

*The Brainerd Foundation*  
*Preamble to our Theory of Change*

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At the Brainerd Foundation, we strive for long-term, durable conservation policies in our region. We also believe that building a base of support for conservation and increasing the organizational capacity of environmental advocates are the two basic building blocks for creating strong conservation at the state and landscape level.

We recognize the importance of providing a range of approaches and a range of tools (legal, technical, economic, etc.) so conservation advocacy and landscape protection is effective and strategic.

We believe in the vital importance of leadership from individuals and from organizations as a whole.

We believe in an approach to conservation that builds political capital and promotes a conservation ethic in states and landscapes where we conduct our grantmaking.

We understand that our grantmaking approach must be flexible to allow for differences between diverse communities and the influence of current events.

After twenty years in operation, the foundation will sunset in 2020. In the final years before our sunset, we will introduce new initiatives focused on capacity building while our historic core programs will continue to support the ongoing conservation policy and place-based efforts at the core of the foundation's mission.

Our new capacity-focused initiatives are designed to:

1. Leverage donor interest in Northwest conservation philanthropy.
2. Strengthen emerging leadership in the conservation field.
3. Support innovation and infrastructure to ensure effective citizen advocacy in conservation priorities.

These initiatives aim to ensure that our impact endures beyond our sunset and our theory of change provides a roadmap for our sunset.

Definitions:

**Building political capital means** creating goodwill from a cross-section of stakeholders.

**Conservation** is defined as the protection of the air, land, and water upon which all living organisms depend.

A **conservation ethic** is collective behavior fusing knowledge of conservation with targeted citizen engagement and action. It is about communities embracing environmental values and leaving a strong and durable conservation legacy for future generations.

**Credibility** is a broad construct with multiple dimensions, such as competence, trustworthiness, and integrity. These characteristics are an essential prerequisite to securing influence and clout.

**Leadership** is the galvanizing of people to address significant issues. It includes the ability to understand and define a critical challenge, mobilize people to engage in that challenge, and achieve meaningful solutions.

**Significant wins** are those that have substantial impact in the protection of our region's air, land, and water. A win can mean development, adoption, implementation, enforcement, or defense of durable conservation measures and policies.

