



Advancing the Conservation Movement

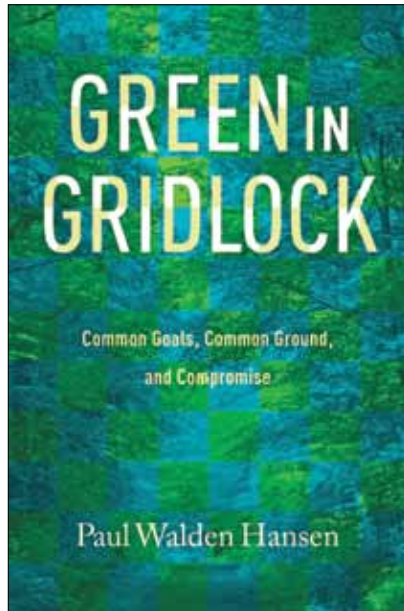
By Robert D. Brown

Let's cut to the chase: If you are a member of The Wildlife Society (TWS), you should read Paul Hansen's *Green in Gridlock: Common Goals, Common Ground, and Compromise*. No doubt you, like me, have had it with the seemingly endless partisanship and posturing in our state and federal governments. Unfortunately, our wildlife populations and their habitats can't afford to wait for a change in our political culture. *Green in Gridlock* provides advice on how to influence environmental and conservation policy while highlighting past successes and failures in the conservation movement.

Lessons from the Past

In his book, Hansen credits former Presidents Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan for implementing noteworthy laws and policies including the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970, the Clean Water Act of 1970, and the National Forest Management Act of 1976. He also details some of the great successes of bipartisanship, not only between Republicans and Democrats, but also between big business conservatives and environmentalists. Hansen discusses the Clean Air Act and the Wilderness Act—both involving bipartisan efforts in the U.S. Congress as well as collaborative efforts between the U.S. and Canada. He highlights the “cap and trade” program—launched in 1990—to reduce acid rain and talks about the bipartisanship of groups as diverse as the National Rifle Association and Defenders of Wildlife for their support of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Hansen explores conservation efforts on a smaller scale such as communities coming together for an increase in sales taxes to protect local lakes or wildlife habitat. He also cites state efforts including



Credit: Texas A&M University Press

a 2008 bill in Minnesota that provides a 0.3 percent sales tax dedicated to conservation. Passed during the worst recession in 75 years, this tax provides \$270 million per year for habitat restoration and land preservation.

As former Director of the Nature Conservancy's Greater Yellowstone Program, former Executive Director of The Izaak Walton League, and TWS member, Hansen is qualified to speak to the environmental and conservation movement in the U.S. Hansen was also a paid member of the Board of Directors of Louisiana Pacific—one of the largest

timber and paper companies in the U.S.—where, even amidst criticism from the green community, he achieved environmental gains. For example, Hansen served as the chair of the External Review Panel of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, which sets best management practices for much of the forest products industry in the U.S.

Roadblocks to Progress

In *Green in Gridlock*, Hansen doesn't shy away from criticizing policymakers and environmentalists for failing to compromise on critical issues. He refers to the Rio de Janeiro Summit in 1992, the Kyoto Protocol meeting in 1997, and the Copenhagen Summit in 2009, when environmentalists refused to accept five- to 10-year stepwise plans and insisted on 20- to 40-year plans to control carbon omissions. The failure to compromise led to no real progress which, in the book, leads Hansen to ask, “Do you want to make a point or do you want to make progress?” Compromise failures in our country include the battle over roadless rules on U.S. Forest Service lands and the failure to pass the Conservation and Reinvestment Act, among others.



Courtesy of Robert Brown

Robert D. Brown, Ph.D., is Former Dean of North Carolina State University's College of Natural Resources and Past President of The Wildlife Society.



Green in Gridlock covers a breadth of environmental and conservation topics, from population control to the use of lead ammo to nuclear energy. Hansen explores how the federal annual deficit and national debt are impacting natural resource agencies disproportionately and credits the hunting and angling community for financially supporting wildlife conservation through self-imposed excise taxes, while pointing out the failure of other recreationists to do the same.

Recipes for Success

In the end, Hansen does not mince words with those who would rather fight than win. He insists that we must “reject the ferocity of brain-dead partisans,” and also notes that “the perfect is the enemy of the good.” Hansen also provides insights on ways in which we can make progress on environmental issues. He states that environmental progress tends to come incrementally, that the business community must be engaged on nearly every issue, and that radical environ-

mentalism—like radical conservatism—is actually anti-environmentalism. Hansen provides positive advice on how to find allies and how to find common ground, such as educating the public, especially young people about conservation issues or providing middle-of-the-road solutions to problems. He points out the number of moderate members of both political parties and how environmental and sportsmen’s groups have much in common. Hansen notes that states with the best environmental records generally also have the best economies—an important fact for industry—and also uses the civil rights movement as an example of coalition building and compromise.

Those on both sides of conservation issues need open-mindedness, pragmatism and patience. With the myriad of problems facing today’s and tomorrow’s wildlife and their habitats, from fracking to sea level rise to global warming, wildlife professionals need to review our history and to heed the lessons provided in *Green in Gridlock*. ■



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