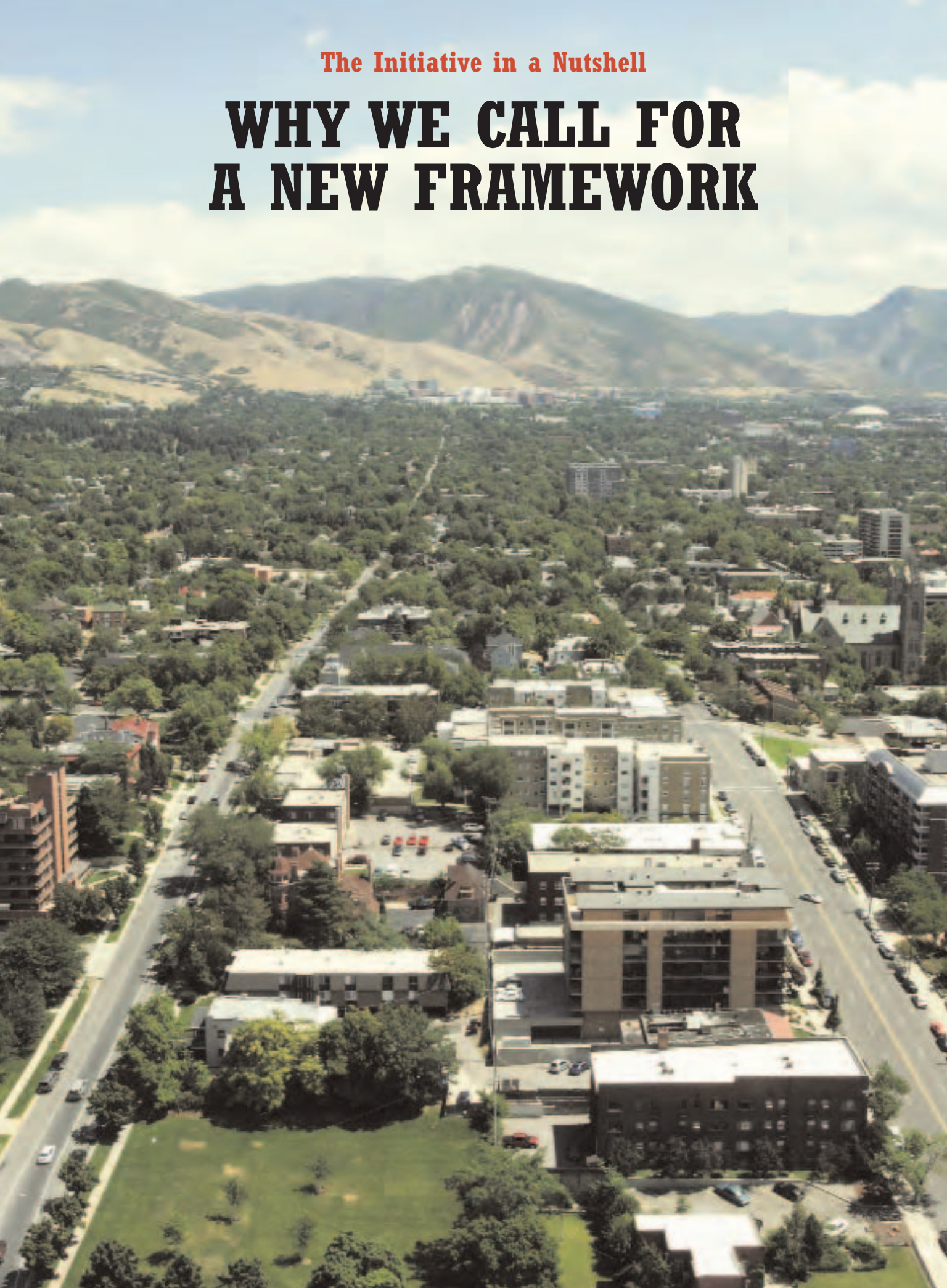


The Initiative in a Nutshell

WHY WE CALL FOR A NEW FRAMEWORK



The environment is a seamless, interactive system that wraps the Earth. At some level, everyone understands that what happens on the land affects the health of the air, the waterways, and so on. Amazingly—since we intuitively understand that the environment is a system—businesses, government, even watchdog groups have never truly addressed the environment this way. Business has seen the environment as a resource. Government has tried to create legal frameworks to manage its use. The activist community has tried to protect it. Because of their conflicting goals—development versus protection—businesses and activists have approached environmental problems from opposite directions. Governmental actions have ranged widely, depending on the political climate, from *laissez-faire* to inflexible regulation. The outcome is a piecemeal, ad hoc, and inconsistent environmental policy.

