



Caring for the Land

A decade of promoting landscape stewardship in Central Europe

"The point of stewardship is that you can't save any area, any land, if you exclude from it people and their activities. Nature is best protected not by nature conservation authorities but by the people who live on it."

Andrea Viceníková, Daphne Institute of Applied Ecology





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Staré Město, Czech Republic, 2000

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Foreword

Stewardship is a way of relating to the environment that is as old as human consciousness. Caring for the earth is not new to Central Europe, where much of the landscape and its natural treasures have been shaped by centuries of human settlement. Only relatively recently has the long symbiosis between people and the environment in the region been strained.

Since 1989, new techniques for landscape stewardship—many of them first developed in North America—have helped people in Central Europe restore their ties to the earth. Landscape stewardship has provided powerful new tools for preserving landscape and heritage. It also has served as a valuable instrument for rural development and community revitalization. Perhaps most importantly, and somewhat unexpectedly, stewardship has proven effective in fostering a vital civil society in the post-Communist societies of the region.

Ten years since the 1989 revolutions, this report looks at the role that landscape stewardship has played over the past decade in addressing some of the challenges faced in the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia. It provides in particular an informal look at the impressive work undertaken by nonprofit organizations throughout the region.

Many of the activities described here have been inspired, nurtured and developed with assistance from the Landscape Stewardship program developed by the Quebec-Labrador Foundation's Atlantic Center for the Environment and the Environmental Partnership for Central Europe. Their integrated program of fellowships, study tours, workshops, and technical assistance has involved hundreds of professionals and decisionmakers as well as dozens of organizations from North America and Europe. The Landscape Stewardship Program has been made possible thanks to generous support from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the German Marshall Fund of the United States, the Trust for Mutual Understanding, the Merck Family Fund, the French Foundation, the United States Information Agency as well as scores of counterpart exchange hosts in the United States and Europe.

Much of the practical implementation of landscape stewardship initiatives in Central Europe has been supported by the Environmental Partnership foundations in the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia. Since their establishment in 1991, the foundations have supported over 2,100 community based initiatives in the region. The work of the Environmental Partnership and its local partners and grantees has been generously supported over the past decade by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the German Marshall Fund of the United States, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and over 40 other private foundations, organizations, governments, and businesses (*see appendix for list of donors*).



New techniques for landscape stewardship have helped people in Central Europe address the environmental devastation left by Communism as well as confront new challenges. More importantly, and somewhat unexpectedly, stewardship has helped foster a vital civil society in the post-Communist societies in the region. Photo: Ibra Ibrahimovič

This report, which was commissioned by the Environmental Partnership for Central Europe and QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment, draws heavily on an in-depth study conducted by Ladislav Ptáček, an independent consultant with extensive experience in nature conservation and landscape stewardship. It was written by Andreas Beckmann of the Environmental Partnership for Central Europe with extensive input from Brent Mitchell, director of stewardship programs for QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment, and Miroslav Kundra and Rafał Serafin, directors of the Czech and Polish Environmental Partnership foundations, respectively.

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Ipswich, Massachusetts



1989: Challenge and Opportunity

The wild, virgin forest of Białowieża in eastern Poland presents a stark contrast to the sickly trees, belching smokestacks, and moon landscapes of the so-called “Black Triangle” in northern Bohemia that are much more fixed in the Western image of post-Communist Central Europe.

Seemingly paradoxically, the top-down organization and sheer inefficiency of Communist regimes served to preserve many historical landscapes with their traditional patterns of human settlement. The centralized effort to exploit coal for energy and increase industrial production ravaged northern Bohemia, but left Białowieża, large parts of the Carpathian Mountains, the Hungarian lowlands, and many other areas of the region relatively intact. As a result, besides “hotspots” with sick forests, poisoned rivers and devastated landscapes, Central Europe in 1989 actually possessed a much greater treasure of biodiversity than Western Europe. It also had a rich cultural heritage, including a diversity of dialects, dress, architecture, cuisine, customs and traditions that had developed over centuries in close connection with the land.

The fall of Communism gave hope to areas like the Black Triangle, which for 50 years had been subjugated to five-year plans. But the changes also presented new challenges and threats to areas like Białowieża or the White Carpathians that had survived relatively unscathed.

The sweeping political changes set in motion a number of forces that are shaping the region’s landscapes. The change to a free market system and reintroduction of private property intensified use of land and natural resources. Many areas like the Jura, a beautiful karst area on the edges of the booming Kraków-Katowice conurbation, have been threatened by the rapid development of shopping centers, roads and residential areas. Previously abandoned border areas, like those tucked within the folds of the former Iron Curtain, suddenly became crossroads.

Other marginal areas, including many parts of the Carpathians, have been buffeted by a persistent crisis in agriculture, the migration of young people to the cities, and aging of those that remain. Traditional land use patterns have been disrupted and plots abandoned. Forests are replacing orchards, fields and meadows. Cultural landscapes with their unique ecosystems and biodiversity—not to mention human culture—are being lost.

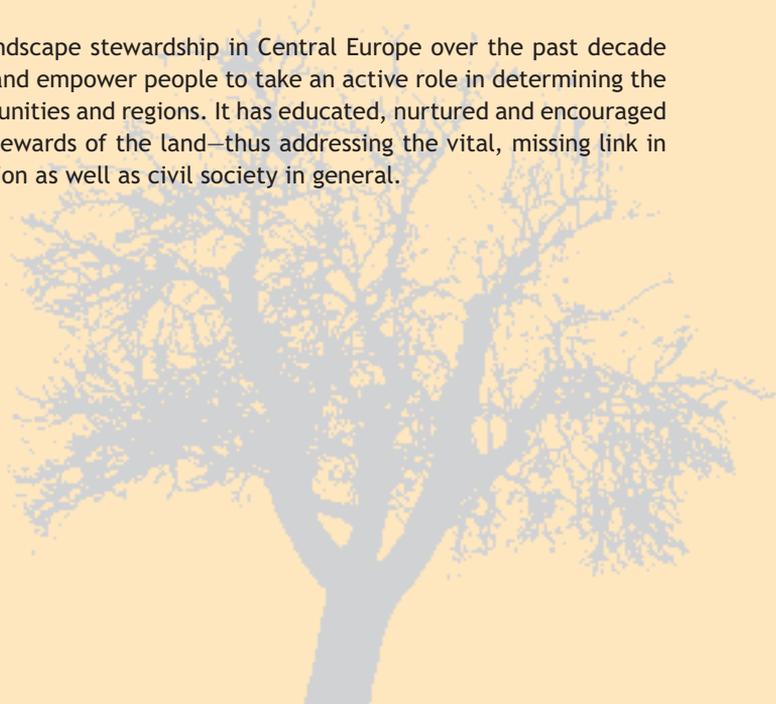


Fortunately, the system of national parks, nature reserves and other protected areas left by the Communist regimes was good. The situation was comparable to Western Europe in terms of the extent of protected areas, criteria for their selection as well as their management. The system was even expanded after 1989 to bring under protection some areas that previously had been left untouched, like the Šumava and Podyjí National Parks, established in the former no-man's land between East and West.

The fate of other areas without formal protection rests in the hands of the people living on and using the land or reclaiming it as their own. Privatization and restitution of property as well as the decentralization of decisionmaking on the one hand has created a great opportunity to involve people directly in caring for the land and natural values. But it also has presented a challenge. Missing in the top-down approach to conservation before 1989 were the people—as individual owners and users as well as civic organizations and communities. Under Communism, environmental protection, like everything else, was the purview of the state and not of individual citizens.

Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians and Poles were little prepared to take advantage of the opportunities and to shoulder the responsibilities brought by the revolutions in 1989. Half a century of Communism had eroded the notion that one should or even could care for the land. It had discouraged genuine civic engagement and suppressed the development of independent civic initiatives. People were little used to working together, weighing other perspectives, forging compromises, and resolving conflicts.

The real value of landscape stewardship in Central Europe over the past decade has been to involve and empower people to take an active role in determining the future of their communities and regions. It has educated, nurtured and encouraged people to become stewards of the land—thus addressing the vital, missing link in landscape conservation as well as civil society in general.



Caring for the Land

When the term stewardship is used with respect to natural resources, it means—in its broadest sense—people taking care of the earth. More specifically, it can be defined as efforts to create, nurture, and enable responsibility in landowners and resource users to manage and protect land and its natural and cultural heritage.

Stewardship taps our basic human impulse to care for our home and its surroundings—be it a parcel of land, a neighborhood, an historic building, or the larger area of a watershed, mountain range, or stretch of coastline. It builds on our sense of obligation to other people: our family, our community, and future generations. By fostering individual and community responsibility, the stewardship approach puts conservation in the hands of the people most affected by it.

The stewardship approach offers a means of cultivating local involvement and reaching beyond the boundaries of conventional protected areas. It takes an overall view of the land and builds on traditional means of landscape management to meet changing needs. With education as its foundation, stewardship draws on a broad array of tools, including verbal or formal agreements by stakeholders to use the land in a sustainable manner, public/private partnerships in protected areas management, creation of direct income incentives for protecting land, or its outright acquisition.

Principal characteristics of stewardship:

Relies on private and public/private approaches

Creates, nurtures and enables responsibility in users and owners to manage and protect land and natural resources

Builds on traditional means of management to meet changing needs

Takes an overall view of the landscape, particularly addressing conservation needs on land which cannot be separated from human existence and commerce.

