can be purchased by non-citizens. The Brazilian government limits foreign land ownership to 25% of the land in any given municipality, according to the U.S. State Department website (Brazil, n.d.). Other countries have started to enforce similar restrictions in order to limit the influence of foreigners by purchasing much of their country's land. The chart below from conversation.com explains which countries currently have restrictions (McKenzie, 2013).

<b>Level of restriction of foreign investment in rural land</b>	<b>Country</b>
No apparent restrictions on foreign investment	Argentina, Colombia, Norway, Romania
In effect require little more than information to government	Australia, Austria, Chile, Egypt, New Zealand**, Poland*, Switzerland
EU countries which do not restrict investment by other EU but may restrict non EU	Belgium*, Czech R*, Denmark*, Finland*, France*, Germany*, Hungary*, Luxembourg*, Netherlands*, Portugal*, Slovak R*, Slovenia*, Spain*, Sweden*, UK*
More rules and restrictions known on foreign investment	Brazil**, Canada, Estonia*, Greece*, Iceland, Ireland*, Japan, Korea, Latvia*, Lithuania*, Mexico, Peru, Tunisia, Turkey, US**, Argentina**, China**, India**
Prohibited	Morocco

Figure 1. Land Restriction of Foreign Investment in Rural Land

*Source: McKenzia, Margaret, 2013.*

It is challenging when there is an increasing need for environmental land protection, a small number of people in the world who can and want to do something, and many roadblocks and complications can sour this well-intentioned action. However, even with many challenges there are still individuals that continue to find ways to make meaningful contributions to conservation.

## Chapter II.

### Research Methods

In order to explore examples of individuals making conservation efforts, there need to be clearly defined research methods and boundaries through which examples are viewed. Understanding the parameters and limitations of the research assists in better exploring the hypothesis of this research.

#### Methods

This thesis examines the impact of individuals and organizations purchasing large parcels of land in the name of conservation. The hypothesis being examined is that conservation easements are not as effective for long-term conservation as land donations to expert non-profit organizations.

Originally, I had planned to use the Protected Areas Baseline Assessment Toolkit (PA-BAT). However, after trying to apply this to my case studies I found that using a chart to track key indicators assisted me with assessing my case studies. See Appendix A for an example of the chart used to track my case studies.

#### Hypothesis

*Hypothesis: An individual donating private land for conservation to a non-profit will have more long-term success of conservation efforts than privately managing conservation land. Success is defined as making measurable gains towards sustainable positive environmental impact.*

I compared the case studies based on impacts made to the environment, local cultures, and local governments. I gathered data on when the land was first purchased, its current state, and any long term or future impacts. The cases that I selected demonstrate different practices in environmental conservation. I focused on two purchases, one land trust, and one major investment in different types of projects. These contributions happened in the last 50 years, and I relied on mostly publicly available data. This research involved an interview with an individual working on behalf of one of the benefactors. The interview was not to gather personal information or data but rather to gain a more general insight into their work. I did reach out to representatives from all of the groups mentioned in this paper; however, I was only able to interview one individual. All identifying information was anonymized or approval was sought. The research conducted for this paper is conducted in line with the policies of the Committee on the Use of Human Subjects.

Through these cases studies, I may learn that my hypotheses are in fact not able to be supported. There may be a strong indication that working with the non-profit conservation groups only delay and weaken any ability to conserve land and communities. This may be due to poor non-profit management, conflicting goals of the parties involved, or lack of community or financial support.

One research limitation is access to data regarding some of the land purchases and the impact on the land after the purchase. In most cases the benefactors seem to want to be public about their purchase and their contribution to an environmental cause; however, there are some examples in which the public information is limited.

## Chapter III.

### Case Studies

These case studies demonstrate the various ways in which individuals are working on global conservation efforts. These efforts differ in goals, execution, and intended and unintended outcomes. In looking at these examples one might have a better understanding of ways in which individuals are having challenges and successes in conservation efforts within their home countries and abroad.

#### Case Study: Doug and Kris Tompkins and Patagonia

Doug and Kris Tompkins have purchased nearly two million acres in the name of conservation, many of which are in Argentina and Chile. Doug Tompkins, the co-founder and former CEO of The North Face outdoor apparel company, and Kris, the former CEO of Patagonia, another outdoor apparel and gear company, made their fortune selling goods to people who love the environment—or want to look the part. The Tompkins' goal was to purchase the land that they had a personal affection for, protect it, and give it back to the people of Chile and Argentina in the form of national parks. In her 2014 article in *The Atlantic* titled *The Entrepreneur Who Wants to Save Paradise*, Diana Saverin documents the concerns of the locals, the government, and the Tompkins themselves. The story was written prior to the donation of the lands as a national park to the government in March 2017. However, you get a sense of the varying views that locals and foreigners have when it comes to land and communities. The purchase of this land was unique for two main factors. First, the Tompkins' were two foreigners who were not

trying to develop the land; rather, they were trying to conserve it. Second, the physical size of this project and their ambition was unheard of.

The Tompkins went to the extent of trying to protect the land from European companies looking to dam the rivers, which would have caused another set of issues for the local communities. At the same time the rancheros, who had lived on the land for centuries, fought the Tompkins as they were highly suspicious of their conservation plans and intentions (Saverin, 2014).

The Tompkins believe they have a moral and ethical obligation to protect this land. As stated on their Tompkins Conservation website:

We believe that humans have an ethical obligation to share the planet with other species, and that we must reorient our values and activities so that all forms of life can flourish. Toward this end, we direct our energies to park creation, activism, restoration, and ecological agriculture. Throughout diverse programs, we uphold our commitment to a common set of ideals: ecologically grounded local economies; local, renewable energy production; thoughtful, place-appropriate architecture and design; and meaningful work for individuals and communities (Tompkins, n.d.).

