

Summary of NACCB Interactive Session on Developing Best Practices for Conducting Conservation Science and Citizen Science on Private Lands

*Co-organized by Dr. Amy Johnson of the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute
and Dr. Ashley Dayer of Virginia Tech*

Conservation on private lands is an integral component of sustaining biodiversity and reversing species decline. While organizations across the Americas are independently developing techniques to optimize the effectiveness of conservation research on private lands, there are minimal opportunities to share knowledge, tactics, and recommendations from lessons learned. For this interactive session, conservation scientists and practitioners from Canada to Latin America came together to highlight exemplar programs, build collaborative relationships and combine expertise to streamline strategies that increase effectiveness of conservation programs on private lands across North America.

The session began with a brief presentation by Ashley Dayer, a conservation social scientist from Virginia Tech, introducing the importance of private lands for conservation, highlighting insights learned from recent social science research, and identifying gaps in knowledge that we hoped to address during the session.

The session then transitioned into a panel discussion where four presenters shared lessons-learned from experts in [social science](#) (Rebecca O'Brien, Ph.D. Student, Virginia Tech), [citizen science](#) (Amy Johnson, Program Director, Smithsonian's Virginia Working Landscapes), [landowner-biologist relationships](#) (Lauren Connell, Stewardship Director, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies) and [translating conservation science into action](#) (Nick Clarke, High Divide Project Coordinator, Yellowstone to Yukon Initiative). Take-home messages included important recommendations including best practices on how to gain access to private lands for research, how to communicate with landowners, building trust, sharing results and building partnerships to optimize success. The panel then took several questions relating to conducting research on private lands which brought up important points relating to diversity and inclusion and challenges associated with documenting endangered species.

The session then transitioned into three breakout rooms focusing discussions on best practices for gaining access to private lands for research (1), cultivating relationships with landowners through the research process (2), and impacts of research on private lands conservation (3). Session participants were given opportunities to share experiences working on private lands through two 15 minute sessions, resulting in a collection of examples and resulting recommendations for developing successful conservation science programs in collaboration with private landowners and citizen scientists. These discussions are currently being summarized by session organizers and will be shared with the SCB and scientific community via a publication in 2021.