

NEXT GENERATION CONSERVATION: THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN EMERGING ECOSYSTEM SERVICE MARKETS

EDITOR'S NOTE*

On October 23, 2009, the *Duke Environmental Law & Policy Forum* (“DELPF”) presented its annual symposium, entitled *Next Generation Conservation: The Government's Role in Emerging Ecosystem Service Markets*.¹ In a unique undertaking, DELPF partnered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of Environmental Markets (“OEM”)² to present the symposium. The partnership could not have resulted in a more successful product.

As a young office with an energetic director, OEM was looking to corral the innumerable and invaluable ideas for developing ecosystem service markets. As an interdisciplinary environmental legal journal, DELPF brings together the leading thinkers on a single topic during its annual symposium—ideally shedding light on the hurdles and associated solutions presented by the topic. In choosing to partner with an academic forum, OEM was able to bring together a diverse set of minds, in the same place and at the same time, to discuss and debate the future of ecosystem service markets. DELPF was chosen because of its interdisciplinary resources, which match those needed by markets that cut across every sector of the economy. While there were high expectations from both sides, the enthusiasm within the symposium, from both speakers and attendees, surprised even our most ardent backers.

In any situation, success is a subjective term. For this event, there were at least two key factors. First was the benefit to OEM. OEM is, and will be, a major influence in the development and

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1. General information about the symposium, including the agenda, can be found at DELPF's website, <http://www.law.duke.edu/journals/delpf>. A webcast of the symposium can be viewed at <http://www.law.duke.edu/webcast/>.

2. Formerly the Office of Ecosystem Services and Markets (“OESM”).

viability of ecosystem service markets. This symposium was intended to give their office insight, multiple perspectives, and suggestions that could be turned into action. Writing this, months after the symposium, the success on that aspect is obvious. Since October 23rd, OEM has leaned on the people who participated and has implemented ideas that were proposed.

An equally important measure of success with a small but growing market is the awareness that our efforts create. Ecosystem service markets are still seen by some as an idealistic dream of environmentalists. We who believe in them must strive to establish that they are not a passing fringe undertaking, but a practical solution that is here to stay. On this front, the number of attendees, which filled one of Duke Law School's biggest lecture halls and then required two additional overflow rooms, helps show awareness. As does the nearly 3,500 viewers who watched real-time on the day of the event. But the most telling point here was perfectly encapsulated by Sally Collins, then Director of OEM, in her closing remarks. She noted that ten years ago, an event such as this drew five people. They were a group who believed, but who ended up talking largely amongst themselves. Now, ten years later, those same five people and others were able to speak to *thousands* about the future of ecosystem service markets. But even more than numbers was the diversity of those in attendance. She noted that the number and diversity of interested parties shows incredible momentum, and that when such a large group of people gets together, the momentum is sure to carry forth. Here is where the symposium truly succeeded—in spreading the future of ecosystem service markets not just to a large group of people, but to a large diverse group of people, people who will take the possibilities in new directions, to new places, and to more new people.

Of course, to achieve such an outcome a great many people worked an uncountable number of hours. I would first like to thank all of the panelists for their honest and intelligent input as well as their time. I would next like to thank Professor Jim Salzman and OEM Director Sally Collins. The idea started with them, and they both stayed intricately involved until the last guest departed. Also from OEM, Dr. Mark Nechodom and Elizabeth Larry were invaluable in putting together the content and coordinating between our groups. The symposium never would have happened without Tomer Hasson and Bradley Lerman, who were charged with coordinating and running the event from the DELPF side. Once the

dust cleared, Jonathan Skinner, the Managing editor of DELPF, has been integral in bringing this issue to print.

I sincerely hope that both the model and the content of 2009's symposium presented material that can be continued in the future. I also hope that readers will build upon the ideas and principles contained within this issue and carry a very promising market to its greatest potential.