The Tompkins first started to purchase land in Chile in the early 1990s, after Doug started the Foundation for Deep Ecology (Saverin, 2014). These land purchases continued for over a decade until they had amassed nearly two million acres. During this period, they gained many critics. Rumors began to spread that they were purchasing this land for everything from residential developments to a new Jewish state. Many of the conspiracy theories and challenges that the Tompkins faced emerged when President Eduardo Frei was governing, and when he was taking a sympathetic ear to timber and

cellulose lobbyists. However, it is understandable that industries that rely on the land the Tompkins were purchasing to make their bottom line would be upset and would set up a campaign against them. The Tompkins found more support with President Frei's two successors, President Lagos and President Bachelet. Within their administrations Chile saw these lands become some of the largest national parks in the world (Saverin, 2014).

Doug Tompkins would never see the handover of his land to the people of Chile. He died in a kayaking accident in Chile in 2015 (Rios, 2015). After his death, the Tompkins' conservation group donated over one million acres to the Chilean government to start a national park system (Bonney, 2018). In response, the government donated nearly nine million acres that created five national parks that sprawl throughout the country. The Tompkins' donation had an amplified affect when the government also contributed significantly. Many did not believe that the Tompkins would in fact donate the land to the Chilean government, and no one expected the donation of land by the government. The dedication and commitment by the Chilean government toward conservation efforts was surprising to most. Both the purchases and donation of land to the government by the Tompkins and involvement of the government were unprecedented.

One might ask why the Tompkins are focused on preserving Patagonia, which is a good question as this is a very remote and sparsely populated area. The reason, as stated on one of their associated organization's websites, Conservación Patagonia, is because the Tompkins believe that the challenges facing this unique part of the world are ones that are solvable. The land that spans the border of Argentina and Chile has an incredibly rich ecosystem and is home to many unique and important species of animals and plant

life (Tompkins, 2018). The Tompkins chose this area in part because they felt they could have a great impact there (Bonney, 2018).

Patagonia falls across two countries, Chile and Argentina. There is no exact border around “Patagonia”; however, there is a common agreement that the area that we call Patagonia is the ecological area of the arid- and semi-arid grasslands at the high elevations in southern Argentina and Chile. The majority of Patagonia falls on the Argentinian side of the border and consists of a dry steppe. Just over the Andes, on the Chilean side of the border, there are temperate beech forests, creating a very diverse and unique habitat (Tompkins, 2018).

Patagonia was and continues to be threatened by deforestation and overgrazing, as well as by proposed hydroelectric dams. For centuries various local animals have enjoyed the grasslands in Argentina and Chile, but with the introduction of cattle and sheep in the early 1900s by foreigners the environment began to collapse as it could not support the increased use by the herbivores (Tompkins, 2018). The map below shows the devastation in the late 1990s. The areas in red are in severe devastation, orange is moderate, and green is little to no devastation.



Figure 2. Desertification Map of South America

Source: *Impact of Climate and Analysis of Desertification in Semi*, 1998.

Conservación Patagonica, which is associated with Tompkins Conservation, and the Chilean government look to establish a national park that will protect a diverse group of ecosystems including forests, grasslands, and wetlands. Due to the diverse habitats, there is a wide range of biodiversity that can thrive in this location. In the map above you can see degradation of the vegetation due to animal grazing.

There are many reasons why the depletion of the grasslands is cause for concern. One might be that damaged grasslands retain less moisture and leads to the diminishing of ground cover and vegetation. This makes soil more prone to erosion, especially with the harsh winds that frequent the area. It turns once thriving and robust areas into deserts. The map above shows the state in which the land was in in the late 1990s. Although there have been improvements it is important to understand the fragility of the soil. Severe desertification is affecting more than 30% of the region, and over 90% of Patagonia suffers from some sort of soil loss due to erosion (Butler, 2018).

With this as an identified problem one might worry about the livelihoods of the ranchers who own the sheep, cattle, and other animals that graze on these lands. Luckily, for the sake of the environment, the wool and meat industries have seen downturns in recent decades, which has resulted in fewer people turning to ranching in this area. Many historic farming estates have been abandoned due to this desertification (Tompkins, 2018).

After speaking with Tom Butler, the Director of Conservation Advocacy for Tompkins Conservation, it became clear that Doug Tompkins approached conservation the same way that he approached climbing a mountain. There were deliberate steps up a marked route to his destination, and when he encountered challenges, he took his time adjusting his route, never giving up. The Tompkins have nearly 200 full-time staff around the globe working on various environmental projects. Butler explained that part of their initial trouble with locals in Chile had to do with the unfamiliarity with philanthropy of this scale. There had been previous conservation efforts by individuals in Patagonia, but nothing to this scale and nothing with this much publicity. According to Mr. Butler, there

is a three-stage approach to their donations: 1. Offer the land to the government as a donation. 2. Have this land made into a national park. 3. Create laws to protect the land for generations to come (Butler, 2018).

As with any large-scale project there were both intended and unintended consequences. The intended consequences were to protect the land for the long term and to convince the government to turn these areas into national parks. There were also some very specific intentions around the health of the environment. As stated earlier, the shrub and grasslands had been over grazed and were depleted in many areas. The Tompkins and their team hoped that over time the grasslands and shrubs would recover. The recovery of the Chaco Valley, however, happened relatively soon after their conservation efforts went into effect. These new grasses and shrubs also brought about new wildlife. There are now wild camels that graze on the grasses and mountain lions that graze on the camels (Butler, 2018).

In terms of the local population, the Tompkins hoped to improve the lives of the people living on and around the land they purchased. They believed that with the natural resources depleting and cheaper alternatives their way of life through ranching would soon vanish. The local economies needed to find other ways to support their communities. The Tompkins believed that through their conservation efforts they could bring ecotourism to these communities as a new industry that could support the locals. This started to happen when more and more tourists came to Patagonia and more amenities, lodging, and support were needed to accommodate the new visitors. The unintended consequence was that they ended up strengthening local grassroots conservation efforts through their support of getting rid of hydroelectric dams.

