

**Conservation and Leadership**  
**By Pat Graham, The Nature Conservancy**  
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Good afternoon. Developing human potential is one of the most important things we can do.

In preparing for this presentation I was thinking about who people might consider to be former leaders on water issues important to Arizona. I want to share four with you.

Collectively, **Senators Goldwater and Hayden and Representatives Mo and Stewart Udall** teamed up to pass the Colorado River Basin Act in 1968 that led to construction of the Central AZ Project. This is the same Stewart Udall who championed a host of environmental laws—Clean Air Act, Wilderness Act and creation of Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Or how about **President Theodore Roosevelt**, who signed the National Reclamation Act in 1902 to launch a federal program to construct irrigation projects across the arid west. He broke ground on the Nation's first project: Lake Roosevelt in AZ in 1903 (SRP). This is the same Teddy Roosevelt who created 150 National Forests, 5 National Parks and 18 National Monuments protecting 230 Million acres of land.

Or **Governor Bruce Babbitt** who negotiated passage the Arizona Groundwater Management Act in 1980, one of the most progressive groundwater acts in the country even today. As Secretary of Interior he created the National Landscape Conservation System and 15 national monuments.

Or **Bill Post**, former CEO of Pinnacle West and Arizona Public Service who made the decision to decommission and remove the 100 year old Childs-Irving hydro generation plant on Fossil Creek, reopening this stream to native fisheries—it is now designated a Wild & Scenic River.

**So who will be the leaders in the future?**

**It is a great pleasure to join you in a conversation about Creating New Leadership for Arizona.** This is a pivotal time, a time for inspired and determined leadership to find solutions that benefit people and nature.

I'm Pat Graham, director of The Nature Conservancy in Arizona. You heard from Lattie Coor earlier today about how our natural environment is considered by Arizonans as their most treasured asset. And they recognize the importance of planning for the protection and sustainable use of water.

**So what are we looking for in leadership?** Leadership comes in all shapes and sizes. Some are born to take charge; others are "reluctant leaders." I was a reluctant leader. I learned my skills on my feet, on the job. Through my career I watched and learned. And in my nine years working for The Nature Conservancy I have had the good fortune to work with people who have inspired me with their leadership both in Arizona and around the world.

There are many traits to successful leadership. Today, I want to focus on three:

1. Finding common ground
2. Relentless focus on results
3. Having a clear vision

**First I want to talk about finding common ground.**

***Let's go visit Holly Richter.*** That would be Dr. Holly Richter who grew up swimming in a creek in New York State as a kid. It turns out that the creek she so enjoyed was the very first preserve protected by The Nature Conservancy 60 years ago. So perhaps it was destiny that brought her to the Conservancy's San Pedro River program.

- Holly moved her career and her home to the San Pedro River about a decade ago.
- She was fresh off earning her doctorate degree in riparian ecology and her in words, "full of ecosystem modeling and science."
- Trouble was, no matter how great the models or how many pages of data she put in front of folks, they held onto their own beliefs about health of the river. One rancher would tell her, "The river's fine, it looks just like it did when I was a kid." A hiker would tell her there were new dry patches.
- Some people wouldn't even give her the time of day to discuss her science. Imagine that.
- It seemed like everyone along the river had a different view of its health and its future. For Holly, this wasn't adding up.
- So, she took a different approach and decided to get these various voices out onto the river to see what they'd discover. She brought them all together on the same day to walk parts of the river and map where it was wet and where it was dry.
- As you can imagine, this can be a little risky—sending people, some of whom don't agree on anything, out on the river and hope they'll take care of each other. Holly believed that if people got out of the meeting room and slogged in sand and water together it might change how they relate to each other. And, how they view the river.
- That was 1999 and those diverse groups have come together every year since. In fact, just a few weeks from now, more than 100 volunteers will cover 170 miles of the river in both Mexico and Arizona.
- The wet-dry mapping had other benefits. It has allowed us to see some improvement in areas where irrigation pumping has been retired and where effluent has been recharged into the groundwater.
- Why is this important? As many of you know, the San Pedro River is vital to Fort Huachuca and the city of Sierra Vista, two key economic drivers for Southern Arizona. It is also a river of life for the many species migrating through the Sonoran desert, including millions of birds each year.
- And with the support of groups like the Upper San Pedro Partnership, in November, the citizens will get to vote on creating a local water entity that will allow them to own and operate regional water infrastructure and create regional conservation programs to benefit the river, the community and Ft. Huachuca. This district would be a first for Arizona.

