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>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: So far, on All for Earth, we've talked about the intersections of environmental issues like adapting to climate change, ensuring sustainable agriculture, preserving biodiversity, and providing clean water to all.

>> STEVE PACALA: So, these four huge environmental problems, climate, water, food, and biodiversity are all happening simultaneously.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: We've heard from experts in policy, science, and communication.

>> KATIE CARPENTER: We get pretty good information, pretty good data for researchers who tell us scientists are not being well portrayed on television. Here's why.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: We've heard about challenges but also about optimism for the future.

>> MARILYN WAITE: I have to be optimistic. This is definitely in reach. We know what we have to do. That's a good thing about it.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: My name is Catherine Riihimaki, and my guest today is the perfect person to help bring all of these ideas together. Carter Roberts is the President and CEO of the World Wildlife Fund, which despite its name, does much more than just working with wildlife. Carter, thank you so much for joining me today.

>> CARTER ROBERTS: It's my pleasure. Thanks for having me.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: I want to start with an outline of what WWF actually does, because it is much more than just biodiversity. So, can you talk a little bit about the scope of WWF's work?

>> CARTER ROBERTS: Sure. We were founded 60 years ago in response to the realization that the world was on the verge of losing some of the most important places on Earth that was home to both creatures that we love but also lots of communities that lived there, and we were born to draw the world's attention to these places and then to mobilize the world to act before it's too late and to save them. So, from the beginning, although we have a black-and-white panda as our logo, we were all about places like the Serengeti, the Amazon, the Mekong River, the Himalayas, and more. And over time, our work has evolved from raising money to buy equipment and to create parks to engaging in the way that infrastructure is designed and engaging in the behavior of the private sector and its footprint. And not just carbon emissions but also habitat alteration. And then finally, engaging on the world's financial systems and the way that nature is factored into the biggest decisions that companies make.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: So, you had mentioned being interested in saving communities. Is that wildlife communities, ecosystems, or does that include kind of the human communities and, you know, I'm leading to a question about, you know, who is at the table when you have discussions about the Serengeti or other places like that?

>> CARTER ROBERTS: It includes all of the above. It is wildlife communities. It's the rich complexity of ecosystems. It is the human communities that live there, finally, it is also all the different players from around the world who end up touching those places and who use those places for better or for worse. And so, when you talk about who's sitting around the table, that is an essential and important question, because what we've learned is that if the only people around the table our government officials, and we know that government officials change. We know that political regimes change, and your work is not likely going to last. And so, our best work, who's sitting around the table? Our scientists, members of the local community who have great knowledge and experience about that place, but whose lives depend on that place, government officials whose regulatory constructs either will help those communities and help scientists do the right thing, and then last but not least, also, different commercial economic players who can either send signals that help sustain that place or destroy it. So, our best work includes listening to the voices of all those players, but at the end of the day, doing what helps that place sustain itself over the long run and sustain the communities that live there

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: All right, are there particular characteristics that you look for in the people who will be successful partners with you, either people who were working for WWF or as collaborators outside of the World Wildlife Fund?

>> CARTER ROBERTS: Well, you know, when I give talks at universities, often students ask, "How should I best begin my career?" And the first thing I reassure them based on my own experience, there's no set model. Can make all kinds of choices in your life, but at least in our work, the most essential qualities of the people that we hire that make the greatest difference is if they have the ability to connect the dots between sectors, they have the ability to bring together not only the scientific/academic community, but also government officials, also the private sector, and also local communities. And so, to be able to connect the dots and build bridges is a fundamental quality to play well in the sandbox with others. It doesn't work well when people want to be solely in charge of an outcome. The best work is often collaborative, created with and through others, and so, you have broad ownership of the solution over the long run and that spans lots of different functions.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: Does that mean that sometimes success looks like someone else getting credit and just being content with kind of the ecosystem or whatever? You know, being preserved, or whatever policy enacted occurring even if it's happening with others taking the lead in that?

>> CARTER ROBERTS: Success almost always looks like others getting more credit than we do. And -- now that sounds like a somewhat trite, predictable thing to say, and there are times when there's tension, and how much credit should we seek? How much credit should others get, and of course, when you have a big brand like we do, often, there's an instinct that we need to make sure the panda

is front and foremost, because with that acknowledgment comes a flow of money, a flow of press, a flow of kudos from our board members and others, but the truth of the matter is that our best work, you have to squint hard to see the panda, and mostly what you see are the logos and the voices of other institutions that are either much more local or play a much bigger role in the context of that nation.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: Right, right. You know, I'm wondering for the environmental community, generally, as we think about who's at the table, are there groups that you think, not necessarily WWF specifically, but environmentalists more generally, that we should be concerned about people who are generally not at the table? Are there groups that are neglected and should be brought into conversations more?