There was a controversial project in Patagonia that would have built five hydroelectric dams in Chile's Asyen region on the Baker and Pascua Rivers (Patagonia Sin Represas, n.d.). This was set to be the largest energy project in the county's history. The dams were approved by the government in May 2011 but were later halted due to large protests and public opposition (Patagonia Sin Represas, n.d.). There are a few reasons why people were upset about this deal; one reason was that the company that would have benefited was from Italy, and another was because of the environmental impact. The project would have flooded 15,000 acres and impacted six national parks, 11 national reserves, 26 conservation priority areas, 16 wetlands, and two privately owned conservation areas (Patagonia Sin Represas, n.d.). The Tompkins joined a group of nonprofits and activists to protest these dams and supported their efforts financially and by also bringing more attention to them. After successfully stopping the dam projects, these groups have gained recognition and support to take on new environmental issues. This was not something that the Tompkins intended to happen; however, having these groups strengthened and continuing to promote conservation only enhances their work in Patagonia.

Moving forward, there is still a lot that Tompkins Conservation would like to accomplish in order to create lasting change, according to Tom Butler. They currently have the support of the Chilean government; however, they recognize this could change if there is a different political party in power. So, while they have support they are trying to build the foundation to make it harder to undo any of the work they have accomplished. They are continuing to support the non-profits that they work with locally. They are also supporting local conservation and environmental protection laws and trying to get more

public support for these types of legislation. There is always the possibility that even if they are able to get legislation passed to protect the land set aside for national parks that it could still be taken away; this is why they have built into all of their agreements with the government a clause to protect against this. This clause says that if the preserved lands are ever used for anything other than a national park the ownership will revert back to Tompkins Conservation.

The Tompkins are an example of the power of the individual when it comes to conservation. Most people will never forfeit their fortunes to protect land in another country, but the Tompkins felt a responsibility to do so. The idea of purchasing land and giving it back to the government with the stipulation that it must be used as a national park in something that most people will not be able to replicate. They have been successful in obtaining their goals of protecting this land, giving it back to the government in the form of a national park, and changing some of the public opinion around environmental protection and conservation. In some ways they have had a harder time doing this independently rather than through a large non-profit. As individuals they faced personal criticism and attacks and had more at risk because this was financed by them personally. They will have to continue to work hard to strengthen the support they have and to continue their goals to increase nationally-protected lands.

#### Case Study: The Land Conservancy

The 24,000-acre coastal Cojo/Jalama Ranch at Point Conception in Santa Barbara, CA has been referred to as Bixby Ranch by locals for decades. This rare piece of unspoiled coastline in California was purchased in 2017 by The Nature Conservancy

through a generous donation by Jack and Laura Dangermond (Fallows, 2017). This piece of land is not only scenic, it has important significance to the local community, the environment, and the local Native American population. To understand this significance, you must first understand its history.

In the mid-1800s there were many people in California in search of gold. Llewellyn and Amasa Bixby and their cousins Benjamin and Thomas Flint dabbled in gold prospecting in Northern California but quickly realized it might be more lucrative to go into ranching. This family from New England started by bringing 2,400 sheep from Illinois to California in a 10-month-long journey (Fallows, 2018). The family acquired vast amounts of land in Southern California and in 1912 purchased the Cojo Ranch and seven years later the Jalama Ranch. The Bixby family owned the ranches until 2007 (Hamm, 2017). After 95 years of ownership they sold the property to Boston-based investment company, the Baupost Group (Hamm, 2017).

When the land was purchased by the Baupost Group many locals were very concerned that this was going to become another densely populated development. The company purchased the land for \$135 million at the height of the real estate bubble (Hamm, 2017). Although the ranch still had cattle, there was no way for the company to make its money back through cattle ventures in a timeframe that would have been acceptable for them. The company purchased the land with the assumption they would be able to use the land in accordance with a 1982 plan called the Agricultural Rural Cluster Act, which allowed for the land to have up to 480 homes on it (McKenna, 2017). The Gaviota Planning Advisory Committee ended up voting to remove this 1982 act when

they rewrote the Gaviota Coastal Plan in 2015 (McKenna, 2017). This essentially ended any hopes for the Baupost Group to use the land for their intended developments.

The desire for this land to be protected by locals was clear. This is a place that many hold to be sacred. The local Native American tribe, the Chumash, see this land as the homeland of the first people on earth. They also, according to legend, believe that this is a portal to the next world: that from this spot-on earth people transfer to the land of the dead (Fallows, 2017). This is also the area in which the first settlers from Europe came to California in 1542 and were greeted by the largest Native American tribe in the state. There are many cultural significant events that happened on this land (Fallows, 2017).

In 2017, a husband and wife decided to try to protect this land for good. Laura and Jack Dangermond donated \$165 million to The Land Conservancy to purchase the former Bixby Ranch (Fallows, 2017). Laura and Jack Dangermond are the founders of the largest geospatial technology company in the world, ESRI. Although the Dangermonds and ESRI have made many philanthropic donations and contributions to local parks and environmental causes, this donation was the most significant for them—not just because this was a significant amount of money but also because it was where they spent their honeymoon in the 1960s. Their personal connection to this land clearly played a role in their decision to help protect the Bixby Ranch (Atlantic, 2017). They were initially hesitant to reveal their identities in association with the gift; however, as Jack Dangermond said in an article in *The Atlantic*, “We’re very intentionally setting out a model that we hope other people with money will follow... We’d like people to think, ‘Let’s do what the Dangermonds did.’ We’d like them to copy us” (Atlantic, 2017).

