

COLLABORATION CASE STUDIES



Laura Calandrella Consulting

KEEPING FORESTS

Keeping Forests is a diverse coalition of partners from across multiple sectors working together to conserve the natural, economic, and cultural value of southern forests.

THE CHALLENGE

It is projected that by 2060, 23 million acres of southern forests will be lost. This loss will primarily be a result of increased population and urbanization.

That's a portion of land equal to 19 Grand Canyons that power a global economy, protect some of the most biodiverse habitats in the world, and provide clean air and water for over 105 million residents in the South.

In 2015, key leaders from a variety of sectors came together to share perspectives and discuss the future of this crucial resource. Eighty-six percent of southern forests are in the hands of private landowners, two-thirds of which are owned by families and individuals.

To keep southern forests as forests meant that innovative solutions would need to be found to address the threats created by fragmented ownership patterns and threats of land conversion.

Collaboration would require a wide range of interests – from environmental experts to private landowners, global corporations to government agencies – would need to unite under a shared vision for change.

Visit the Keeping Forests [website](#) for more information

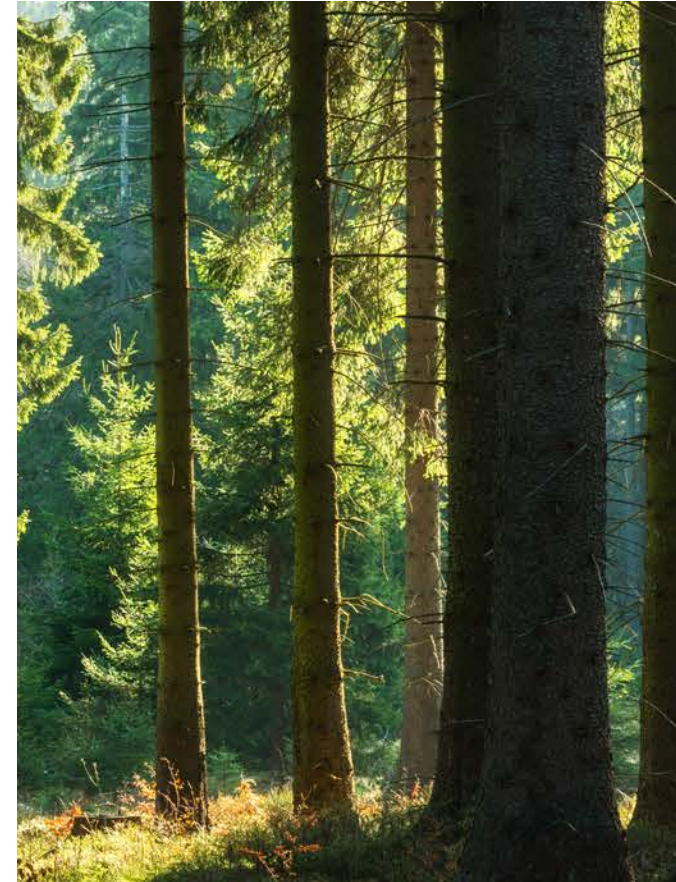
THE OUTCOME

Keeping Forests is now celebrating its fifth year of collaboration. Laura Calandrella has guided the development of this partnership since its inception. Her facilitation and collaborative conservation expertise has ensured the commitment of stakeholders to this vital effort.

Balancing passionate and sometimes opposing views, she designed conversations and strategies that resulted in a systems-level approach that is unique in the conservation community. The collaboration is focused on transforming markets and public support for southern forests in ways that will ensure their survival.

Her work has ensured the full participation of partners in defining the challenge in front of them from a 360-degree view. She has guided them through the stages of initiating action, organizing for impact, early execution, and, in 2021, evolving their methods as the effort matures.

She creates an environment where partners are free to share, discover, and challenge one another in healthy ways. Ultimately, this has kept the group aligned to their common agenda through the ups and downs that every collaboration naturally faces.



Laura understands what collaboration really means, how it has to be managed, and the power behind it if it's done right.

Scott Davis,
Executive Director | Keeping Forests

CREATING A COMMUNITY OF PRIVATE RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION CENTERS

There is a growing interest in the role of large private landowners to promote excellence in natural resource management, conservation, and sustainability practices. As more of these landowners emerge so too does a new community.

THE CHALLENGE

The Jones Center at Ichauway is a 29,000 acre property in rural southwestern Georgia. Funded by the Woodruff Foundation, it is committed to world class research that has advanced scientific understanding and management of natural resources. It was established in 1991 and has become a model for large landowner research and conservation initiatives.