Strengthens local and regional identity and culture

Empowers people and is a long-term social investment

Adds value to conventional national park and protected area approaches to nature conservation



Stewardship taps our basic human impulse to care for our home and its surroundings. By fostering individual and community responsibility, the stewardship approach puts conservation in the hands of the people most affected by it. Photo: Czech Environmental Partnership

In responding to conservation challenges, stewardship can include sustaining traditional land uses, such as farming and small-scale forestry, which are important to ecological, economic and scenic values; creating biological corridors, greenways and trails across privately owned or managed land; through partnerships, enhancing the ability of government agencies to acquire and manage publicly owned parks and protected areas; protecting open space and fragile natural areas in the face of development pressures, especially in areas where planning controls are weak; as well as conserving biodiversity through protection of habitats.

Though the focus of stewardship is often on private initiatives—of individual landowners, resource-users, businesses and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—government control plays a key role, providing a framework in the form of tax and other incentives, land use planning, and a supportive climate for private organizations. In no way does land stewardship replace or substitute for conventional national park and protected areas approaches to nature conservation. On the contrary, stewardship initiatives add to, enhance and otherwise make more effective top-down conservation because they help build a public constituency of support for nature protection.

Bringing Landscape Stewardship to Central Europe

QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment in cooperation with the Environmental Partnership for Central Europe have been fostering the stewardship approach in Central Europe since the early 1990s. The two organizations have developed an integrated program of mutually-reinforcing methods for training, technical assistance, professional exchange and community-based planning projects that have involved hundreds of decisionmakers and a variety of local stakeholders from the region. Small grants from the Environmental Partnership foundations have supported practical implementation of dozens of stewardship initiatives. *See appendix for a complete list of Landscape Stewardship programs and participants.*

Landscape Stewardship Fellowship Program in New England

Since 1993, over 30 conservation professionals from Central Europe have participated in an annual, month-long fellowship program on land conservation and stewardship. The intensive program is practical and problem-solving in its approach, introducing participants to conservation issues in the northeastern United States and enabling them to begin a dialogue among themselves and with their North American counterparts.

Landscape Stewardship Exchanges

Interdisciplinary teams of conservation and development experts from Central and Western Europe as well as North America have been brought together to advise local stakeholders on development issues. The model relies on a combination of community organizing at the local level and the outside perspective provided by the international team to stimulate public participation and a dialogue among diverse stakeholders.

Landscape Stewardship Workshops

Workshops featuring alumni of the program as well as US experts have brought stewardship concepts to broader audiences in Central Europe. The four-day workshops rely on practical exercises, interactive discussions, and field trips to introduce participants to a range of practical tools for land conservation.

Local Leaders Study Tours

Designed to reinforce the Landscape Stewardship Exchanges, these programs focusing on local democracy and natural resources include traveling seminars in rural regions of northeastern North America and Central Europe for local leaders such as mayors, rural development professionals, protected area managers, and conservationists. The study tours are complemented by workshops on leadership and management skills.



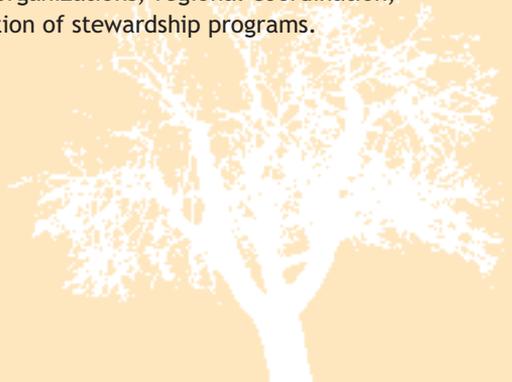
The Liptov region in northern Slovakia, which has been a focus for support through the Landscape Stewardship program, has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past decade. Communities have pulled together to develop and implement a vision for their future, including preserving their cultural and natural heritage and developing small-scale tourism. In one project, local residents renovated the chapel at Dlhá Lúka in Kvačany. Photo: A-projekt

Technical Assistance

Specific skills and training to NGO partners have been provided as necessary. For example, the leader of a highly successful program for “community visioning” in New England visited Slovakia to help organizations there develop programs in public participation. More recently, an American expert has made trips to the Czech Republic to assist with creation of land trusts.

Regional Working Group/Alumni Retreats

Fellowship, exchange and assistance programs in Central Europe are aimed at developing a strong, organized constituency for civil society and sustainable development acting regionally. Periodic retreats for “alumni” of these programs have provided continued interaction among peer organizations, regional coordination, as well as strategic planning for the continuation of stewardship programs.



The Power of a River

The 1997 Landscape Stewardship Exchange that the Foundation for the Jizera Mountains helped organize in Frýdlant in northern Bohemia and a subsequent visit of New England community leaders to the region turned out to be an important turning point in the development of the foundation, and possibly of the region as well.

"People from completely different conditions came here and offered the local people a unique opportunity to talk about their problems," notes Kateřina Lauer-mannová of the Department for Regional Development of Liberec district. *"Our people got the chance to look at their region through the eyes of someone else."*

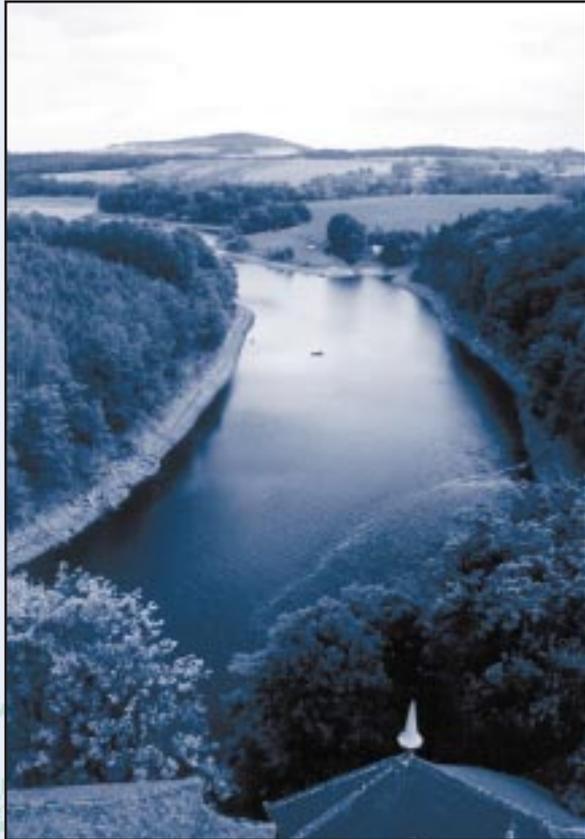
Dušan Richter of the Foundation for the Jizera Mountains describes one moment during the 1997 exchange: *"An old forester said that in the past, when there used to be forests up in the catchments of the Směda river, it could rain for four days and the water level would barely change. Now, after two days people downstream have to watch for flooding or even evacuate their villages. I saw how people taking part in the workshop started making the connection. They suddenly realized how much a person in Višňová, twenty kilometers from the Jizera mountains, is affected by the condition of the mountain forests."*

The workshops convinced the Foundation for the Jizera Mountains to expand their activities from reforestation in the mountains themselves to take on a broader range of activities, including economic development and social as well as cultural concerns in surrounding communities. In addition to establishing new grant programs focused on community development, the foundation established a new organization, the Society for the Jizera Mountains, which has become the main motor for sustainable development initiatives in the Jizera Mountains area.

The Landscape Stewardship Exchange also led to the establishment of the Frýdlant Association by community leaders, businesspeople, and NGOs, many of whom had come together at the workshop for the first time. One of their first steps was to take up the suggestion of their American visitors to use the river Směda as a potent symbol and an axis connecting the mountains and the communities below.

The Frýdlant Association has since developed a rich program of concerts, educational activities, and special events focused on the river and mountains, and connecting the communities along its banks. In cooperation with the Society for the Jizera Mountains, the association is now taking the next step and has begun a number of initiatives for sustainable development in the region. They are currently developing cycling trails and accompanying services that will link to routes across the nearby borders with Germany and Poland.

“Development of the Frýdlant area since the Landscape Stewardship workshops now serves as a model for initiatives that we are trying to develop in other parts of the Jizera Mountains region,” says Blažena Hušková, director of the Society for the Jizera Mountains.



The Smědá river has become a potent symbol for the Frýdlant region and an axis connecting the Jizera Mountains with the communities at its base. The focus for common identity is particularly important in this former Sudeten area, which lost its identity, cultural continuity and community with the loss of its predominantly German population following the Second World War. Photo: Society for the Jizera Mountains

Stewardship in Central Europe

Landscape stewardship in the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia has differed considerably from its application in the United States and Canada. For the Central European societies, the value of North American experience with stewardship lies in its general approach, impetus and inspiration more than in specific techniques, which often do not apply to the different conditions in the region.

Land easements, for example, common in North America, have little significance in societies that traditionally have low rates of taxation on land. Many areas of Central Europe are relatively densely populated, and the landscapes themselves and their ecosystems have been shaped by centuries of human settlement. At the same time, local economies are still relatively poor. As a result, the emphasis for landscape stewardship has not been so much on strict protection as on landscape management and sustainable development. Land acquisition, which has played a central role in North America, generally has taken the backseat in Central Europe to work with conservation authorities and landowners for conservation management as well as initiatives, like eco-tourism, that promise to provide an economic rationale for sustainable land use.