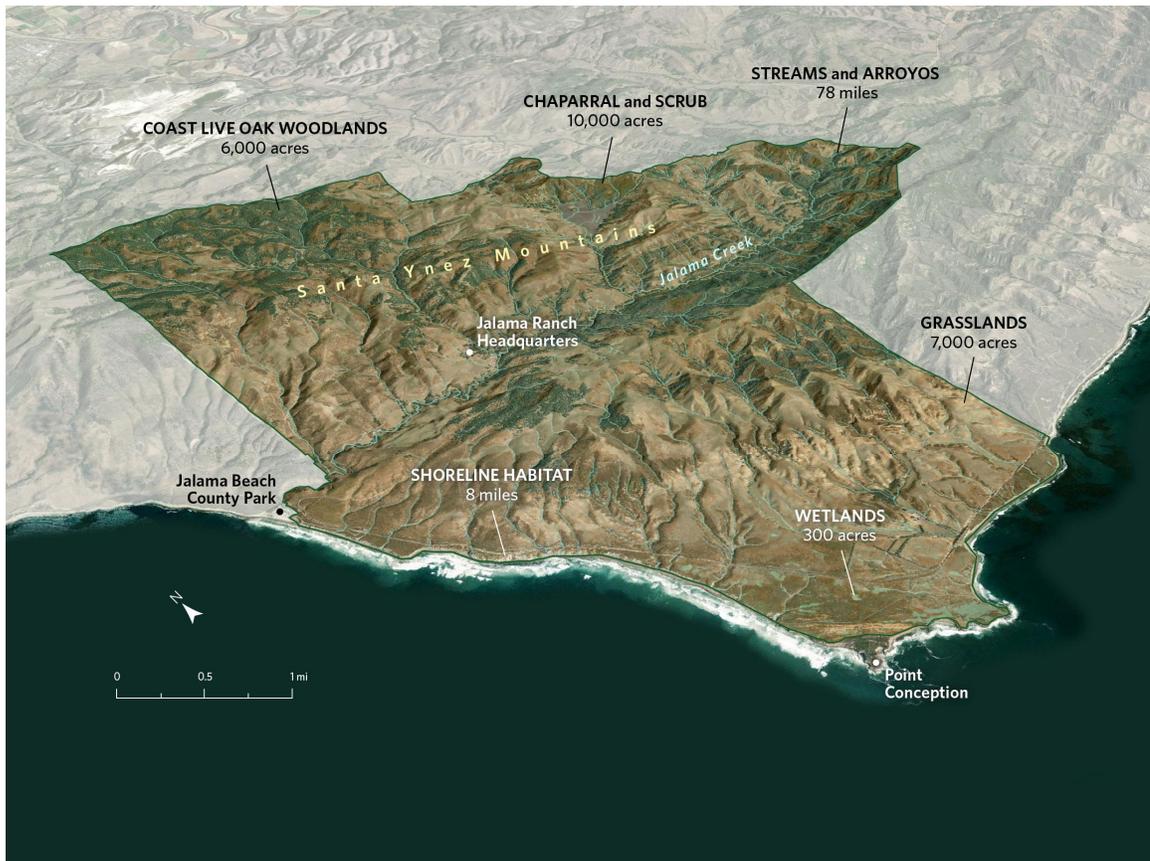


Figure 3. Jack and Laura Dangermond Preserve

*Source: Borrell, 2018.*

The area in which this land exists is a unique part of California. It is more than eight miles of connected and pristine California coastline with historic coastal oak forests. This is also where the colder waters of Northern California meet the warmer waters of Southern California, creating a unique and important ecological system both on and off shore. The coast itself takes a 90-degree turn at Point Conception. There are at least 39 animal species that are on the threatened or special status living in this area. This property connects the mountains to the sea and acts as a corridor for the animal inhabitants that

live there. The oak forests sprawl over the gentle hills and the marine life nourish themselves of the kelp and marine ecosystem (Fallows, 2017). The Nature Conservancy scientists believe that part of the value of protecting and studying this land is because it is a “transition zone.” Mark Reynolds, the senior ecologist at The Nature Conservancy and scientific lead of the Dangermond Preserve planning process said, “Four ecoregions meet, two terrestrial and two marine [areas]. There are [land] species here that are found in Northern and central coastal California, that don’t extend into Southern coastal California. The land and sea here offer a unique environment that can assist in teaching future scientists about the environment” (Fallows, 2017).

For around a century this land has been an untouched cattle ranch, and it looks that it will remain that way for at least another few months. The Nature Conservancy will finish an 18-month long study in the next six months and create a plan that will protect and nourish the biodiversity of the area and create a world-class environmental research program. The Nature Conservancy has hired a property manager to assist with upkeep of the existing buildings infrastructure on the property, and they are working with their neighbors and University California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) to develop long-term plans for the area. They have partnered with UCSB to create an Environmental Conservation Chair so that the university has a lab on the preserve to be able to monitor and study management techniques, analysis, and landscape monitoring (Gibbens, 2017).

The choice for the Dangermonds to fund The Nature Conservancy purchase, rather than purchase the land themselves, is one rooted in American history. When looking at the establishment of American national parks—although the undertaking is by the federal government—many wealthy families like the Rockefellers and Carnegies

played a role directly or indirectly by donating funds or land for conservation. The Dangermonds are hoping that their conservation effort in California inspires others to look into conservation efforts in their own cities around the world. Jack Dangermond believed that The Nature Conservancy was the organization that would be able to manage a property with such a complex and diverse environment and history.

The Nature Conservancy has consistently been ranked as one of the most trusted environmental non-profits by Charity Navigator, Forbes, and Harris Interactive polls (The Nature Conservancy, 2017). The Nature Conservancy has been operating since 1950 and was founded by leading scientists, activists, and leaders. This non-profit organization is built on inclusive programmatic work and has projects in 72 countries around the world and all 50 states in the U.S. (The Nature Conservancy, 2017).