Several other large landowner initiatives have emerged in recent years, all seeking the advice of The Jones Center along the way. It became apparent that a deeper conversation was needed to explore what opportunities might exist for greater coordination, leveraging of resources, or integration to create a southeastern-wide partnership.

Although the group shared a common commitment to land conservation, their backgrounds and missions were wide-ranging: from an 80-year old woman with a vision for land management through piney wood cattle to a foundation creating an environmental, agriculture, and research hub in Georgia.

The challenge was to ignite the spark of possibility between this group who was meeting for the first time in a virtual environment.

THE OUTCOME

Laura Calandrella designed and facilitated two half-day sessions that were held over Zoom. There were two main objectives for this meeting: 1) create a space where participants could build relationship; 2) explore what shape a collaboration might take.

An essential part of Laura's work with this group was to teach them that collaboration happens on a spectrum. From simple communication to creating movements, collaborations necessarily look different. She provided them with the necessary tools for self- and group-reflection to determine what their true desires were.

Presentations and conversations were brought to life through the use of a graphic facilitator. This helped to draw the connections that are often lost through virtual platforms.

The five organizations that walked "into the room" at the beginning walked away as a community of practice. They are committed not just to sharing knowledge and resources, but to creating a network of long-term organizations that lead to an adaptive landscape. An identity is taking shape and the group has agreed to convene to further define what that is.



Reference:

Kier Klepzig

The Jones Center at Ichauway | Director

SOUTHEAST NATURAL RESOURCES LEADERS GROUP

The Southeast Natural Resource Leaders Group is a collaboration of regional federal senior executives who lead agencies with a nexus to natural resource, conservation, protection, and stewardship in the southeastern United States.

THE CHALLENGE

The strategic alignment of senior executives in the federal government provides an undeniable opportunity to impact environmental and natural resource outcomes.

In 1984, the southeastern regional leads of 13 federal agencies established a forum committed to the common purpose of cooperatively fulfilling agency mandates in ways that promote wise management and sound stewardship of natural, cultural, and economic resources.

But in 2018, the group realized that it had lost its focus. They had shifted from collaborative, problem-solving gatherings to presentation-focused meetings. This approach denied the group a powerful opportunity to harness the collective wisdom of senior leaders.

There was a need to reignite the purpose of the group in a meaningful way that held true to its 30-year mission.

THE OUTCOME

Laura Calandrella designed and facilitated a two-day meeting focused on the central question:

“What is the strategic value and direction of the Southeast Natural Resources Leader Group?”

Through stakeholder interviews with each of the federal agency senior executives and their executive committee members, she surfaced the core purpose of the group and the obstacles that prevented them from realizing their potential.

The results of these interviews shaped the dialogue held during the two-day meeting. With a spirit of curiosity, openness, and vulnerability, these leaders worked through conversations that redefined their identity and affirmed their commitment.

They defined a new approach for collaboration, most importantly gaining clarity on the most important focus for future gatherings.

Laura continues to guide the design and facilitation of monthly, quarterly, and bi-annual meetings to sustain the momentum gained in the initial engagement.



Laura provided great vision in developing and delivering a complex agenda. She helped recalibrate the group's shared priorities, goals, and commitments.

Don Duerr,
USDA Forest Service | Region 8 Director

ACHIEVING THE GOALS OF THE SOUTHEAST CONSERVATION ADAPTATION STRATEGY

The Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS) brings together public and private organizations around a bold future for the future. They're connecting the lands and waters of the Southeast and Caribbean to support healthy ecosystems, thriving fish and wildlife populations, and vibrant communities.

THE CHALLENGE

SECAS was launched in 2011 by the states of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA) and the Southeast Natural Resources Leaders Group. SECAS emerged as a response to unprecedented challenges facing our natural and cultural resources, like urban growth and climate change.

These challenges present an opportunity to coordinate conservation action and investment around a shared strategy. The goal is a 10 percent improvement in the health, function, and connectivity of southeastern ecosystems by 2060.

At the heart of that goal is a data-driven spatial plan that is helping more than 240 people from 100 different organizations bring in new funding and inform their conservation decisions. This plan is known as the Southeast Conservation Blueprint.

In 2019, the US Fish and Wildlife Service hosted a symposium at the SEAFWA conference to highlight progress and engage stakeholders in achieving the "10% goal."