More fundamentally, stewardship in the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary has focused on developing the social infrastructure for people to care for the earth. Much more than in North America, stewardship in Central Europe has involved strengthening the capacity and skills of civic organizations; developing techniques for conflict resolution and public participation; and fostering understanding of different backgrounds and perspectives.

“The most someone could do for our NGOs would be to train the activists in communication. To learn fundraising is not so difficult, but to learn from others, to really listen and think about what others are saying—that’s a real problem. This inability to exchange experience is the biggest limit to the development of Czech conservation NGOs. At first I thought the main problem was money, but I realized that one can only do so much, and that unless we are able to communicate conservation better to more people, we will not move forward.”

Petr Dolejský, ČSOP Bílé Karpaty, Czech Republic

From orchids to town councils

The moving force for stewardship in Central Europe undoubtedly has been non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Many of the groups in the region have strong roots in very hands-on nature conservation, which before 1989 was tolerated by the Communist authorities as being seemingly apolitical. Stewardship has helped many of these organizations see their conservation work in a broader context.

Kosenka, a group based in the eastern Moravian town of Valašské Klobouky, is representative of others. It started in the early 1980s focused on preserving rare species of orchids in the White Carpathians. Like other branches of the state-sanctioned Czechoslovak Union of Nature Conservationists, most of the group's activities focused on hands-on efforts to maintain local ecosystems and biodiversity. The organization became known nationwide for the brigades of volunteers it organized every year to mow the area's flowering meadows.

"People thought we were a bit crazy and called us flower boys," admits Miroslav Janík, Kosenka's charismatic director. Stewardship helped broaden the group's approach. *"We gradually realized that our efforts to save the orchids would be pointless over the long-term unless we took a more holistic approach that involved the interests of the people living in the area,"* Janík explains.



The traditional St Nicholas Day Fair in the Moravian town of Valašské Klobouky that the environmental group Kosenka revived several years ago has become a major celebration of local Wallachian culture on both the Czech and Slovak sides of the White Carpathian Mountains. Photo: Czech Environmental Partnership

"The White Carpathian landscape is a result of a partnership between man and nature and among people. We won't save what is left of it unless we go back to the idea of partnership and multilateral relations. Now again we can show areas where there are 250 hectares of well-grazed pastures thanks to partnership between farmers and conservationists. This is all only because people could join together. And the fact that the area is growing somehow more naturally means to me that there is also a greater chance to achieve lasting results."

Mirek Janík, director, ČSOP Kosenka, Valašské Klobouky, Czech Republic

Today, Kosenka is a driving force for sustainable development in the local area of Wallachia. Several of the organization's members serve on the town council of Valašské Klobouky. Besides its continuing efforts to maintain local ecosystems, Kosenka has been working to develop and market local crafts and products. Thanks to the group's work with area farmers, sheep have returned to the hillside meadows of the area; and the traditional St Nicholas Day fair that the organization revived several years ago has grown into a major celebration of local Wallachian culture and identity.

Kosenka's broader approach to its work is changing not only people's attitudes to the former "flower boys", but also their relations to the meadows and orchids that were at the group's beginning. *"People here used to distrust the conservationists,"* says Josef Mana, mayor of the village of Potec, which has been working with ČSOP Kosenka for the past six years. *"Kosenka was the first to convince people through their daily work—when people saw the amount of energy Kosenka put into its work, they started to accept a different opinion."*

Reviving old ways—with a modern twist

The flowering meadow ecosystems of the White Carpathians with their rare species of orchids are the product of centuries of human settlement. The tremendous diversity of fruit that is native to the region—over 250 species, especially apples—is largely the result of human cultivation. For centuries, orchards have spread out like fans from the villages that dot the region. Hundreds of wooden-plank fruit-drying houses once dappled the landscape. From apple cakes to plum brandy, fruit has shaped the area's cuisine as much as its festivities.

The long history of settlement in Central Europe shaped not only the landscape and its ecosystems, but also the people living on them, influencing their lifestyles and culture. Only relatively recently has the symbiosis between man and nature in many parts of the region been broken. Achieving sustainability often means returning to old methods—though usually with a modern twist.



For centuries, animal husbandry was an important feature of local economies, culture, as well as the landscape in many parts of Central Europe, particularly the Carpathian Mountains. But sheep and cattle have disappeared from many areas thanks to competition from abroad. A number of environmental groups now are supporting local farmers to reintroduce cattle and sheep, like these in the White Carpathians, to maintain meadow ecosystems as well as produce meat and wool.
Photo: Jiří Dobrovolný

In the White Carpathians, cheaper, mass-produced and chemically-treated imports are undermining demand for local produce; as a result, area residents have less incentive to care for their orchards, and native species are disappearing. Sheep, once a central feature of life in the northern reaches of the White Carpathians (evident, for example, in the felt hats and dress as well as shepherd music and culture) and important for maintaining meadow ecosystems, have given way to competition from New Zealand. Kosenka is part of a broader coalition of NGOs, local communities, farmers, businesspeople, and state organs on both the Czech and Slovak sides of the White Carpathians that are seeking to develop and market traditional crafts and goods made from local produce. The initiatives are expected to strengthen the local economy and create an economic rationale for preserving the area's natural and cultural heritage.

A juice-processing plant will soon start operation on the property of the Veronica Environmental Foundation in the village of Hostětín, while a marmalade factory is planned for Valašské Klobouky. Kosenka and other groups are also looking into commercial uses for wool from local sheep, including use for home insulation. The different products are marketed under a special brand, *Traditions of the White Carpathians*, which creates a connection to the area and its qualities.

Pride of place

Though initiatives like those in the White Carpathians in many ways signal a return to former ways, the approach—through public participation—is quite new. The salient feature of landscape stewardship is a concerted effort to involve people in looking for and implementing sustainable land use practices. In the context of post-Communist Central Europe, the approach is nothing but revolutionary.

There is probably no better example of the power of tapping people to be part of solutions than the work of A-projekt, an 11-person NGO based in Liptovský Hradok in northern Slovakia. The organization was established in early 1992 to present practical alternatives to government plans to bring the Winter Olympics to the Tatras Mountains, a project which promised to devastate the area's environment and change its communities and culture beyond recognition.

The Tatras were given a reprieve, giving A-projekt the chance to initiate a gradual transformation of the Liptov region from the bottom-up. The idea was to build on the inherent qualities of the area to preserve natural and cultural heritage by developing soft tourism and other unrecognized potential for economic development. Guest accommodations were created by rehabilitating abandoned or underutilized houses rather than building larger hotels. Many rare examples of traditional wooden architecture have been saved in this way from demolition.

In addition to promoting these new resources, which benefit the local population directly, programs have improved the attractiveness of rural villages to visitors. In the small village of Kvačany, for example, bus stops made of stone and wood, or attractive garbage containers are small signs of greater changes. The result is an economic incentive to maintain the rural character of the villages rather than redevelop them into generic tourist destinations.

A-projekt and the Liptov region have been one of the main foci for the QLF-EPCE Landscape Stewardship program. Director Vlasta Körnerová and several other people from the region have been on fellowships to New England and have participated in follow-up workshops and alumni retreats. A 1995 Landscape Stewardship Exchange focused on alternative development for the Liptov region. In addition, A-projekt and Liptov have received considerable technical assistance, including help in developing programs for community participation and visioning. *"The benefits (of the Landscape Stewardship program) are complex," Körnerová says. "You learn completely new ideas, which can be useful at home; it is a source of inspiration for projects, publications, and reports; but more importantly, when you are doing something very new, it is very important to meet others doing something similar."*



A-Projekt has been helping Slovak communities like Vlkolínec, a small village which has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, to both protect and exploit their cultural and natural heritage. Photo: A-projekt

The result has been more than economic. The initiatives have given local residents a pride of place and sense of empowerment. *"In communities where we have supported small projects,"* says Vlasta Körnerová, A-projekt's founder and director, *"people have realized that honesty can pay off more than dishonesty."*

Local ownership of initiatives is key. As Körnerová explains, A-projekt self-consciously works as an initiator rather than develops its own projects. The group works closely with local inhabitants to determine their communities' resources and limits for development, develop a vision, and then put it into practice. A-projekt has been a pioneer in Central Europe in developing community micro-grants and micro-loans funds. Other programs include *Listening*, in which local inhabitants interview one another, and a program for developing children's management skills.

Despite the work of A-projekt, other organizations and communities in the Liptov region, plans to hold the Winter Olympics in the area have not disappeared. The government still plans to invest Sk 60 billion (about USD 1.3 billion) for the event. A-projekt's plan is much cheaper. *"Based on our experience with small grants and micro-loan programs, promotion, information centers, study trips, etc.,"* Körnerová says, *"we have calculated that if we had Sk 260 million for 5 years, we could have a friendly, hospitable region with 30,000 beds."* The number, she claims, is well within the carrying capacity of the region and should bring in about Sk 1 billion per year. *"Now when you invest Sk 60 billion,"* Körnerová continues, *"then in 2006 there will be a big bang, but how much will it bring back permanently?"*



People for parks

Across the Tatras Mountains and the Slovak-Polish border from Liptovský Hradok is Babia Góra, an imposing peak that dominates the surrounding countryside and forms the center of the Babia Góra National Park. For years, the National Park authorities and the nearby community of Zawoja have been at loggerheads over use of the park and surrounding lands. The conflict is almost a cliché for relations between conservation authorities and neighboring communities in Central Europe: the former uphold the need to safeguard natural values, while the latter push for their exploitation.