The organization got its start by protecting land from development. Now it has branched into projects, including protecting both oceans and freshwaters as well as tackling climate change. The organization has protected more than 119 million acres of land and thousands of acres of waterways. It has more than a million members that belong to their group across the world (The Nature Conservancy, 2017).

Like most non-profits, it is not without controversy. It has been criticized because of its partnerships with big business, questionable resale practices, and its policies on hunting. In 2003 *The Washington Post* wrote a series of articles that raised questions about some practices being used at The Nature Conservancy. As a result of the publication of these articles there were many questions from the public and the government, which led to many changes to better align The Nature Conservancy's actions with their mission.

Some of the changes made include no longer buying or selling land that is in some way connected to a trustee, employee, or family that is related to the organization. They have tried to get rid of any conflict of interest when it comes to their land purchases, after there was much scrutiny of purchases and sales that involved individuals connected with the organization. They have created a no-net profit policy for any land sale transactions. They are also no longer issuing loans to employees with very favorable terms, something that they had done in the past for 12 employees (Stephens, 2003).

Lastly, they hired outside council in 2003 to assist them figure out a way of dealing with land they purchased that has active oil drills on them. However, according to a 2014 *New York Times* article it seems as though the organization still has controversy around possibly profiting off of oil being drilled on a property they own in Texas (Gills, 2014). The Nature Conservancy states that they really have no say in the matter when it comes to this property, as part of the of their lease with an oil and gas company allows for the drilling of oil and gas on the land (Gills, 2014). Critics of the non-profit state that there are ways in which they could get out of this through termination clauses in their contract; however, they stand to make a profit and therefore they do not. Lastly, the controversy surrounding hunting has been brought up as some hunting has been allowed on its properties to assist with over population of certain species, and it has had board members in the past that were avid hunters (Nature Conservancy's Position on Hunting and Fishing, 2019).

The organization has many members on its board who have ties to oil, mining, agricultural, and chemical industries. It also has members that are leaders in environmental research, and national environmental groups. Its board is an impressive list

of business, financial, academic, and governmental leaders all with an interest in the environment. The Nature Conservancy has been able to move away from any controversy and focus on innovative and important projects like the one in California with the Dangermonds.

In December 2017, UCSB announced a \$1 million endowment by Jack and Laura Dangermond to establish a Chair in Conservation Studies (Fallows, 2017). This endowment is part of their effort to create lasting and continuing protection for the land that The Land Conservancy owns. As part of the relationship, there will be a laboratory for students in the Chair's areas of expertise at the Jack and Laura Dangermond Preserve.

The Dangermonds saw an opportunity to protect this unique part of the California coast and did so by donating the funds for The Nature Conservancy to purchase this land and to establish a conservation Chair at University California, Santa Barbara. The Nature Conservancy and the Dangermonds did not receive as much push back from the local community as others have when trying to establish conservation lands due to the fact that the majority of the local community wanted this land to be protected and was quite upset when they saw what may become of it when an outside investment firm purchased it prior to The Nature Conservancy. The Dangermonds were able to protect this land, but do not have to take on the task of managing and protecting it for years to come. The Nature Conservancy through its decades of work around the world has the ability to devote full time scientists and experts to manage this land properly.

## Case Study: China

Historically, China has had very strict land ownerships laws that have made land conservation by private citizens and NGOs challenging. However, there are two examples of conservation efforts in China that are defying past practices and challenging the country to explore new methods of protecting its environment and wildlife. The first example is a \$1.5 billion contribution by He Qiaonv, a private citizen who is making conservation efforts in China. The second is China's first land trust reserve, the Laohegou Land Trust Reserve.

Unlike many countries in other regions of the world, China has not been known for its environmental conservation interests. According to the 2018 Environmental Performance Index (EPI), China ranks 120 out of 180 countries in the report. EPI scores these 180 countries on 24 performance indicators such as healthy and biodiverse environments and clean water (Wendling, Emerson, Esty, Levy, de Sherbinin, 2018). The metrics assist with tracking the progress of countries on both national and international environmental goals. This is helpful because many of these countries have entered into environmental agreements like the Paris Accord to reduce carbon emissions (Wendling, Emerson, Esty, Levy, de Sherbinin, 2018). China is unique in that it has the largest population in the world, which can cause a great strain on the global environment. There are 1.4 billion people occupying 9,388,211 square kilometers (Wendling, Emerson, Esty, Levy, de Sherbinin, 2018). The environmental challenges that China is facing are in large part due to its large population and rise in its industrial sectors. China's modernization has lifted millions out of poverty and created a middle class; however, it has also led to many environmental issues. The contamination of the water, air, and the over

development of their land are becoming more and more pressing issues that are weighing on the citizens of China. It was not until the late 1970s when China began to draft policies to protect the environment; however, there has been a great deal of trouble enforcing these policies (Albert & Xu, 2016). The environment in China has suffered without the proper enforcement and support by the government of these policies, and for decades China's support for the environment was simply something on paper. By the 1990s, the environmental impacts were no longer something that could be ignored.

In the past three decades, China's government has seen changes in its relationship with the environment. Starting in the 1990s, China has invested \$350 billion in 16 environmental programs. These programs are addressing issues around the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers, forest conservation, and agricultural sustainability (Bryan & Gao, 2018). The investment was a result of an awakening to the environmental distress the Chinese communities were facing after years of abuse. In the 1990s, the natural forest cover was below 10% and five billion tons of soil was eroding annually (Bryan & Gao, 2018). The agricultural soils had been exhausted, the grasslands were overgrazed, and a quarter of China was turned into desert (Bryan & Gao, 2018). In 1998, an investment was made by the government to work on conservation efforts within the country.