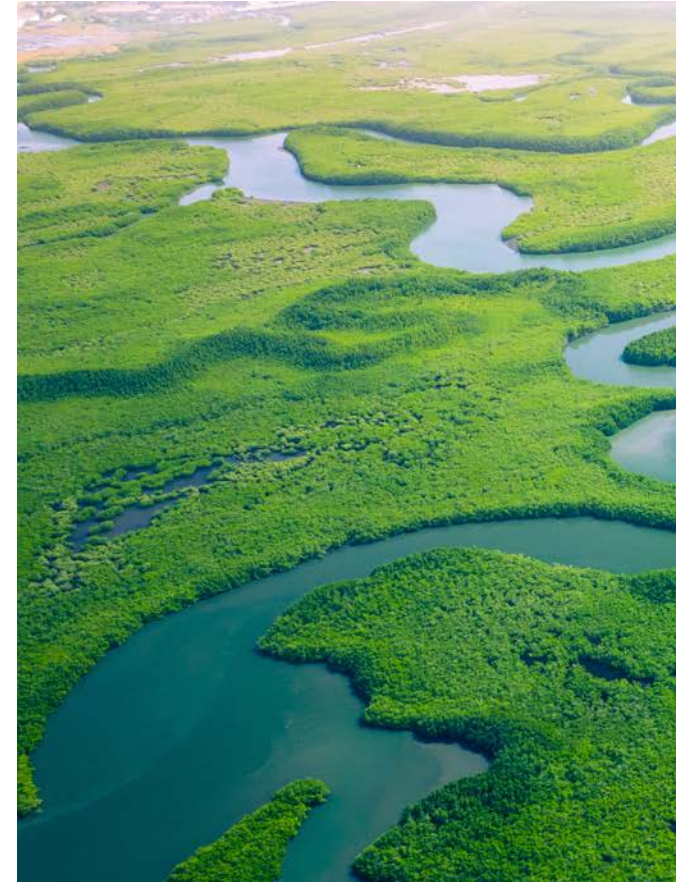
THE OUTCOME

Laura Calandrella designed and facilitated the half-day symposium. The goal was to identify a suite of actions that would advance progress toward the SECAS 10% goal.

Laura developed an approach that balanced information sharing with inspiration, engagement with action. A blend of presentations, robust panels, and small breakout groups enabled multi-layered learning.

Laura prepped the panelists so that they could weave their stories together in a way that supported the audience needs. She also provided training to breakout group facilitators on how to lead participants through a meaningful conversation.

All voices in the room were thus able to guide the future of SECAS. Five critical actions identified at this meeting: 1) hosting a state and partners open forum; 2) building a collaboration atlas; 3) standardizing data sets and metrics; 4) identifying and prioritizing terrestrial barriers; 5) improving SECAS communication.



Reference:

Mallory Martin
US Fish and Wildlife Service |
Coordinator, Southeast Conservation
Adaptation Strategy

GROWING SOLUTIONS TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN ATLANTA

Organizational leaders with deep roots in Atlanta's underserved communities come together to create America's largest urban food forest.

THE CHALLENGE

This group came together without a defined reason to collaborate or a single problem they wanted to solve. Their common agenda was this:

"We want to impact underserved communities in Atlanta through an environmental justice project."

The participants came into the project with vastly different needs:

- The federal government had money to invest;
- Two local non-profits with environmental justice missions needed funding for projects;
- The City of Atlanta had recently formed the Mayor's Office of Resilience/Sustainability and wanted a project to showcase;
- Two more non-profits were engaged, one with an urban forestry mission and one whose goal was to purchase and permanently protect working forests.

The opportunities were endless, but also the stakes were high. The collaboration had to fit perfectly for each of them and provide results quickly.

THE OUTCOME

Laura Calandrella helped the group to clarify their desire to rally behind a single project. They didn't envision a long-term collaboration. They wanted to demonstrate the power of leveraging resources to create a powerful outcome.

Through a series of meetings over the span of six months, the group wrestled with ideas and emotions. Many of the initial conversations revealed diversity biases that had to be addressed head-on. She created a culture where the group could challenge each other in healthy ways. This led to deepened trust and rapport.

The ultimate outcome of this project was the creation of Brown's Mill Food Forest.

Through this partnership, 7 acres of land in southeast Atlanta is now ripe with 2,500 pesticide-free edible and medicinal plants. It provides green space and healthy food to an area where 1 in 3 residents live below the poverty line and the nearest grocery store is a 30-minute bus ride away.

The forest is now owned by the parks department and more than 1,000 volunteers and neighbors help to plan, water, and maintain the forest.



The Brown's Mill Food Forest simply wouldn't have existed without Laura. She was able to bring us together and commit to taking action on this very important project.

Mario Cambardella,
Former Urban Agriculture Director |
City of Atlanta



Collaboration can unlock solutions you never imagined possible.

These are a few clients who I've helped discover how true that can be. The environmental and sustainability challenges in front of us need the collective wisdom and action of your group. I provide consulting and facilitation services that guide you toward results.

Let's talk about how I can help you.

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