The Polish Ecological Club and the Polish Environmental Partnership Foundation have turned to landscape stewardship to try to unravel the conflict around Babia Góra and transform it into a mutually beneficial relationship for both the park and surrounding communities.

A 1999 Landscape Stewardship Exchange workshop organized by the two organizations in cooperation with the QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment brought a team of conservation experts from North America, Western and Central Europe to the region for an intensive five-day battery of meetings with different local stakeholders. The team's presence brought some of the National Park authorities and community leaders together for the first time. The foreigners with their outside perspective helped the two sides to focus on the region's qualities and realize their common interest in preserving the mountain and other heritage values that give the area its identity. The workshop also served to develop first ties with conservation authorities and communities on the other side of the mountain in Slovakia.

The vision that grew out of the workshop was to develop sustainable tourism around the park and mountain—a significant shift from the mass tourism, modeled after the nearby resort town of Zakopane, that had been favored by many area residents. A number of initiatives are now under way to develop cycling routes and other tourist products as well as promote the area, particularly as part of the Amber Trail stretching from Kraków to Budapest. Projects have also begun in cooperation with Slovak partners on the other side of Babia Góra.

Dominika Zaręba, one of the organizers of the Babia Góra Landscape Stewardship Exchange, notes some of the changes that have taken place since the workshop. *"When you talk to people, they tell you things they did not realize two years ago—like in Zawoja, where people did not realize before that they could involve local NGOs in development action, and now are asking them for help. They want to involve more and different groups, which means that they are no longer afraid to talk and discuss things. And they see that when they talk to different groups, they can change more than when they remain alone."*



In a region where landscapes and biodiversity have shaped and been shaped by centuries of human settlement, natural and cultural heritage are closely connected. As a result, many of the people and organizations working to protect the environment in Central Europe are also interested in preserving traditions and culture. Photo: Dominika Zaręba

Zaręba herself participated in a Landscape Stewardship Exchange in Frýdlant in northern Bohemia in 1997 and now works with the Polish Environmental Partnership and Polish Ecological Club to develop sustainable tourism in the region. She notes the value of using the stewardship approach for protecting Babia Góra and other national parks. *"You can have legal buffer zones, clearly defined with discrete borders and imposed by law, or you can have social buffer zones when people understand that if they take care of a forest they might get more tourists and more business. They will own the buffer zone."*

Preserving land

Stewardship in Central Europe has inspired a creative and flexible approach to conservation and expanded the tools available for protecting land and nature. *“The general idea (of stewardship) is simple,”* says Istvan Gyarmathy, director of the Alliance of Greens in Debrecen in Hungary and a participant of the 1992 Landscape Stewardship Fellowship in New England. *“There is always more than just one way of protecting the landscape.”*

Gyarmathy’s organization has joined forces with the Hungarian Ornithological and Nature Conservation Society and the Bihar Nature Protection Association to preserve the wooded steppe of the Bihar region in southeastern Hungary near the Romanian border. Together, the three groups have established a land trust, which currently covers 500 hectares of the area’s forests, fields as well as dry and wet meadows.

In addition to outright acquisition, the partners work with local farmers and secure from them voluntary agreements for land stewardship. The approach, says Gyarmathy, presents hope particularly for wetlands, which traditionally have no value and thus are often drained for other uses. *“It is nice when we can convince people that they should let wetlands continue to exist, and that they even have economic benefits for them, such as haymaking, reed cutting, hunting and fishing as well as less material values like nature’s beauty or ground water protection.”*

The Hungarian Ornithological and Nature Conservation Society (commonly referred to by its Hungarian acronym, MME), one of the partners in the Bihar initiative, is probably the strongest and most professional organization involved in stewardship work in Central Europe. It operates five land trusts throughout Hungary covering 5,200 hectares and manages another 10,000 hectares. Among the organization’s other initiatives is a major program to protect the Great Bustard, whose population in Hungary has plummeted over the past fifty years from 8,000 to just 1,000.

Strict protection by law is not enough to keep the Great Bustard’s numbers from dwindling further. The fate of the threatened bird and the grasslands it prefers for nesting is tied to agricultural practices, including how land is cultivated and grazed, as well as the sensitivity of agricultural workers to the bird and its nests.

“It is necessary to reconcile people with the land they live on. I think that stewardship can never work in a community or area, where people are negative to their home.”

Blažena Hušková, Foundation for the Jizera Mountains, Czech Republic

In addition to lobbying government for measures and legislation that can improve the state of grasslands, including an agro-environmental scheme that was recently introduced, MME has established Great Bustard information centers around the country. The organization also has been working with state conservation and agricultural authorities to reach those directly involved in deciding the bird's fate, particularly tractor and harvester drivers, small farmers, and managers of large farms. Besides distributing leaflets, putting up posters in pubs and on bulletin boards, and working with the agricultural extension service, the two program coordinators travel about 100,000 km per year visiting farms and field workers as well as monitoring the birds. The approach is expensive, but ultimately cost effective, says Szabolcs Nagy, MME director of conservation: an increasing number of farm workers follow the fairly complex instructions regarding what to do when they encounter a nest. MME is also seeking to revive shepherding skills as another way to preserve grassland habitats.

MME's independence and good reputation are key assets. *"It is important that we do not have any legal power in our hands,"* says Nagy. *"We must develop very cooperative relations with farmers, both on the lowest level and in top management. Goodwill is essential for our work."*



The Daphne Institute of Applied Ecology has combined science with stewardship to restore wetland habitats in the Morava floodplain in southwestern Slovakia. The group works closely with volunteers, local inhabitants and farmers. Photo: Daphne Institute of Applied Ecology

Applying Science for Stewardship

A young group of environmental scientists at the Daphne Institute of Applied Ecology, based in the Slovak capital Bratislava, have developed a three-step approach to their conservation work that intimately links science with stewardship. According to Director Jan Šeffer, Daphne starts each project with data collection and research. This is followed by efforts, including information campaigns such as *Wetlands for Life* and *Meadows for People* as well as educational programs for schoolteachers and farmers, to raise awareness and attract interest to the results of their research. Actual project implementation, such as habitat restoration, completes the cycle.

A main focus for Daphne is the wetland area of the Morava floodplain at the western edge of the country. One project that is now in the final implementation phase is converting 130 hectares of fields in the floodplain to wet meadows, their original form.

Gaining people's trust is most important, Šeffer says, since the first reaction of any farmer to an outsider offering advice is "who asked you?". One way to get around this is to let the farmers themselves define the problems they see and to offer them help where possible. "We must know how to solve problems, offer know-how, help farmers overcome their personal limits such as cooperating with competing farms, and bring some money to support implementation," Šeffer explains. The group started its work in the Morava floodplain by doing a small public opinion poll among local people, which it then was able to use in its meetings with local residents and decisionmakers.

"The greatest success I see is that we have proven in the Morava floodplain that meadow restoration can be done, even without state support," says Šeffer. His colleague Andrea Viceníková adds: *"The great thing is that the re-conversion of fields into meadows is done by the farmers themselves using our methods, which we have tested on a smaller scale. We have convinced the farmers and they do it themselves."*



2,000 landlords

The ability of NGOs to involve different people and groups in conservation work make them valuable partners for state conservation authorities as well as communities. ČSOP Bílé Karpaty, which was established by former employees of the White Carpathians Landscape Protection Authority, is typical of many other groups across the region who work closely with state organs.

Members of ČSOP Bílé Karpaty are working to protect the 700-hectare Čertoryje nature reserve. At present, they are negotiating rights to manage the area's meadow ecosystems with the 2,000 landowners that got back their family's traditional narrow strips of land in restitution. The task indicates the scope of the challenge that restitution and privatization have created for conservation in Central Europe.

"We can't work the same way as in the US, not only because of lack of money but also the problem of ownership rights," says Jan Šeffler of the Daphne Institute of Applied Ecology. He explains that in Slovakia, land used to be divided equally among children. The result has been a very fractured structure of land ownership. *"Twice we have tried to buy some land,"* Šeffler notes, *"but two acres have 30 owners, out of which only five are possible to find."*

Stewardship the American way, in which control over an area is gained through purchase or with easements, is less possible in Central Europe. But the basis of the idea—caring for the landscape—is still there. *"We just need to do it in another way, which may be more complicated and demanding,"* Šeffler remarks. It requires constant work with people. *"We have only one option: to influence people with information, money, etc.,"* Daphne's director notes, and then adds, *"but it is not a bad option".*

Working with landowners and other stakeholders takes time. Everyone involved in stewardship in Central Europe agrees that progress is slow, made up of many small but nevertheless significant steps. Involved in conservation work for the past ten years, Petr Dolejský of ČSOP Bílé Karpaty says that he has gradually changed from being a pessimist to become a moderate optimist. He explains: *"When I visited farmers ten years ago, they would 'welcome' me with a pitchfork, or they would tell me to get lost. After three years, they offered me coffee, but still were convinced that cows could not graze on the White Carpathian meadows without dying from hunger. Now, the farmers are interested in breeds that can stay out at pasture not for one week but for the whole season. That is a tremendous change in the minds of these people."*

Selected Stewardship Achievements in Central Europe

Czech Republic

For three years the Czech land trust movement has received support from the Ministry of Environment. The program, *Space for Nature*, is led by a national NGO, the Czech Union of Nature Conservationists (ČSOP). A ministerial committee on land trusts has been charged with recommending further measures, including legislation, to encourage further development of land trusts. Twenty organizations have been officially accredited as land trusts by the Land Trust Board.