In the last 20 years in China, there have been great successes when it comes to improving the health of the environment. Forest cover is past 22%, desertification has reversed in some areas, and grasslands have expanded (Bryan & Gao, 2018). Although these successes are good news, there is still a lot of work to be done. There remain many issues around climate change, wildlife protection and protection of their ecosystems, air pollution, and water pollution, to name a few. This is where influential and passionate

individuals around the world can work to make a difference. China is home to many of the wealthiest individuals, and although it is challenging because of local land laws, there are many individuals that are interested in trying to make a difference in China.

While inroads are being made toward protecting and healing the environment by the Chinese government, wealthy individuals are starting to make a great impact as well. He Qiaonv is the founder and CEO of Beijing Oriental Landscape and Ecology Co., Ltd., a Chinese Landscaping firm that specializes in construction of water resources, water landscape, and water environment. Her business has evolved and has grown since she started the predecessor to her current firm in 1992. It is estimated that Qiaonv is worth \$3.6 billion (Ekstein, 2019). Her success and passion for the environment led her to pledge \$1.5 billion of her own money in 2017 to wildlife conservation in China (Ekstein, 2019). This is one of the largest personal commitment to wildlife conservations in history (Ekstein, 2019). Her contributions are not just to one single project, but rather for implementing conservation efforts within her business, supporting both local and international partners, and advocating for the protection of wildlife and a healthy and biodiverse environment.

He Qiaonv developed her appreciation of wildlife and nature from a young age. Born in 1966 in Zhejiang, a small mountain town, her father made a living selling and buying seedlings (Ekstein, 2019). After Qiaonv graduated from Beijing Forestry University in 1988, she recognized there was a market to help design and create green spaces in people's work and living areas (Ekstein, 2019). This was the seed that helped start her company. Her company then went on to become the largest landscape architecture firms in China.

He Qiaonv sees a need and desire for wildlife and environmental conservation within her country. She is able to have a great deal of influence within China through her environmental architecture business, her charitable foundation, and with the support of her influential friends and partnerships. She has pledged \$1.5 billion of her fortune to assist in wildlife and environmental conservation in China (McCrackin, 2017). One of her first projects will be to partner with a non-profit group called Panthera, which is devoted to protecting the 40 species of wild cats and their ecosystems throughout China. She is contributing \$20 million over the next decade to help with conservation efforts around large cats in China (McCrackin, 2017). In 2017 Qiaonv announced that through her charitable foundation, Beijing Qiaonv Foundation, she would contribute to protect 28 critical habitat areas within China in order to help support the animal and plant life within them (McCrackin, 2017). Her donation of \$20 million will double the operating budget of Panthera (Ekstein, 2017). Panthera hopes to connect existing protected habitats of these cats and create protected ecosystems in which they can live.

The Qiaonv Foundation has several core focuses in China that the \$1.5 billion will go toward. These focuses include endangered species, rivers and oceans, urban biodiversity, national parks, and Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, and climate change. They hope to conserve ten faunas and five flora species, protect nine rivers and lakes, restore habitats in cities, promote the national park model, and conserve endangered species, water sources, forests, grasslands, and wetlands in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau (“Focuses,” 2019). Qiaonv, like other philanthropists doing similar work, hopes that she can encourage and inspire other private citizens to follow in her footsteps.

He Qiaonv stated:

I would also add that there are a large number of entrepreneurs in China who are actively paying attention to environmental issues. They would love to share their wealth, knowledge, and vision to search for more and effective solutions for conserving nature. Qiaonv Foundation is calling on potential partners in China and indeed across the globe to unite together to protect our only homeland and promise a better future for this planet! He Qiaonv (McCrackin, 2017).

Qiaonv approaches conservation by making meaningful contributions to existing organizations through her private foundation, of which is the chairperson. This charitable foundation consists of a board, a management team, and a network of experts to assist in the donations that they are contributing to. Through her work she is changing how private citizens in China look at conservation. Private ownership of land in China is not allowed, making conservation something that has largely been managed by the Chinese government. There has not been enough time to see the impact of Qiaonv's pledge; however, it has garnered a great deal of attention and support.

Because private citizens are generally not allowed to own land, conservation in China has historically been led by the Chinese government through the creation of nature reserves. The creation of the Laohegou Land Trust Reserve is an example of the government's success in this area. There are currently 2,500 nature reserves throughout the country that are owned by the government and have not been well maintained or funded (The Land Trust Reserve, n.d.). Although private land ownership is still not allowed in China, in 2008 the Chinese government decided to allow some forest land use rights to be given out for conservation. The Nature Conservancy partnered with local organizations to develop a model in which Chinese land trusts are able to protect

important areas and work with the communities in those areas to develop sustainable models (The Land Trust Reserve, n.d.). The goal is to have ten private nature reserves using the land trust model. In 2013, the first land trust model began with 27,325-acre Laohegou Land Trust Reserve (The Land Trust, n.d.).

In this model the Chinese government does not give up any land ownership but instead gives non-profits land use rights for conservation efforts. Typically land trusts do more than hold the land use rights; there is usually a conservation goal on which they focus their priorities. This might take the form of managing historical sites, restoring recreational facilities, supporting educational activities, and other similar projects. The Laohegou Land Trust Reserve is of ecological importance because it links existing nature reserves, allowing for more safe passage of wildlife. The non-profits managing this land trust are working to support the local wildlife in the area. The reserve is home to monkeys, takin (a sheep relative), Asian black bears, golden cats, deer, endangered giant pandas, and a variety of plants. Protecting this land and managing it properly will also help these animals and plants.