- Holly didn't choose leadership. People chose her. She first led the Upper San Pedro Partnership Technical Committee for ten years and now chairs the Executive Committee. Though the ecosystem models now guide decisions, the **leadership challenge remains---- finding common ground.**

**Let's take our journey to China to meet Dr. Quaoyu Guo (Chow-YOU Gwo) a water ecologist and the Yangtze River Project Manger for the Conservancy. She is a private woman with an intellect that has been called a "force of nature." Her laser-like focus and unrelenting discipline has led to conservation progress on the Yangtze River.**

For those of you who don't know the Yangtze River:

- Originating in the glacial melt waters high up on the Tibetan Plateau and flowing 4,000 miles to the Pacific, the Yangtze is the third longest river in the World.
- For thousands of years the Yangtze has sustained Chinese civilization and literally shaped its history.
- One in every three people living in China lives along the Yangtze River, many of whom rely directly on the river for their livelihood and survival.
- There are over 400 different kinds of birds and 350 species of fish including 140 found nowhere else in the world.
- As China's energy needs escalate and the pressure to reduce greenhouse gasses grows, the government plans to build 12 new large dams on the Yangtze to join the nearly completed Three Gorges Dam, the worlds' largest hydropower facility.
- Quaoyu understood the importance of the River and had an unwavering belief that without conservation-minded scientific expertise these dams would lead to the demise of the Yangtze, which in her words was already "tired and unhealthy." It would jeopardize the fish population, the main source of protein for tens of millions of Chinese people.
- With the stakes at an all time high she and her team worked tirelessly to bring together hydropower companies and other non-profit organizations to develop sustainable alternatives to the design and operation of the proposed dams.
- As you might imagine China's governing system made this slow and complex and the team challenged traditional concepts on hydropower operation and flood risk management.
- I'm pleased to report that due to Quaoyu perseverance the Conservancy recently formalized key alliances by entering into Memorandums of Understanding with the Three Gorges Company and the Yangtze Water Resources Commission. These agreements will allow us to reduce the impact of the dams and work to ensure water releases mimic the natural flows of the River.
- Despite the obstacles Quaoyu encountered she remained disciplined and focused on achieving results. This leads me to the third **characteristic of leadership and perhaps the most important, having a vision.**

**Let's travel to Colombia to meet Aurelio Ramos, director of conservation for the Conservancy's Latin American programs.**

Aurelio is an economist. A charismatic man, he was once asked to try out for Colombia's national soccer team. He had another vision, however. After being named one of the top entrepreneurs under 35 in Colombia, he decided to turn his attention to saving nature.

In 2000, TNC helped launch a water fund in Quito, capital of Ecuador. A voluntary fee on water bills helped pay for protection and restoration of national parks and lands in the high Andes damaged by agriculture. The purpose was to improve water quality as these areas provide the drinking water for Quito.

Aurelio believed that if we could create a self-sustaining water fund in Bogotá, it could gain recognition and create momentum to replicate the program across the region—improving water quality for people while restoring nature.

To achieve this vision he knew they had to have strong science, supported by economics and willing partners.

First he enlisted support from the water company and then set his sights on the largest brewer of beer—Bavaria, who's success depends on a clean source of water, and people who like to drink beer. Before his presentation was complete, the company executives stopped him and asked, "How much money would it take?" Following the successful launch of the water fund in Bogotá in 2008, the Conservancy has helped launch a dozen more across Latin America, with a goal of 32 by 2015. Our ultimate goal is to protect over 9 million acres of watershed providing water to over 50 million people.

As we work with the citizens of Arizona to create The Arizona We Want, **we must all** develop a clear vision, have relentless focus on our objectives and build the common ground needed to create enduring results. As we see from leaders in the past, it is not a question of choosing between a healthy environment OR a healthy economy. We need both, one supports the other.

In Arizona leaders today and in the future will wrestle with issues of achieving sustainable use of water in the face of population growth, decisions about how to allocate water among uses, the tension between those in urban areas served by renewable water supplies and those in rural areas dependent on groundwater, declining water supplies as a result of uncertain climate and competition for water within the Colorado basin, and how to create flexibility in the system to protect our remaining rivers and the rich diversity of wildlife that depend on them.

I would like to close with these words of Carl Sagan, "**Anything else you're interested in is not going to happen if you can't breathe the air and drink the water. You are by accident of fate alive at an absolutely critical moment in the history of our planet. Don't sit this one out. Do something.**"