Landscape Stewardship Program alumni have been crucial to the promotion of stewardship at the ministerial level and within ČSOP.

Hungary

A National Land Trust Network has been established by the Hungarian Ornithological and Nature Conservation Society (MME). The five land trusts that are currently in existence directly own 5,200 hectares and manage another 35,000 hectares. Three additional land trusts are currently in preparation.

Education programs for landowners have been initiated by Landscape Stewardship Program alumni over a large part of the country.

Poland

A Stewardship feasibility study has been completed, as well as a policy analysis of new planning legislation, development trends, and implications of European Union integration. Landscape Stewardship Program alumni have played an important role in this process. Mirek Mirowski, an alumni of the Program, has succeeded in introducing land stewardship to Poland's debt-for-environment facility, the EcoFund Foundation, and involves NGOs on an ongoing basis in implementation of biodiversity conservation projects

Slovak Republic

Efforts have focused on integrated rural development initiatives for villages, with dramatic changes in attitudes towards conservation and community approaches to land use, development and conservation. Landscape Stewardship Program alumni have been leading efforts in Liptov and the White Carpathians.

Lessons learned



A decade of experience with fostering stewardship in Central Europe offers the following lessons:

1. NGOs are key

Though there are many examples of very active communities, it has been NGOs that really have been the driving force behind stewardship in Central Europe. Unlike national and local governments, who come and go with elections; state organs, who must answer to a higher authority; or private businesses, who follow the whims of the market, independent, nonprofit NGOs have served as a stable base for the kind of long-term development that stewardship requires. Their independence and credibility have been important in mobilizing people and involving different stakeholders.

2. Invest in people and social infrastructure

Investing in people and in development of social infrastructure is expensive, but, as the changes described in these pages indicate, the return on investment can be considerable. *“The most needed investment in our country is in social capital, not industry,”* says Mirek Janík of ČSOP Kosenka. *“It is better to have 100 sheep and cut 100 hectares less, but send people abroad to learn something, even if we know that not everyone will eventually become a leader.”*

3. Offer complex assistance

A broad and flexible palette of assistance, from fellowships to workshops and technical assistance, has proven the real strength of the Landscape Stewardship Program. The ability of the Environmental Partnership foundations to offer small grants for practical implementation of stewardship initiatives also has been important.

4. Make a commitment over time

Longevity of commitment is essential to cultivating partnerships, and to giving both sides time to learn about the characteristics of the other region. A long-term exchange program, reaching a growing cadre of participants and using a variety of interventions, offers greater potential for impact than a short-term project.

5. Concentrate assistance

Concentrated and complex assistance to targeted areas, like the White Carpathians, the Liptov region in Slovakia, Frýdlant, and Babia Góra, has helped develop strong organizations with broad local support. Many of these groups, like A-projekt in Slovakia, are now catalyzing the development of other initiatives locally and even nationwide.



6. Bring in a wide range of disciplines, backgrounds and interest groups

Particularly in regions like Central Europe where practitioners typically have relied on highly specialized approaches to solving problems, the exchange is enriched when it brings people together across sectoral and disciplinary—as well as geographic—boundaries.

7. Involve government-level decisionmakers

Particularly the Czech experience shows the value of focusing not only on NGO leaders but also involving government decisionmakers that are willing to listen to new ideas. The direct involvement of a section director of the Czech Ministry of Environment in the program has been crucial for furthering the development of land trusts in the country.

8. Build strong partnerships

Strong exchange programs are best built on strong partnerships among cooperating organizations. The partnership between QLF/Atlantic Center and the Environmental Partnership and close ties with key local organizations have been invaluable in assessing needs, identifying participants, carrying out projects, ensuring follow-up and tracking progress.

9. Explore opportunities with the business sector

Once a favorable climate is created for joint local action for conservation, experience shows both an opportunity and a need to promote revenue-generating activities and co-operation with the business sector. In the White Carpathians, the sheep and the new juice factory generate revenues and jobs. The potential for cooperation with the private sector both locally and internationally is still largely unrealized.

10. Progress is slow

Everyone involved in landscape stewardship agrees that change does not come quickly. *“I learned after the initial enthusiasm that we have to take little steps,”* says Istvan Gyarmathy of the Hungarian Alliance of Greens. *“We won’t achieve big results in a short time. It is a long and difficult path with little but nevertheless important results.”*

Schools for Social Change

The garden with native plants in front of the primary school in Biały Kościół not only makes the village center more attractive but also promotes social change in the Jura Upland of southern Poland. The garden was designed and planted by school-children, teachers, and parents as part of a special program that seeks to increase awareness and appreciation of the flora and fauna of this beautiful karst region, which is facing intense development pressure from Kraków, just 20 km away. Just as importantly, the program seeks to foster partnership between local citizens, government, and businesses. *“Next to the church, schools are at the center of small communities in Poland and thus are the natural place to initiate social change,”* says Andrzej Biderman, coordinator of the Jura program.

Developed by the Polish Environmental Partnership in cooperation with Ojców National Park and the Jura Upland Landscape Protection Authority, the Jura program fosters awareness of the rich natural and cultural heritage of this karst area. It also promotes alternatives for local development that both respect and protect these treasures, particularly environmentally-friendly tourism to serve the booming Kraków-Katowice conurbation.

School programs also involve children in acting as assistant rangers for the Jura Upland, both to care for and interpret its natural and cultural heritage for visitors. The school garden in Biały Kościół has already led to further initiatives, including the establishment of “energy teams” composed of children, teachers, parents, and school officials that in cooperation with local authorities have achieved significant energy savings in the school and area homes.

The garden with native plants in front of the primary school in Biały Kościół is a natural place to initiate social change.
Photo: Dominika Zaręba





Stewardship Works

The most important lesson is that stewardship works. Benefits of stewardship in Central Europe go far beyond nature conservation.

Conserving landscape and heritage

Stewardship expands the circle of people, organizations, and sectors involved in protecting landscape and heritage, and offers a variety of practical tools and approaches for conservation.

Developing NGOs and social infrastructure

Stewardship can provide a positive focus for cooperation with other organizations and sectors and thus strengthen an NGO's position within a community or area. It promotes professionalism, integrity, and long-term development of civic organizations, and encourages them to be flexible and pragmatic, open rather than closed, inclusive rather than exclusive.

Reviving rural areas

Based on involving and empowering people, stewardship can serve as a powerful antidote to the apathy and passivity that characterizes many rural communities in Central Europe in particular. It fosters local and regional identity and pride of place. Stewardship encourages different stakeholders to develop and work toward a common vision for long-term, sustainable development of their community or region.

Generating jobs and local business opportunities

Many of the most valuable areas are also the poorest, often subjected to years of neglect. By creating a sense of common values and purpose among local people, land stewardship generates new business opportunities and a sense of entrepreneurship—a sense of the need for and benefits of taking the future into your own hands.

Fostering civil society

Perhaps most importantly, stewardship catalyzes civil society development. It encourages people to resolve conflicts and build cooperation, moving beyond narrow differences to focus on broad common interests. Particularly in post-Communist Central Europe, stewardship has promoted civic engagement and constructive relations between people, organizations, and across sectors and national borders.

Moving forward



The next step in moving stewardship forward in Central Europe is to involve central governments, who thus far have remained largely outside of the picture. Despite clear benefits in terms of heritage protection and local development, Central European governments have not followed their North American counterparts in creating more favorable conditions for stewardship.

Legislation governing the establishment of land trusts is generally inadequate, and there are no taxation or other incentives to encourage their development. Financial support for public/private conservation initiatives is limited. State policies, for example governing environment and agriculture, often work at cross-purposes to one another.

Moreover, governments have pursued nature conservation policies in isolation of one another. Aside from some cross-border Biosphere Reserves, little has been done to build a Central European agenda for nature conservation. The pressure for such an agenda is now on as some of the Central European countries negotiate accession to the European Union. Landscape stewardship with its transnational networks and strong constituency of local support is an obvious place to start building such a strategy.

To a certain extent, the Czech Republic presents an exception. Nonprofit land trusts are expected to play a significant role in the country's nature conservation strategy. The Czech Environmental Ministry has recognized that NGOs are not only valuable as stewards of private land, but also are often better caretakers of public lands as well. It has set up a special committee to recommend legal and financial measures to support and encourage the establishment of land trusts and other stewardship arrangements. At present, about 20 land trusts have official accreditation. The number could soon reach a couple hundred, according to Pavel Pešout of the Land Trust Commission, who estimates that around half of the 350 organizations in the Czech Union of Nature Conservationists (ČSOP) currently act as land trusts without being officially recognized as such. Legislation on developing an ecological network of bio-corridors and bio-centers across the country's territory has been in place since the early 1990s and is slowly being implemented, encouraged by some financial support from a number of state funds.

Financial sustainability is another concern for many of the NGOs who have been most active in landscape stewardship in Central Europe. North American sources, which have been a major support for these activities over the past decade, are disappearing from the region; replacements are proving difficult to find. State support is dwindling, philanthropy is still little developed, and outside sources like the European Union are still almost impossible to access as national governments increasingly play the role of intermediary and give little space to nongovernmental organizations.