One of the local organizations that is assisting with the Laohegou Reserve project is the Paradise International Foundation. This foundation has many notable consultants and leaders associated with it, such as co-chairmen Jack Ma, Pony Ma, and Shen Guojun. Jack Ma is the founder and former CEO of Alibaba, one of the largest e-commerce sites in the world. Pony Ma is the founders and CEO of Trascnet, an international management company. Shen Guojun is the founder of Yintai, an industrial investment firm. These three men, along with many other successful supporters started Paradise International Foundation. They have committed to preserving the natural environment by investing in

protected areas, nature education, supporting products that come from sustainable natural ways, and urban rainwater management (Paradise Foundation International, n.d.). This protected land, for at least the next 50 years, was once dedicated to logging and now it is dedicated to scientific research.

There is a great deal of pushback from the local communities because this new nature reserve has affected their livelihoods. Prior to protection this area was used for logging by the government and later poaching, mining, fishing, and herb collecting by locals (Yan, 2016). There were many former government employees and locals that were dependent on this land for making a living and supporting their families. The reserve made efforts to hire previous government employees that worked the land and to provide work opportunities to locals when they took over the land rights. Locals can now face fines and jail time if they trespass or are found doing any of their previous activities (Yan, 2016). A local community member said, “Now we are required to show our ID card at the entrance to prove we are local villagers before we are allowed into the valley... the reserve has more or less dwindled our income, particularly from herb collection.” (Yan, 2016).

Aside from hiring previous employees, the Laohegou Land Reserve also tried another method to support local communities. The reserve arranges for the 20-member board managing the reserve to be able to purchase local products from those in the local village of Minzhu. According to the nature reserve administrator officer, some of the items sold to their board include peanuts, soybeans, walnuts, pork, and chickens (Yan, 2016). They can typically charge a lot more to the board members than they can on the local market. The reserve and the locals both acknowledge that there are limitations when

it comes to selling their products to the board members and there is simply not a large enough market to allow for individuals to make a living wage (Yan, 2016).

Minzhu and Wuyi are villages that are two kilometers away from one another; however, they look very different because of the investment that was made by the reserve in one community and not the other. Minzhu has paved roads, road signs, gardening, and has undergone renovations. Wuyi, however, remains dusty and is in need of many repairs. Many of the villagers in Wuyi are frustrated because they believe that their livelihoods are also affected, however only Minzhu is the only village being supported. Kang Wei from The Nature Conservancy said in response to these concerns, “We cannot cover all communities in the vicinity, and our main responsibility remains on nature preservation, rather than social and poverty alleviation” (Yan, 2016).

The regional government recognizes the issue of the local community’s dependence on this preserved area. The local government, the reserve, and their partners are working to try to come up with alternatives to present to the local communities. The government has been training locals on planting alternative crops for which they can charge a higher cost, such as the Morel mushroom that can sell for as much as \$250 per kilogram (Yan, 2016). The Paradise Foundation has also started to offer those living in Minzhu with microfinancing, educational support, and is supporting efforts to start ecotourism in the area. They have also started a tour guide training program for Minzhu villagers. The eventual goal is to develop the local community enough to take over the management of the land trust.

It appears as though they are continuing to invest in one community, although other local communities might also be feeling the effects of the change in management of

the nature reserve. The local support for the Minzhu village is a meaningful way to support those affected by the nature reserve; however, there seem to be gaps in the how they are addressing other local populations. This reserve is in a very remote area in China and one where options for an income are limited. Although many of the projects and alternatives that are being proposed and implemented to assist the rural communities, there might continue to be pushback. Many have sought livelihoods in these forests for their entire lives, and perhaps for generations, making many of these new methods of farming or types of crops difficult to get used to.

There is a shift taking place in China. In some ways China was late to the game in terms of conservation; however, they have quickly made up for time. The land that the government owns and protects through nature reserves accounts for almost 18% of the country (Yan, 2016). Many of these land reserves were protected land on paper and have not had any protection or rehabilitation projects or management. It is a tremendous amount of land that is on paper being “protected”; however, much of it has not been properly resourced or maintained. It has been nearly impossible to create private conservation land due to the strict land ownership laws in China that restrict privately owned land. In 2008, the government decided to allow some Chinese entities to have forest land use rights, while the government still technically holds ownership. This has allowed for the creation of private nature reserves that connect other existing reserves. Although there are gaps in implementation in this project, this a large step in the right direction for China.

He Qiaonv and The Paradise International Foundation are working in China to support environmental causes. They are making more than a financial contribution as

they are using their names, companies, and contacts to bring the spotlight to the role of the individual in environmental conservation. In a country where conservation was once only something done by the government, there is now a movement among the Chinese elite to start to make meaningful contributions to support land conservation and protection in China.

## Chapter IV.

### Findings/Results

My hypothesis is that an individual donating private land for conservation to a non-profit will have more long-term success than if they manage the land privately is not proven. Although there are benefits to having a nonprofit manage conservation efforts, they are not significant enough to say that this model of conservation will have more long-term success in conservation efforts. The examples in this paper indicate that there are perhaps fewer challenges for groups like The Nature Conservancy to manage private conservation efforts; however, as seen with the Tompkins, an individual can also achieve similar success.

The dedication and actions of the Tompkins demonstrate how an active individual can be successful long term. I would like to note that most individual conservation investors do set up a foundation or nonprofit that manage their land donations on their behalf. I see this as something slightly different than donating the land to a non-profit with which the individual is not affiliated. When a non-profit is still managed by the individual, the individual has the influence and power to still make decisions and have personal responsibility over that land donation. When an individual donates land to a non-profit with which they are not associated, then they give up the responsibility to manage that donation.

Donations to groups like The Nature Conservancy are the best option for private citizens who want to make an impact but who do not want to take the time to develop the resources and manage the operation. For successful conservation project there needs to be attention given to those properties. As seen in China, where the government has not

properly resourced or funded their nature reserves, one can see these parcels of land still being mined, logged, and used for hunting. Without proper management, there is no way to enforce the protection of the land. Although the hypothesis that was stated at the beginning of this paper is proven in some cases, it can also be equally not proven.

