



Forever Wild Initiative

The Future of Conservation

From Siloes to Systems



August 2026

Short Report Series



The Forever Wild Initiative

The Forever Wild Initiative designs and implements landscape-scale ecological finance architecture to integrate conservation, enterprise and community livelihoods. The Initiative is headed by a registered Australian charity, providing governance for nature across the group. The goal is to unlock the deployment of finance in a way that delivers genuine progress towards the global biodiversity and science-based targets.

We blend financial, legal, ecological, and governance expertise to ensure finance operates effectively and equitably. We guide investment transactions and provide the technical capability needed to support enforceable rights for nature. We promote equitable practice and accountability of outcomes, and we co-design projects on the ground with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IP&LCs). Most importantly, our work is founded in the reality and complexity of ecological economics. We create the conditions and tools for nature-centric finance to move from intent to action.

Our technical reports focus on solutions to real-world challenges in nature finance.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which our work is undertaken and recognise their continuing connection to Country. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Indigenous peoples.

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Imagery

Thank you to Tobias Visuals for the ongoing use of images.





A perspective from Fiachra Kearney

Executive Director, Forever Wild Initiative

Nature, society and the economy are not separate domains, they are deeply intertwined. In this piece, Forever Wild's Executive Director Fiachra Kearney sets out why conservation's future depends on moving beyond the field and into the systems, legal, financial and institutional, that decide nature's fate.

The future of conservation begins with a simple truth: we only have one planet. While clearly obvious, its implications are profound. Nature, society, and the economy are not separate domains - they are deeply intertwined. Yet conservation has too often treated nature as a standalone cause, siloed from the systems that ultimately determine its fate. This fragmentation has been reinforced by a philanthropic model that favours simple, emotive narratives over the harder work of systems-level change.

Efforts such as [Alinea](#) and the [Forever Wild Initiative](#), now coming together through [Isonde](#), point to a different future; one where conservation succeeds only by embracing integration. Protecting nature cannot be achieved through short-term wins alone, especially when those wins displace long-term, strategic efforts. For example, ecological expertise must be fully integrated with economic and financial

capability. While the emerging concept of 'nature finance' promises to place nature at the centre of investment decisions, progress has been slow. Where such efforts do exist, there are too few skilled advocates representing nature itself, and even fewer mechanisms to ensure that local communities (those who live with and steward nature) have a meaningful voice.

Many barriers are structural. Legal and financial systems have been designed almost exclusively to protect people and capital. Nature is treated as external, disposable, or incidental. If conservation is to have a future, it must move beyond the field and into the heart of these systems: legal frameworks, financial instruments, banks, insurers, and investment institutions. Without reform, nature will remain systematically undervalued. While on-ground conservation work remains vital, much of the next frontier lies elsewhere.

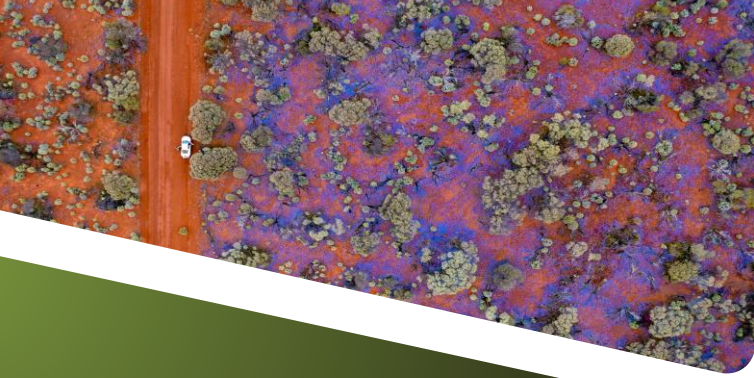
Philanthropy remains essential, but it is not sufficient on its own. To be effective, philanthropy must operate across three tiers:

1. short-term tactical funding,
2. mid-term strategic support, and most critically
3. long-term strategic engagement.

This long-term tier is largely absent today. Yet it is precisely here that philanthropy can play a catalytic role, blending with commercial or sub-commercial finance to unlock far larger flows of capital for nature. Done well, philanthropy and blended finance can de-risk investment, support institutional innovation, and ultimately replenish philanthropic capital. The discomfort some donors feel about supporting 'commercial returns' overlooks a crucial point: **the ultimate stakeholder is nature itself.**

At the same time, the conservation sector has become increasingly fixated on metrics. Hundreds of tools and





companies now exist to measure nature outcomes. Measurement matters, but in isolation it risks becoming performative, like carefully inspecting a house that is structurally collapsing, with no bank behind it, no capital, and no real plan or capacity to rebuild. Without addressing the deeper economic, policy, and institutional challenges, there may soon be little left to measure.

Finally, human rights must remain central to conservation. But the link is inescapable: if we fail to address climate change and biodiversity loss, human rights will inevitably erode further, particularly for those already marginalised. Food security, water access, health, and livelihoods all depend on functioning ecosystems. This brings us back to the core insight: one planet and a complex system.

Nature, society, and economics must be treated as inseparable.

The future of conservation demands a rapid shift towards long-term, systems-based approaches that reflect ecological reality, respect human societies, and acknowledge that economics is woven through every aspect of life on Earth. Whether we choose to recognise this integration or not, it will define our collective future.

Forever Wild's role

This thinking underpins Forever Wild's own work: building the legal, financial and governance architecture that lets capital work for nature, not against it. We test that architecture on the ground, across our [Western Deserts](#) landscape in Australia and, through [Isonde](#), our joint venture with Alinea Network Organisation, across southern Africa.

Engaging with us

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