>> CARTER ROBERTS: Well, you asked that question at a time when every institution is asking that question.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: Yeah.

>> CARTER ROBERTS: And it's clear and obvious that we have work to do in making sure that the voices of people of color, indigenous communities, and voices across genders are heard in a much more balanced way than they have been to date, and I think the environmental community has work to do and getting better on that count. And it's interesting, at WWF, we have 7000 people around the world, 7000 staff working in different places. We have, believe it or not, 28 offices in Indonesia. It's a big, long archipelago of islands. We have learned that as we operate an institution, it can't just be the voices of those who have money and influence in Europe and the United States. You have to have an equal seat at the table for people from other countries to look at common issues like climate change or resource use and allocation. But at the same time, in our local work, whether it's in Alaska or the Northern Great Plains, the heart of the Congo, or wherever, we have to be good and disciplined at making sure that the voices of those who do not have power are at the table, particularly when it's their place and their community that is most deeply affected by whatever actions are taken. And that means having a seat at the table when a project is designed. Having a seat at the table with the project is being evaluated and also having moments in time where there is facilitated engagement with governments and other institutions, whether it's on healthcare or conservation or whatever, to make adjustments when the balance isn't right.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: Right, and it also seems like WWF does a tremendous amount of work, sort of reaching out beyond the table to influence kind of consumers and, you know, I think about it as like winning the hearts and minds of the average person. Is that something that you feel is part of the WWF brand? I mean, you mentioned the panda logo. I feel like I've seen that on lots of products at the grocery store, you know, and I think my child has a couple of your stuffed animals. So, sort of how do you work with understanding what your sphere of influence is? Is it the people who are making the policies? Is it the people were ultimately spending their dollars on dolphin-safe tuna or what have you?

>> CARTER ROBERTS: In the environmental community, I think you know well, there's an inside

game and an outside game. The inside game is you hire a lot of smart people who have great technical skill, and you engage corporations or Congress or the administration in either regulatory policy fixes or the change in the way that products are sourced and produced. But from the beginning, all the way back to how we were born, we've been all about mobilizing and galvanizing the public, too. And so, that's reflected, and a heavy emphasis on membership. We have, by some count, 6 million members around the world throughout Europe and Pakistan and China and the United States and more. We have 8 million activists in the United States who don't necessarily give us money, but they act on key issues working with us, and I would say that over the long run, it is incumbent upon us to engage the public in the decisions that the public makes, either what kind of energy to use, transportation, and most particularly, what kind of food we eat or waste. And we are looking for ways to use not just our brand, but partnerships with others, like the school system, like food providers, in scaling up the consciousness of people about the consequences of the choices they make. We are, I would say, about 10% of the way toward where we need to be, but we often talk about the importance of putting the movement back in the environmental movement.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: Ten percent of where you need to be with outreach to consumers, to changing people, that sort of everyday person?

>> CARTER ROBERTS: Yeah.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: Yeah.

>> CARTER ROBERTS: Yeah, absolutely, and we have a brilliant team here who have a background in social media and communications and the rest. They've won many, many, many awards.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: You have some of the most beautiful videos on YouTube and such.

>> CARTER ROBERTS: Yeah, there's that --

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: And the iPod.

>> CARTER ROBERTS: We want Apple's highest award for design for an app that we've created, but I would say that if you look at countries, and awareness and how that translates toward the pressure that companies feel or that politicians feel, the environment is -- it looms larger in Europe than it does in the United States, and particularly in the US, I would say we have work to do to make people aware of the extraordinary degree to which we depend on the planet and the solutions we have at our disposal right now and the absolute urgency that we need to act now and not just in the decisions we make in our own lives, but in the decisions that we help the institutions where we work or that we influence and the decisions they make, too.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: You know, that's a nice transition, I think, to one of the big issues that

weigh on policymakers' minds and maybe in the public mind. You know, some of this costs money. You know, do you view these issues as being economic cost-benefit issues or is it more of an ethical issue that these are beautiful places that deserve to exist and that we ethically should not be destroying them? And I know this is not necessarily one of the other, but in the WWF work, does one take more priority than the other?