There are some common threads that seem to be present in the cases presented in this paper. In all cases there was a local government and community skepticism of the intentions of the conservation efforts, which is understandable. In many cases there is a potential profit to be made off this land if it were to be developed or used for its natural resources. In the case of the Dangermonds, the land they were donating had a previous owner who stated that they would not develop the land, only to later then try to develop the land. The property that the previous owners hoped to develop would have brought in an enormous amount of revenue to them, since the location of this land is in one of the most desirable locations in the world. For many it is hard understand why someone, especially an outsider, might want to forgo any potential financial benefit.

There are also local regulations and customs that one must be aware of when approaching this type of investment. As soon as one states that their intention is to create a nature preserve, national park, or conservation easement, all eyes are on them and they will face extreme scrutiny by not just the local community, but also the environmental activists around the world. In both China and Patagonia, there was pushback from local communities because they felt that their livelihoods and way of life would be threatened. In China, many of those in the local communities used the nature reserve to collect herbs, mine, and hunt. The restrictions of the nature reserve impacted their income, culture, and local customs.

The involvement of the community is critical. When looking at examples of conservation projects around the world, it seems that there needs to be community buy in, long term planning for the management of the land, and investment into local systems that will support the conservation efforts. In the case of The Nature Conservancy's purchase of land near Point Conception, California, one can see how they worked with the local institutions, such as University California, Santa Barbara to set up long term community support and a connection from the community to the protected land. The research on this property will also benefit the university, its faculty, and its students. It also establishes the land as having scientific value.

The Tompkins' projects in South America have also tried to achieve long term community support, but in a slightly different way. Their approach was to support local non-profits and to get the buy in from the federal government to set up the land as national parks. In the examples shown in this paper, the Tompkins had more initial resistance by locals in part because they were foreigners and the practice of large-scale conservation was not one that was familiar to the community.

Local community buy in is critical to the success of these conservation efforts, regardless of where you are. Local communities can often see the purchase and conservation of land that might otherwise have been developed or farmed as taking away local resources from that community. If there is an investment of time and finances into that community one will have an easier time of gaining community support of their efforts.

Similar to the concept of community buy in is the idea of working with local governments to come up with legislative ways in which to support conservation. This

might be working with a government to support a clean water initiative or it might be working to create a robust national park system. Also, by investing in governmental relationships you are building long term trust within larger institutions and have the chance in enacting more change.

Another way in which these groups are successful is to have a foundation run the day-to-day operations of managing the conservation property. This might take form by creating a family foundation, like the Tompkins', donating to a non-profit like The Nature Conservancy, or having a local foundation be advised by a group like The Nature Conservancy. There are not only financial and legal benefits, depending on the location of the purchase, but it can also assist in the long-term management of the property. When one removes the land from their individual portfolio, they must create a structure for this property to managed beyond the lifetime of the individual. The Tompkins' land is managed by the Tompkins Conservation Foundation. As stated earlier, a foundation or trust started by the individual is something different than a completely independent third-party non-profit. Many times, as in the case with the Tompkins, the foundations are still very much connected to the vision or financial support of the individual(s) that started the foundation or trust.

## Chapter V.

### Conclusion

There are many ways to protect land from the abuses that humankind will afflict upon it. In this paper, I explored three case studies that both had mainly positive outcomes but took very different approaches to private land conservation.

Kris and Doug Tompkins purchased over two million acres in Chile and Argentina in order to protect it and bring it back to a healthy state. These individual private purchases were made over the course of many years. The Tompkins faced pushback from local communities and spent a great deal of time and money to enact the protection of these lands. They did not work with a separate non-profit; rather, they created their own non-profit to manage the conservation efforts in Chile and Argentina. While they were successful, so far, in creating a national park system out of their land purchases, and later land donations to the government, there is still a lot at stake. Tompkins Conservation could face challenges if the local governments changes hands and new political leaders wish to dissolve any agreements between the foundation and the government, or if private funding dwindles.

The Dangermonds made a donation to The Nature Conservancy to protect a unique piece of the California coastline. This designated gift allows for The Nature Conservancy to protect this undisrupted coastline and make meaningful contributions to the study of conservation through the endowment of a Conservation Studies Chair at the local University California, Santa Barbara. The Nature Conservancy has a wealth of resources and experts to help manage this land for the foreseeable future, as well as learn

from it. There are limits though when working through a non-profit as they have multiple projects that require their resources and they have their own policies set by their board of directors and leadership.

In China, we are seeing the beginning of private land conservation. In a country where private land ownership is not allowed, individuals are finding creative ways to support efforts to protect the environment through conservation. He Qiaonv is paving the way with her very public commitment of \$1.5 billion to various conservation efforts. Her financial commitment allows for non-profits in China to have the resources to implement national conservation programs and it encourages other individuals to do the same. The Laohegou Land Trust Reserve demonstrates how a local non-profit can benefit from the expertise and experience from The Nature Conservancy can offer. The partnership between the China-based non-profit and the Nature Conservancy also demonstrates the creative problem solving that is being used to assist in these conservation issues. The Chinese government is unable to fully fund and manage their nature reserves, allowing for Chinese non-profits and other groups to have conservation land trusts in order to better execute conservation projects.

Land conservation is very much dependent on the terms of the conservation project, location, and local community. Global and local policies and responses to environmental threats will continue to change. It will be critical to look at each case on its own and assess the best methods forward for each particular situation. There are, however, proven methods of working with local communities and governments in order to have long term success.

Appendix 1.

Project Assessment Table

	Land	People	Government
Condition of Land at Purchase			
Stated Intended Projects/ Goals by Purchaser			
Success of Intended Projects Determined by Purchaser			
Long Term Effects of any Changes Made to Management of Land			

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