Whether they have involved setting aside wilderness, protecting endangered species or regulating air and water quality, all of our efforts to minimize environmental damage have been divided up into projects or problems. Unless we begin to approach the environment as a system, we will not preserve it. Unless we try to solve environmental challenges within the context of a system, we will only address part of the problem. In the face of inevitable, continued urban and economic development around the world, such partial solutions will be disastrous.

Restoring and sustaining a healthy environmental system is not about being pro-business or pro-environment. It is about being pro-human. Our challenge is to move beyond the traditional approach of regulation and protection.”

by plants on this planet. Species are disappearing faster than they can be catalogued. The degradation has gone too far.

Our challenge, then, is to move beyond the traditional approach of regulation and protection. The old strategies can neither stop the continuing degradation nor lead to the needed reconstruction of natural systems. More regulation brought to bear through the usual political advocacy cannot result in systemic and system-wide change. It is doing the same thing over and over, expecting different results. That is one definition of insanity.

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Restoring and sustaining a healthy environmental system is not about being pro-business or pro-environment. It is about being pro-human. Just saving the wild landscape that remains is not enough. Humans already gobble up more than half the available nutrients produced

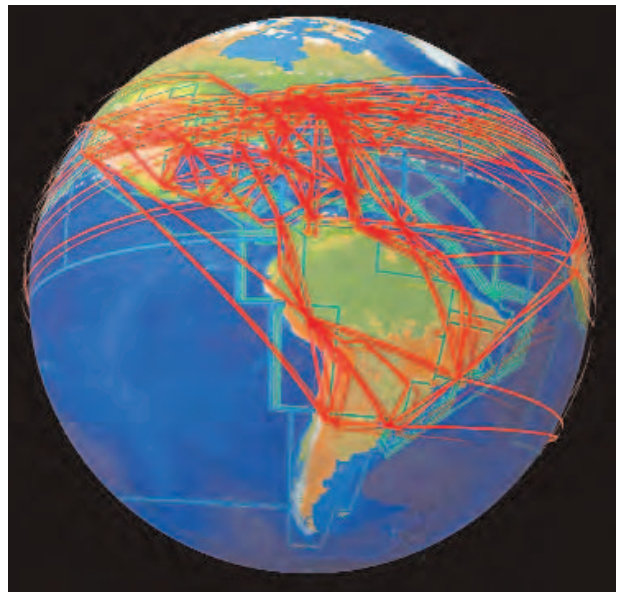
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

We must develop a new framework. We must find the means to rebuild and reconnect the fragmented parts of the environment so they can once again function like a healthy system.

We need to create a new vision, new institutions and a new agenda that will guide efforts. That new framework needs to be built on the understanding that the environment is a living system. We need to treat it as a system and maintain it like all the other system we manage: urban systems, transportation systems, economic systems.

Will it be difficult? Will it be complex? Will the economic and political barriers to this approach be formidable? Of course. We don't minimize the challenges involved. But we must make the effort.

Over the next year, AMERICAN FORESTS hopes to sketch out how this new framework can grow from a new public, private and institutional coalition. We hope to explain why this coalition must embrace the environment as a living, planetary system. We hope to suggest ways that communities, industries, business and government can come together to devise systemic solutions. A broad coalition can begin this initiative, but we hope to make clear that only a more active and informed federal leadership can achieve this goal. AMERICAN FORESTS intends to help articulate what that new framework needs to be as we go forward. **AF**



The global network—through which people, goods and information move around the world—overlays natural systems. This diagram, produced by Michael Gallis & Associates, illustrates the pattern of human air, road, rail, ocean and communication systems that circle the globe. It illustrates how the manmade global network is overwhelming ecosystems.