Stewardship works—if given enough time. Will post-Communist societies in Central Europe manage to take stock of their heritage and develop a vision for its future before it is lost? Photo: Dominika Zaręba

Perhaps the greatest concern is time. Change across Central Europe already is occurring at a breathtaking pace, and is only bound to quicken with expansion of the European Union. It is presenting communities with a *fait accompli* before they even realize what is at stake. Greenfield developments around booming Kraków and Katowice are devouring the karst landscape of the Jura Upland faster than the people living there can realize the natural values that they are losing.

Stewardship by its nature is a slow, organic process of communication and relationship building, of gradual change in perspectives and culture. It is a process of nurturing people and communities that cannot be accelerated. This is particularly the case in Central Europe, where ten years after the fall of Communism the societies are still learning how to communicate and cooperate, to take stock of their heritage and develop a vision for its future.

A start has been made—now it is time for partnership action across sectors and borders to build a truly Central European nature conservation policy “from the ground up”.

QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment

The mission of the Quebec-Labrador Foundation (QLF) and its Atlantic Center for the Environment is 1) to support the rural communities and environment of eastern Canada and New England, with special emphasis on encouraging education and leadership in young people; and 2) to create models for stewardship of natural resources and cultural heritage that can be applied worldwide.

The Atlantic Center for the Environment has conducted international programs since 1980, and has been active in Central and Eastern Europe since early 1989. Atlantic Center's International Program is based on a philosophy that experience from work in the organization's original geographic area—the Atlantic Region—provides a foundation for mutually beneficial exchange with other regions of the world. Atlantic Center programs are today most active in Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East.



"The (Landscape Stewardship) fellowship has had a very great impact on my career. Before, I was only familiar with the traditional top-down conservation methods used in our nature conservation. In New England, I learned about different approaches involving NGOs, local people and landowners. Two elements were of particular importance to me: methods of encouraging landowners to take care of their land in an environmentally-friendly way, and methods of land acquisition by NGOs."

Istvan Gyarmathy, director, Alliance of Greens, Debrecen, Hungary

Environmental Partnership for Central Europe

The Environmental Partnership for Central Europe is a consortium of five indigenous foundations in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and, since 2000, Romania that are focused on stimulating community-based environmental action and citizen participation in Central Europe.



Since their establishment in 1991, the Environmental Partnership foundations have invested over USD 10,000,000 in support of more than 2,100 individual projects and provided various forms of training and technical assistance to some 3,000 organizations. The foundations are currently the most significant private source of funding for community-based environmental initiatives in Central Europe.

In addition to working with QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment to foster landscape stewardship in Central Europe, the Environmental Partnership foundations have supported much of the practical implementation of stewardship initiatives in the region. Funding for the hundreds of small grants that the Environmental Partnership has awarded for such initiatives has come from a wide range of private foundations, governments, organizations, and businesses, including:

Austrian Ministry for Family, Youth, and the Environment • Barbara Gaunlett Foundation • BP Poland • Canada Fund • Charities Aid Foundation • C. S. Mott Foundation • Conanima Foundation • Czech Ministry for Local Development • Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt • DHL International s.r.o. • German Marshall Fund of the US • Honeywell Foundation • Jenifer Altman Foundation • Joyce Mertz-Gilmore Foundation • Jurzykowski Foundation • Luxemburg Ministry of the Environment • MATRA (Dutch government) • Monsanto Europe • Moriah Fund • Novem • Open Society Fund • Pew Charitable Trusts • PHARE Partnership • QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment • Rockefeller Brothers Fund • Sacharuna Foundation • Sasaki Peace Foundation • Sendzimir Foundation • Stefan Batory Foundation • Trust for Mutual Understanding • United Kingdom Know How Fund • USAID • Winslow Foundation • WWF Norway • and others...

Landscape Stewardship in Central Europe

List of programs organized by QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment and the Environmental Partnership for Central Europe, 1989-2000

1989 International Youth Conservation Exchange • New England, USA

QLF/Atlantic Center expanded its UK exchange program to include Central Europe for the first time. The five-week program for young conservation professionals combined a study tour and practical assignments, focusing on rivers and natural area conservation. **Participants:** Zsuzsanna Asvanyi (Hungary); Zsolt Csikor (Hungary); Alister Duncon (Scotland); Murray Ferguson (Scotland); Wenley Ferguson (USA); Fiona Gemmel (Scotland); Diane Hewlett (Scotland); Raymond Hunter (Scotland); Kristin Illick (USA); Réka Könczey (Hungary); Rosa Lameira (Portugal); Scott McEwen (USA); Charles McKay (USA); Julianna Nagy (Hungary); Patricia Nash (Canada); Miklós Puky (Hungary); Michael Scott (Scotland); Jennifer Stern (USA); Valéria Szekeres (Hungary); Peter Thomas (Canada).

1990 International Youth Conservation Exchange • Hungary

The young conservation professionals exchange was hosted in Hungary by the Independent Ecological Center. Focusing again on rivers and natural area conservation, the five-week study included an inventory of a critical Danube woodland. **Participants:** Caroline Bagshaw (Scotland); Katalin Barabás (Hungary); Norah Barnes (Scotland); Gregor Beck (Canada); Sandra Bureau (USA); László Czuni (Hungary); Jiří Dusík (Czechoslovakia); Péter Frakas (Hungary); Vivienne Halcrow (Scotland); Ferdinand Heinz (Hungary); Whitney Kaulbach (USA); Réky Könczey (Hungary); Wendy Kuntz (USA); Viktor Lovász (Hungary); Katalin Maros (Hungary); Julianna Nagy (Hungary); István Reith (Hungary); Matt Rosenberg (USA); David Shaftoe (Hungary); Florence Shaufler (USA); Peter Thomas (Canada); Leslie Wallace (Scotland).

NGO Management Training Fellowship • New England, USA

Drawing on experience from offering similar courses for Latin America and the Caribbean, QLF/Atlantic Center provided training on NGO management for organizations in countries emerging from totalitarian regimes. Participant Zsuzsa Foltanyi went on to direct the Environmental Partnership in Hungary. **Participants:** Rosemarie Benndorf (Germany); Zsuzsa Foltanyi (Hungary); György Pal Gado (Hungary); Victoria Gonzalez Vela (Spain); Robby Marschall (Germany); Miguel Rafa i Fornieles (Catalonia, Spain).

1991 International Youth Conservation Exchange • Scotland, United Kingdom

The exchange program for young conservation professionals completed the triangle with Central European and North American participants in a study tour with counterparts in Scotland. **Participants:** Migdalia Acevedo (USA); Alexis Aguilar (USA); Linda Banks (Scotland); Agota Horvath (Hungary); Alexey Janes (Scotland); Andras Kovacs (Hungary); Fiona Lawrence (Canada); Meredith Levy (USA); Tracey Lloyd (Scotland); István Reith (Hungary); Phillip Richemann (Scotland); Eva Schad (Hungary); Claire Seymour (Scotland); Dyanna Smith (USA); Peter Vali (Hungary); Robin Webster (USA); Ian Whan Tong (Canada).

Technical Assistance in River Conservation • Hungary, Czech and Slovak Republics

QLF/Atlantic Center facilitated a trans-Atlantic NGO partnering of river water-quality monitoring groups, which included staff exchanges and practical training. **Participating organizations:** River Watch Network (Vermont, USA); Adirondack Visitor Interpretive Center (New York, USA); Göncöl Foundation (Hungary).

Individual River Conservation Fellowships • New England, USA

Two separate individualized programs exposed leading river conservation groups in Central Europe to techniques of their New England counterparts. **Participants:** Kata Barabás and László Szilágyi, Göncöl Foundation (Hungary); Jaromír Síbl and Lydia Varčėková, Slovak Union of Nature and Landscape Protectors (Czechoslovakia).



Participants of one of the first landscape stewardship workshops organized by the Environmental Partnership and the QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment in Brumov in eastern Moravia in 1994. The workshop, which was attended by farmers, local and state officials as well as conservationists, drew on experience of land trusts in New England to explore techniques for conservation of privately owned land, a newly recognized opportunity and challenge. Photo: Veronica Ecological Institute

1992 Fellowship on Land Conservation and Environmental Education

- New England, USA

Participants: Alexander Harna, Ipel Union (Šahy, Slovakia); Jitka Pellantová, ČSOP Veronika (Brno, Czech Republic); Szilvia Cseráp, Göncöl Foundation (Budapest, Hungary); András Fernengel, Törökbálint Natural History Group, Göncöl Foundation (Törökbálint, Hungary); István Gyarmathy, Hortobágy National Park, Alliance of Greens, Hungarian Ornithological and Nature Conservation Society (Hungary); Marek Maciejowski, ECOBALTIC Foundation, Polish Ecological Club, (Gdańsk, Poland); Magdalena Szulc, Pro Natura (Wrocław, Poland).

Individual Fellowships on Land Conservation

- New England, USA

Participants: Annettee Beleites, Department of Nature Protection (Schwerin, Germany); Rein Kuresoo, Estonian Fund for Nature (Estonia).

River Stewardship Workshop

- Hungary

"Involving Citizens in River Conservation: the Role of NGOs" brought together 25 Hungarian and Slovak environmentalists for a training and joint strategy session. **Local partners:** Independent Ecological Center and Göncöl Foundation.

