



CLASS DISCUSSION GUIDE

It's Good Business: Moving Beyond Conservation

Directed by Simone Kisiel

2019 | USA | 12.5 min

INTRODUCTION

This discussion guide is intended to provide you and your students with thought provoking questions around the topics of conservation and biodiversity. These questions are designed to engage students in meaningful conversation about the complex issues that our changing ecosystem raises. We encourage you to frame the challenges of loss of biodiversity as opportunities to improve on how we care for our natural world.

FILM INTRODUCTION

'It's Good Business: Moving Beyond Conservation' is a short documentary that explores the antiquated idea that capitalism must be at odds with the health of the environment in order to profit. While we all want to protect our planet, some current models of environmental conservation are failing. It's clear that we urgently need a fresh approach to protecting nature. In 1990's Mexico, many believed major deforestation was simply the cost of doing business. But one man saw an alternative and launched what would become the most successful biodiversity program in history: The National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO).

Dr. José Sarukhán, the National Coordinator for CONABIO, won the Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement in 2017, indeed, many of those interviewed for this film are Tyler Prize Laureates, experts on biodiversity and environmental conservation. This documentary analyzes what made CONABIO successful, and aims to inspire other conservation efforts to think beyond our current conservation systems.

THE TYLER PRIZE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACHIEVEMENT

The Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement is one of the oldest and premier awards for environmental science, environmental health and energy. Often referred to as the 'Nobel Prize for the Environment', the Tyler Prize Laureates include some of the most brilliant minds in the environmental arena. These Laureates are often in the forefront on environmental issues, leading science, awareness, and policy creation to help conserve nature and the essential role that it plays.



TYLER PRIZE
for Environmental Achievement

VOCABULARY

Biodiversity: The variety of life on Earth at all its levels, from genes to ecosystems, and can encompass the evolutionary, ecological, and cultural processes that sustain life. Biodiversity includes not only species we consider rare, threatened, or endangered but also every living thing – from humans to microorganisms.

CONABIO: Mexican biodiversity agency (National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity). **Note:** The acronym comes from the Spanish: **Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad**.

PRE-SCREENING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do we need biodiversity conservation?
2. What are some drawbacks and/or limitations of current conservation efforts?
3. What groups of people have the ability to solve these kinds of problems? Eg. Conservation groups, governments etc.

POST-SCREENING KEY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did your perspective change on the importance of biodiversity? Explain.
2. What are your key takeaways about how we can approach conservation?
Thinking of local communities in your country: How can we work together with local communities in ways that are both respectful to their current or traditional ways of life, but that also protects their local biodiversity?
3. Can conservation be done without one of the three pillars this documentary mentions (Science, Society, Government)? Explain.
4. How essential do you believe the government is in the process of conservation? Explain.



GROUP PROJECT

Divide into groups, assigning each group a natural habitat in your local area e.g. parklands, forest area, riverlands, coastline etc. Within your groups, create a mock conservation plan, taking into account everything you have just discussed. Include an explanation as to why you have taken a specific approach and why it will work.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the global issues discussed in this film? Why are they important to acknowledge before undertaking a new conservation effort?
2. How does the economy affect implementation of conservation efforts? What are ways we could counteract this?
3. What is your opinion on citizen science? Do you think science organizations should engage in more citizen science programs? Explain.
4. What do you think is the most important of the three pillars (Science, Society, Government) in this documentary, to ensure conservation is successful? Debate.
5. Where else do you think a model such as CONABIO should be implemented? Is there anywhere it should not be implemented? Explain.
6. Why do you think other countries haven't followed the CONABIO model so far?
7. What policy initiatives would you want your government leaders to create around biodiversity and conservation?
8. If you were asked to change your behavior to save a local species, how would you react?
 - a) What information would you need to know before you changed your behavior?
 - b) How would you feel about changing your behavior? Eg. Happy, angry, repressed, empowered.
 - c) Would these aspects change depending on who was enforcing this behavioral change?
Eg. Government, scientists, local community.
9. How would you engage local communities to make them understand the science behind conservation?



Stills from the documentary.

GET INVOLVED

Speak Up:

Now that we understand that every living creature, plant and animal, has an essential role in our ecosystem, it's up to us to spread the word. It's likely that you know someone who swats at bees when they buzz by, or who drops trash wherever they please. Remind your friends and family that while our natural resources can be used to our benefit without destroying them, it is indeed up to us to care for the world around us.

To learn more about why biodiversity is essential, visit: www.amnh.org/research/center-for-biodiversity-conservation/about-the-cbc/what-is-biodiversity.

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Use Your Skills:

Not everyone ends up being an ecologist, but we all have skills that can help with this issue. Identify your skill set and leverage it to spread the word in a way that is specific to you.

Write To Your Politicians:

As we learned, the gatekeepers around this issue are governmental institutions, regulations and laws. Conservation problems and loss of biodiversity require direct action and political involvement. Reach out to your politicians - local and otherwise - and in public. Use platforms like Facebook and Twitter to publicly address these issues with your elected officials. Not only will they read what you have to say, but your friends will see you're personally making a difference.

Here is a guide on contacting your elected officials: www.usa.gov/elected-officials

RESOURCES

CONABIO | www.biodiversidad.gob.mx

The National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity is a permanent inter-ministerial commission of the Federal Mexican government, created in 1992.

Contact your Congressperson | www.govtrack.us/congress/members

Tell our elected officials what they should be doing about conservation and loss of biodiversity.



Stills from the documentary.

Right: An orangutan physically fights for its habitat as bulldozers clear the trees it calls home.