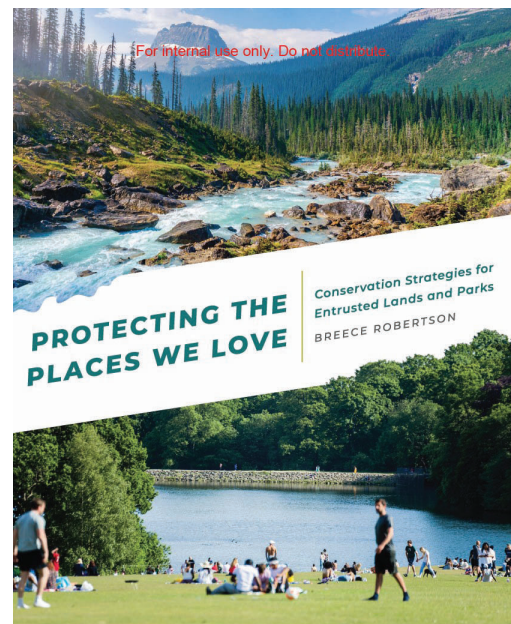


According to author Breece Roberston, this book project (her first) was developed to share insights gained from years of experience working at the intersection of the worlds of land conservation advocacy and geospatial science and technology. Breece, currently the Director of Partnerships and Strategy for the Center for Geospatial Solutions at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, previously worked at the Trust for Public Lands, leading efforts devoted to land protection, improving park access and utilization, and development of voter-approved public funding for parks and conservation projects. In a 2021 promotional interview¹ with ESRI co-founder and president Jack Dangermond, Breece suggests that her book was written for a broad audience but targeted toward land trusts and other conservation groups that are currently underutilizing GIS. As Jack suggested in the interview, a primary goal of the book is to “catalyze the conservation community with quantitative methods.” As access barriers (fiscal, technical, organizational, or otherwise) to geospatial science and tech have become less onerous in recent years, Breece calls attention to this opportunity at a critical time when environmental challenges have arguably reached crisis proportions. The book is organized into ten Chapters, each highlighting opportunities for conservation organizations to improve their effectiveness and efficiency through the enhanced utilization of geospatial data and tools. The book is illustrated with colorful maps, graphics, and photos throughout.

The Foreword sets the tone with a vigorous call to action, making the case that in an environment of complex and competing political and economic priorities, all available tools and methods need to be explored to advance the goals of land conservation. Each subsequent chapter unfolds with reference to resources and ideas addressing various aspects of the subject. Some specific topics include: a broad primer on using maps as a device to focus attention on places and problems; discussion of the importance of enhancing urban parks and greenspace systems with a view toward balancing access, equity, biodiversity, and connectivity; understanding and documenting the relationship between climate resilience & green infrastructure; measuring and understanding landscape connectivity; innovative and effective ways of promoting community engagement; building strategy and impact into the park planning process; and bringing Geographic Information Science into the critical process of evaluating and communicating the impacts and benefits of conservation efforts. The latter chapters highlight the availability of new capabilities that can enhance public interface with parks and conservation efforts and offer a strategic look at ways to improve the integration of GIS capabilities into traditional organizational structures. The cross-referenced Index gives some help to readers wishing to review and revisit specific examples.

¹Interview: <https://www.esri.com/en-us/esri-press/browse/protecting-the-places-we-love-conservation-strategies-for-entrusted-lands-and-parks>.



Protecting the Places We Love: Conservation Strategies for Entrusted Lands and Parks

By Breece Robertson

ESRI Press: Redlands, California. 2021. 280 pages, including diagrams, maps, photos, images, index. Paperback or eBook. \$29.99. ISBN 9781589486164, eISBN 9781589486171.

Reviewed by Matthew E. Ramspott, Ph.D.,
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One clear strength of the book is the large amount of practical discussion centered around data sourcing. This is a focus that runs throughout the book, pertaining to a wide variety of issues of interest to those engaged with advocating for and assessing the benefits of wildland conservation, parks, and green infrastructure development. Highlighted are US Census-derived demographic and socioeconomic data, multiscale land use/land cover data, outputs from ecological and habitat models, archives of location-based information on conservation projects, and many more datasets. This fundamental aspect of the book seems effective as an idea

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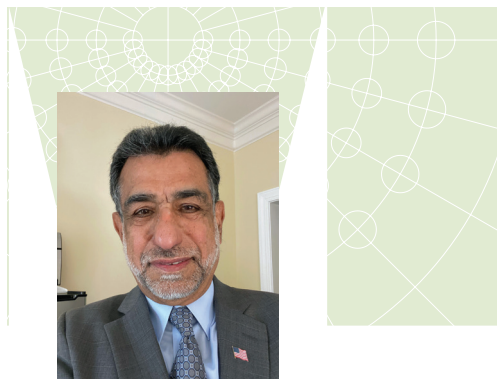
generator to help with the potentially challenging process of locating appropriate and readily accessible data. Discussion of data reliability is perhaps a little sparse, but the sources referenced here are credible and authoritative, and issues related to data integrity and accuracy have been covered in depth elsewhere.

The book gives a comprehensive view of the processes and challenges associated with effective management of land conservation efforts, making use of representative examples far too numerous to address completely in this short review. Overall, the tone is grounded in practical organizational considerations such as framing goals and questions, identifying potential stakeholders and collaborators, strategic planning & prioritization, inviting public participation, accessing useful geospatial data and tools, and integrating geographic information into advocacy, outreach, and fundraising efforts.

It should be noted that this is not a highly technical book, nor is it intended to be. The book surveys many methods and structures associated with geospatial analysis but does not venture far into the realm of a technical “how-to” manual. Perhaps unsurprisingly, much of the description of software and apps in the book prominently features ESRI products. The focus instead is on underscoring the potential value of geospatial science and detailing successful examples to point the way forward. The projects described in the book

range from the very local scale (e.g. the redevelopment of a local neighborhood park or schoolyard) to intermediate scale (e.g. evaluating park needs in a large metropolitan area with diverse socioeconomic situations) and regional scales (e.g. tracking the locations and connectivity of conservation projects with an eye towards meeting more broadly integrated conservation goals and objectives). The many benefits of community partnerships and collaborations are weaved throughout the narrative.

In conclusion, *Protecting the Places We Love* seems well-suited to its target audience. With a focused and deep understanding of the operational concerns of organizations devoted to the expansion of land conservation and green space, Robertson thoughtfully explores her subject in a clear, authoritative, and well-organized manner. The underlying message is about the diverse array of opportunities for conservation and parks advocates to enhance their work by leveraging the capabilities of geospatial science, and Robertson successfully presents it in a way that is both inclusive and empowering.



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