1993 QLF/Atlantic Center Staff Research Project: "Stewardship in Central Europe"

- Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Austria, Germany, Switzerland

The Landscape Stewardship Program was initiated in Central Europe following seven months research by QLF/Atlantic Center's Jessica Brown and Brent Mitchell.

Landscape Stewardship Workshop

- Poland

Tools for working with private landowners in conservation of natural areas. **Local partners:** EcoFund and ProNatura.

1994 Landscape Stewardship Fellowship

- New England, USA

QLF/Atlantic Center's first Central European fellowship focusing specifically on stewardship. **Participants:** Peter Albrecht, Regional Office of Environment District Planning Authority, Czech Union of Nature Conservation (Prostějov, Czech Republic); Nad'a Gutzerová, Association of Friends of Nature, Brontosaurus Movement (Žatec, Czech Republic); Mojmir Vlašín, Czech Institute for Nature Protection, Brno City Council (Brno, Czech Republic); Márta Márcis, Ministry of Environment, Zsámbék Basin Association for Landscape Protection (Budapest, Hungary); Ferenc Márkus, Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) Hungary, Hungarian Ornithological and Nature Conservation Society (Budapest, Hungary); Małgorzata Piotrowska, Chelm Landscape Protected Area, Bird Protection Society of Lublin (Lublin, Poland); Mikuláš Lisický, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Society for Sustainable Living (Bratislava, Slovakia); Peter Gažík, Slovak Environmental Agency, A-projekt (Liptovský Mikuláš, Slovakia); Alexander Zavadovych, Znesinnya Landscape-Historical Park, Regional Lviv Foundation (Lviv, Ukraine).

Workshop: "Tools for Stewardship"

- Brumov, White Carpathians, Czech Republic

The first workshop to focus specifically on land conservation, this three-day workshop drew on experience of land trusts in New England to explore techniques for conservation of privately owned land, a newly recognized opportunity and challenge. Over 60 Czech NGO conservationists participated. **Local partners:** ČSOP Veronica and ČSOP Kosenka. **Faculty:** Ed Becker, Essex County Greenbelt Association (Massachusetts, USA); Mary Ellen Boelhower, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (New Hampshire, USA); Marian Spain, Countryside Commission (England, UK).

River Conservation Workshop

- Slovakia

Planning and training for the fledgling Slovak Rivers Network. **Local partners:** Slovak Union of Nature and Landscape Protectors. **Faculty:** Elliot Gimble, QLF Upriver Program (USA); Gwendolyn Hallsmith, Institute for Sustainable Communities (Vermont, USA); Tim Traver, Upper Valley Land Trust (Vermont, USA).

Landscape Stewardship Exchange: Enlargement of the Pálava Biosphere Reserve

- Mikulov, Czech Republic

Participatory problem-solving exercise focused on land-use issues in the Pálava region. This was the first time this program model, based on a planning exchange among the US, UK and Canada that QLF Atlantic Center helped found in 1987. The Pálava program focused on proposed expansion of the Protected Landscape Area, and brought together key stakeholders for the first time. **Local partner:** ČSOP Adonis. **Participants:** Tomas Brückmann, Gruene Liga (Germany); Christian Ganzert, Institute for European Environmental Policy (Germany); Christopher Hamilton, NE Vermont Development Association (USA); Roger Merchant, University of Maine Cooperative Extension (USA); Zuzana Mesencevová, Slovak Union of Nature and Landscape Protectors (Slovakia); Libor Musil, Masaryk University (Brno, Czech Republic); Katarína Rajcová, Society for Sustainable Living (Slovakia); Brian Shupe, Town of Stowe Planning (Vermont, USA); Joy Smart, Countryside Commission (England, UK).

1995 Landscape Stewardship Alumni Retreat

- Czech Republic

This three-day workshop brought together fellowship alumni from all four target countries. Regional Working Group on Land Stewardship established.

Landscape Stewardship Exchange: Community Development in the White Carpathians

- White Carpathians, Czech and Slovak Republics

Exchange focused on community development and conservation along the new border area in the White Carpathian Mountains. **Local partners:** Czech Union of Nature Protectors and Society for Sustainable Living. **Participants:** Rick Carbin, Vermont Scenic Preservation Council (USA); Pierre Derioz, University of Avignon (France); Anna Polujanska, Foundation for the Development of Polish Agriculture, (Poland); Katarína Rajcová, Society for Sustainable Living (Slovakia); Tara Zadeh, Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture (USA).



Dozens of Central European conservationists, NGO leaders, and local and state officials have visited New England to study new techniques for landscape stewardship, community organizing and leadership. Photo: Jessica Brown

Landscape Stewardship Exchange: Alternative Development of the Chočské vrchy Mountains
• Slovakia

This exchange explored opportunities for alternative development and conservation of an area adjacent to the Tatras mountains. **Local partner:** A-projekt. **Participants:** Jeff Brown, Appalachian Mountain Club (New Hampshire, USA); Janet Dwyer, Countryside Commission (UK); Eddie Gale, Vermont Community Foundation (USA); Hal Hamilton, Center for Sustainable Systems (Kentucky, USA); Rastislav Horička, Slovak Agency for Rural Development (Slovakia); Jaroslav Ungerman, Löw & Co. (Brno, Czech Republic); Vladivoj Vančura, Tatras National Park (Slovakia).

1996 Landscape Stewardship Fellowship • New England, USA

The program consisted of a study-tour, individual assignments and a week-long case study of the role of conservation in economic development of the Androscoggin Valley near Berlin, New Hampshire. **Participants:** Petr Roth, Ministry of Environment, Department of Nature Protection (Prague, Czech Republic); Jan Jongepier, Bílé Karpaty Protected Landscape Area, ČSOP Bílé Karpaty (Veselí nad Moravou, Czech Republic); Katarína Rajcová, Society for Sustainable Living (Trenčín, Slovakia); Andrea Viceníková, Daphne Foundation for Applied Environmental Research (Bratislava, Slovakia); Jacek Kaliciuk, Green Federation Szczecin/West-Pomeranian Ornithological Society (Szczecin, Poland); Joanna Lápuc, Foundation in Support of Local Democracy (Białystok, Poland); Igor Solovii, Ukrainian Ecological Association "Green World" (Lviv, Ukraine).

Workshop: "Tools for Stewardship" • Radějov, Czech Republic

This workshop reviewed progress in land stewardship since the previous meeting in Brumov and brought the concept to new audiences, especially relevant ministries. **Local partner:** ČSOP Bílé Karpaty. **Faculty:** Gina Campoli, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (USA); Carl Powden, Vermont Land Trust (USA).

Workshop: "Tools for Stewardship" • Poland

This workshop followed on a review of opportunities in Poland conducted by the Institute for Sustainable Development. Several past Fellows attended this rare meeting of Polish conservation groups. **Local partner:** Institute for Sustainable Development. **Faculty:** Gina Campoli, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (USA); Carl Powden, Vermont Land Trust (USA).

Technical Assistance Assignment: Participatory Planning • Kvačany, Slovakia

To assist in community visioning and organizing projects, Eddie Gale of the Vermont Community Foundation worked with A-projekt and the Oblazy Foundation to develop participatory planning skills. In a separate assignment, Tim Traver of the Vermont Institute of Natural Sciences helped Slovak groups develop an eco-tourism program based on bird-watching itineraries and a raptor support group similar to that of his US organization.

Individual Exchanges • New England, USA

As a follow-up to the Technical Assistance assignments, Jozef Cendula of A-projekt's Raptor Group and Lea Kilvadyová of the European Council for Eco-Agro-Tourism, Slovakia went to Vermont to work with and learn from counterpart organizations. Irek Mirowski of the EcoFund Foundation, Poland took part in a two-week program in Massachusetts.

Workshop: National Parks and Protected Areas • Krakow, Poland

NATO Advanced Research Workshop on the "contribution of national parks and protected areas to heritage conservation, tourism and sustainable development", organized by the Environmental Partnership in cooperation with the Heritage Resources Center, University of Waterloo (Canada). Landscape Stewardship Program alumni presented papers on current developments in their respective countries. QLF/Atlantic Center presented the paper "Extending the Reach of National Parks and Protected Areas: Local stewardship initiatives."

1997 Landscape Stewardship Exchange: Development in the Frýdlant

• Region Frýdlant, Jizera Mountains, Czech Republic

This participatory problem-solving exercise suggested approaches to regional development in the Frýdlant region, bordering Poland and Germany, and separated from the rest of the Czech Republic by the Jizera Mountains Protected Landscape Area. **Local partner:** Foundation for the Restoration and Renewal of the Jizera Mountains. **Participants:** Stephen Blackmer, Northern Forest Center (New Hampshire, USA); Michael Burian, ECEAT (Czech Republic); Preston Gilbert, North Country Council (New Hampshire, USA); Ingrid Ondrášová, A-projekt (Slovakia); Ladislav Ptáček, ČSOP Adonis (Czech Republic); Dominika Zareba, Polish Ecological Club (Poland).

