

I am writing this weekend from a sunny spot in the Pacific, from the [IUCN World Conservation Congress](#) in Honolulu. For the uninitiated, the [IUCN](#)—International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources—is a global union of governments and non-governmental organizations (including over 1300 member institutions, organizations, and countries worldwide) focused on the conservation of nature. The IUCN holds its worldwide meeting, the World Conservation Congress, once every four years. For the first time, the WCC is being held in the United States, in Honolulu. I have been involved in the planning of several events in connection with the Congress this weekend.



Diamond Head and Waikiki Bay just before sunrise

Last night, my colleague [Michelle Lim](#) and I co-organized a special workshop on [Emerging Leaders and the Future of Environmental Law](#), graciously hosted by the University of Hawai'i William H. Richardson School of Law and co-sponsored by the IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law. The event was a vibrant, inter-generational gathering of judges, attorneys, and students from a variety of countries and backgrounds. In order to hear from as many voices as possible, we asked speakers to compress their remarks to 3 minutes and address a set of questions, focused on describing a particular environmental challenge and describing a specific suggestion or proposal for the role of environmental law in creating a sustainable future and for engaging a new generation of leaders in environmental law.



Presenters at the event on Emerging Leaders and the Future of Environmental Law in Honolulu, Sept. 2, 2016

Some of the main themes that emerged were how legal systems often fail to allow marginalized voices to be heard, and that there is a great need to work with communities, and learn from past experiences and traditional knowledge about human interactions with the environment. In the face of great social, economic, and environmental challenges, there is a need for inter-generational engagement on how to reform law, making it a tool for collaboration and connection for environmental protection and sustainability, rather than conflict.

Today, at a larger session at the IUCN Congress on engaging a new generation for conservation, Jane Goodall spoke, admonishing each of us in the audience to “think about the consequences of the small daily choices you make” and their impact on the environment. My hope is that over the next generation, we can think more effectively about how legal systems, environmental laws and policies can encourage this kind of consciousness and motivate us to change our collective unsustainable behavior as well.