

From the Interim Executive Director

When you're as large and significant a nation as the United States, it's understandable to think that size makes a difference. It's certainly true about our contribution to international trade, climate change, and global stability. But being a small nation does not make one inconsequential, a fact that was made evident at our World Forest Institute conference "When Small is Big," that featured our International Fellows talking about natural resource challenges they face at home and what is being done to address them.



Keynote speaker Dr. John Bliss, professor emeritus at Oregon State University, began with a presentation illustrating how a proboscis monkey in Borneo is connected to us in Oregon. Ben Hayes of The Pinchot Institute moderated the conference, asking questions of the speakers that highlighted the parallels and differences between Northwest forests and their home region.

The topics presented were wide-ranging both geographically and thematically. From battling severe water shortages in India and managing forest fires in Nepal, to monitoring atmospheric data in Japan and developing sustainable economic models for Guatemala's impoverished farmers, the Fellows painted a diverse picture of environmental issues impacting livelihoods.

Lessons abounded in these stories for the 60-plus diverse attendees. Chiao-ping Wang of the Taiwan Forestry Research Institute lamented how, decades after banning logging in Taiwan, the public decries even the trimming of a dying tree's limbs, leaving public managers with few options to maintain healthy forests. Michelle Yap from the Sabah Forestry Department in Malaysia commented on the difficulties that a negative public perception can create for active forest management. Jan Jenco of Slovakia's Ministry of Environment noted that there is a legal dualism across Slovakia where two different policy acts are in play on the same lands – one for timber and the other for conservation. In contrast, Hebe Carus of Scotland said that given Scotland's small land base, they don't have the luxury of delineating one area strictly for timber and another for conservation. Citizens recognize the need to integrate multipurpose land use for wildlife habitat, agriculture, timber, and development. I find that approach refreshingly pragmatic. Maybe being small does have its advantages after all.

Like the small countries doing big things highlighted by this event, our Sponsor, Vanport International, is a local leader in building global connections far larger than its relatively small company size. Based in Boring, Oregon, Vanport is a wood products lumber and trading company, supplying timber and certified wood to Asian and other markets. In company founder Adolf Hertrich and his wife Gaby, we found a shared desire to explore common natural resource issues which affect everyone on this planet. We are grateful for their sponsorship and making this event possible. We'd also be remiss not to thank Rainer Hummel, a 1995 WFI alumnus from Germany, now with WA Department of Natural Resources, who spent countless hours working with our Fellows in preparation for the conference. It was a great opportunity to bring past and present WFI Fellows together in a common cause.

Sara Wu
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