Travelling Seminar for Local Leaders • New England, USA

Recognizing that local governments in Central Europe are facing many new pressures, QLF/Atlantic Center hosted a delegation of Czech and Slovak community leaders on a study tour on Local Democracy and Natural Resources. Participants included mayors, conservationists and economic development professionals from the target regions of Pálava, White Carpathians, and Kvačany Valley, areas where QLF/Atlantic Center has conducted Landscape Stewardship Exchanges. **Participants:** Alfonz Chovan, Mayor of Kvačany, Slovak Environment Agency (Slovakia); Ludmila Jakubková, Mayor of Červený Kameň (Slovakia); Miroslav Janík, ČSOP Kosenka (Czech Republic); Alexandra Janíková, Mikušovce Information Center (Slovakia); Radim Machů, ČSOP Hostětín (Czech Republic); Marie Michalicová, Mayor of Hlohovec (Czech Republic); Ota Pražák, ČSOP Břeclav (Czech Republic); Milan Vaculík, Mayor of Starý Hrozenkov (Czech Republic); Maria Zarevúcká, Educator, Kvačany (Slovakia); Mária Zuskinová, Slovak Environment Agency (Slovakia).

Individual Landscape Stewardship Fellowship • New England, USA

QLF/Atlantic Center hosted Peter Medved' of the Slovak Environmental Partnership Foundation in a study-tour that introduced him to conservation organizations and community foundations, a model of particular interest to Slovak groups.

Landscape Stewardship Alumni Retreat • White Carpathians, Czech Republic

Second strategy meeting of fellowship alumni, furthering regional approaches to stewardship. **Local Partners:** Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation and ČSOP Kosenka

1998 Travelling Seminar for Local Leaders**• Czech and Slovak Republics**

In a reciprocal exchange following the visit by Czech and Slovak leaders in New England, American counterparts visited the target regions of Pálava, White Carpathians, and Kvačany Valley, as well as the Frýdant, site of the most recent Landscape Fellowship Exchange. The focus of the program was on how natural resources are managed at a local level. **Participants:** Joan B. Allen, Mettowee Valley Project, Vermont Land Trust (USA); Deborah M. Burd, Western Mountains Alliance (Maine, USA); Tom Lauritsen, Vermont League of Cities and Towns (USA); Thomas N. Thomson, Thomson Family Tree Farm (New Hampshire, USA); Sharon White, Sta-North Economic Development Corporation (USA); Susan Witt, E.F. Schumacher Society (Massachusetts, USA).

Technical assistance**• White Carpathians and Liptov, Slovakia**

Delia Clark of Upper Valley 2001 and Beyond (Vermont and New Hampshire, USA) worked with community leaders in selected villages in two regions of Slovakia and led a series of workshops in which citizens articulated their vision for their community's future. **Local partners:** A-projekt and STUŽ Biele Karpaty.

Landscape Stewardship Fellowship**• New England, USA**

Participants: Michal Graj, Greenworks Society (Nowy Sacz, Poland); Jan Hošek, Director, Czech Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection (Czech Republic); Helena Kameníčková, Territorial Planning and Environment, Municipality of Studénka (Czech Republic); Jana Mejzrová, Jizera Mountains Protected Landscape Area (Czech Republic); Ján Roháč, Amber Trail Greenway (Banska Štiavnica, Slovak Republic); Libuše Šamánková, State Soil Improvement Administration (Brno, Czech Republic); Magdalena Tracz, Stargard Ecological Workshop, Insko Landscape Park (Szczecin, Poland).

Landscape Stewardship Exchange: People and a Park—Sustainable Co-existence at Babia Góra National Park**• Zawoja, Poland**

This participatory planning exchange in Zawoja near Babia Góra National Park reviewed approaches to stewardship in the Czech and Slovak republics, Hungary and Poland. It also provided an opportunity to open dialogue between local communities and the protected area. It was held immediately after the regional conference on the "Green Backbone of Central Europe." Local partner: Polish Ecological Club. **Participants:** Heather Black, Heritage Resources Center, University of Waterloo (Waterloo, Canada); Michael Creasey, Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission (Massachusetts/Rhode Island, USA); Angela Curtean, Environmental NGO "ECOTUR" (Sibiu, Romania); Paul Labovitz, Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance, National Park Service (Ohio, USA); Robert Mystajek, Association for Nature "WOLF" (Godziszka, Poland); Jordi Pietx i Colom, Companyia de Serveis Ambientals, Fundació Territori i Paisatge (Barcelona, Spain); Andrzej Szeliga, Amber Trail Greenway (Wysoka, Poland).

Marsh Billings Stewardship Initiative**• Vermont, USA**

QLF/Atlantic Center conducted research of stewardship practices internationally for a planning project for the first national park in Vermont, the Marsh Billings National Historic Site. This project has drawn heavily on Central European examples.



Members of the Daphne Institute of Applied Ecology taking stock of meadow ecosystems with a student and state official.
Photo: Daphne

1999 Landscape Stewardship Alumni Retreat

- White Carpathians, Slovakia

The retreat continued the process of building the network of stewardship practitioners in Central Europe. **Local partner:** Society for Sustainable Living (Trenčín, Slovakia)

Landscape Stewardship Exchange: Development in the Morava Floodplain

- Morava floodplains, Czech and Slovak republics

This participatory problem-solving exercise focused on the important trans-boundary region of the Morava floodplains, one of the few largely unchanneled waterways in Central Europe and an area that was hit by severe flooding in 1997. **Local partners:** ČSOP Veronica, Union for Morava River, Society for Sustainable Living (Uherské Hradiště). Participants: Pawel Madej, Institute of Meteorology and Water Management (Poland); Jana Mejzrová, Landscape Management Department, Jizera Mountains Protected Landscape Area (Czech Republic); Gerhard Neuhauser, Distelverein (Austria); Kyle Schilling, Water Resources Support Center, Institute for Water Resources, Army Corps of Engineers (Virginia, USA); Jan Sendzimir, Systems Ecology, University of Florida (USA); Antoine Smits, Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management (The Netherlands).

Study Tour for Leaders from the Baltic Countries

- New England and New York

QLF/Atlantic Center helped host a study tour for board members of the new Baltic American Partnership Fund to visit land stewardship organizations, local governments, and community foundations.

Technical Assistance Assignment: Strategic Planning for Land Trusts

- Czech Republic

Tim Traver of Vermont, USA provided technical assistance in strategic planning for emerging land trusts in the Czech Republic. Workshop at Ministry of Environment and field visits in partnership with the Czech Union for Nature Conservation.

2000 Travelling Seminar: Women's Rural Community Leadership • New England

A two-week training and leadership development program for women working conservation and rural development in rural communities of the Czech and Slovak republics. Like the Local Leaders' Exchanges during 1997-98, this project was designed to follow up on the Landscape Stewardship Exchanges by targeting the same micro-regions. **Participants:** Eliška Bittnerová, Bílé Karpaty Protected Landscape Administration (Czech Republic); Vlasta Cukorová, Town Council, Liptovský Hrádok (Slovakia); Marcela Herichová, Mayor, Nižná Boca (Slovakia); Blažena Hušková, Association for the Jizera Mountains (Czech Republic); Lubomira Jakubková, Spod skál civic association (Slovakia); Pavlína Kolínková, ČSOP Kosenka, (Czech Republic); Dana Kopačková, Mikušovce Information Center (Slovakia); Marie Matušková, Mayor, Višňová (Czech Republic); Yveta Svobodová, Chairperson of the Frydlant Association (Czech Republic)

Landscape Stewardship Exchange: Czech Karst Protected Landscape Area

• Czech Karst, Czech Republic

This participatory problem-solving exercise focused on the Czech Karst Protected Landscape Area. Adjacent to Prague, the area is threatened by unplanned development, unmanaged visitation and continuing limestone mining. Local partners: Czech Karst Protected Landscape Area Administration. **Participants:** Wojciech Bosak, Ojców National Park Education Center (Poland); Alexandra Hopkins, Pownal Land Trust and Maine Smart Growth Forum (Maine, USA); Robert Kneeland, Sutton town council and Ocean State Finishing Co. (Massachusetts, USA); Matjaz Puc, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ljubljana, Slovenia); Gareth Roberts, Countryside Council for Wales (United Kingdom); Victória Siposs, Agriculture and Rural Development Officer, World Wildlife Fund Hungary (Hungary); Tamás Tóth, Regional Supervisor, Körös-Maros National Park (Hungary).

Workshop: Women's Rural Community Leadership I

• Frydlant, Czech Republic

Twenty-five Czech and Slovak women community leaders participated in this workshop focusing on management and strategic planning. The workshop, which involved the nine women who had participated in the travelling seminar, is the first of a two-part series. **Local Partner:** Association for the Jizera Mountains. **Faculty:** Marlene Stjernholm and Ruth Feldman, consultants; Dagmar Lišková, Society for Sustainable Living (Slovakia); Julie Martin, Quebec-Labrador Foundation.

Workshop: Land Trust Organizational Development

• Czech Republic

Workshop for Czech land trusts on strategic planning, marketing and membership development. **Faculty:** Tim Traver, former Director of Upper Valley Land Trust (Vermont and New Hampshire); Delia Clark, Antioch New England Institute (New Hampshire).

Workshop: Women's Rural Community Leadership II

• White Carpathians, Slovakia

This second workshop in the Women's Rural Community Leadership program focused on techniques of community visioning and facilitation, and featured case studies of rural revitalization projects. **Local Partner:** Society for Sustainable Living. **Faculty:** Delia Clark, Antioch New England Institute (New Hampshire); Mária Zelenáková, Partners for Democratic Change (Slovakia).

* Either Jessica Brown or Brent Mitchell, or both, of QLF/Atlantic Center staff participated in all projects. Staff of the Environmental Partnership for Central Europe participated in many projects, more than those specifically mentioned in the notes.

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Reports from Landscape Stewardship Exchanges are available at <http://www.qlf.org>



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