>> CARTER ROBERTS: Look, I am in this business starting 30 years ago because of the -- more from the ethical/personal impulse that we cannot let other species go extinct on this planet, and these places are so profoundly important to us, how could we destroy them? That's where I start from, and I think aloft staff at WWF are motivated in the same way. What we have learned is that when you are talking to policy makers and you are talking to those who don't have the same impulse, capturing the profound dependence humanity has on ecosystems and the planet for food, for air, for source of water, and for all the rest matters a lot, and then putting in economic value on those ecosystem services matters a lot. I always think of it as it's the poetry and the prose of our work is that we talk about the beauty of it all, the ethical, the moral fundamentals of conservation and environmental protection, but we also talk about the economic reality and the fact that our economy and our way of life is at risk, and I think when you look at the disruptions that climate change is now causing with storms, catastrophes, disruptions, inability to plant food, and the disruption to economies that occurs when you've got a combination of food scarcity and governance failure like in East Africa and the Middle East, then people start to migrate. They start to move. Government's collapse, and then you see insecurity and instability in the world, and it puts everything we care about at risk. So, you have to tell old stories.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: Yeah, and it emphasizes your need to have so many different people at the table who, I mean, it sounds like liberal arts personified that you know, you need to be able to capture the poetry of it, as you said, as well as the economics, as well as the science that leads to understanding what the economic impacts might be.

>> CARTER ROBERTS: You said it. I was with my 87-year-old father, who was a professor of medicine, who was lecturing to my kids over the weekend about the importance of a liberal arts education, the importance of learning the humanities and science, and the importance of connecting the dots, and it's true. You -- these are really complex issues and complex ecosystems and complex politics, and we have to find our way through it, and that requires being able to see all the different angles and then being able to stitch together and narrative that resonates with the American public and with policymakers and the private sector and more.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: Right. So, sticking with the private sector, is there sort of optimism from your end then from their end that we can preserve ecosystems, we can combat climate change, and that we can do it and in an affordable way, in a way that works with companies' business models and with their particular products or where they see themselves going?

>> CARTER ROBERTS: I think optimism is too simple, maybe even too strong a word. I would say that I think those institutions who see most clearly the -- what's at stake are the military. The Department of Defense is probably the wisest about the importance of nature, believe it or not, within the federal government, because of the stories I just told. The private sector also sees quite

clearly because even though they are responsive to quarterly reports and Wall Street and investment models, at max, take into account a five-year cycle of return, the best businesses have 20, 30, 40, 50-year models and scenarios and think deeply about this. So, I think they see very much what's at risk and the imperative to do something about it, and I also think they see very much the opportunity to create new markets, new products that solve the problem, and see progress over those things that they can, and I'm talking about the best companies, not every company, that they can control. But I think there's a certain moment, and I was in New York at the UN General Assembly when hundreds and hundreds of companies find the New York Forest Declaration they declared that they would keep the forests of the world intact and remove deforestation from their supply chains. There is a moment when you will sit next to one of those executives, and they will point to somebody across the room, a government official, in key government where they source product, and they will say, "We cannot get there without her." And so, there is, at the end of the day, there's all the good, important work on creating solutions and driving markets, but you would be naive to think that markets alone are going to solve the problem. You need governments. You need government regulations to create stability in markets, send the right signals, such as putting the right price on carbon. That the best companies desperately want because they know it will enable them to scale up in a way that they need to. And you know, just a year ago, with four other NGOs, we created something, and the biggest buyers of renewable energy in the country. We created something called the renewable energy buyers alliance that Google chairs. It involves Facebook and Microsoft and many, many, many other companies, and it is now its own NGO, and we put all of our -- some of our best staff left to join this institution. And it is a trade association that works at policy, policy barriers and removing them, and new policies at a state level, and ultimately, the federal level, that those companies need to scale up renewable energy. And they can't get there unless the government plays its role, as well.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: So that's a great sort of lead into where I kind of want to finish our conversation, which is thinking about this political climate today, and you said optimism is not the right word. So, how do you view the prospects of making progress on political ends, whether it's the US or whether it is a global context? You know, what does the future look like in that realm?

>> CARTER ROBERTS: Look, I think some people are born pessimistic and some are born optimistic. I like the word optimism, but you know, I don't think optimism is just some sunny disposition you have, that everything is going to be fine.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: Yeah.

>> CARTER ROBERTS: I think, what I described with, I think, those institutions and also, and I would say this is true of WWF, is our role is to be clear about the science of it all, which, by the way, is quite scary when you look at resource scarcity and climate change and their ability to break the back of our planet and our ability to sustain ourselves. But there is a deep and abiding conviction within WWF, and I think our best partners, that we have it within our power if we can only influence those institutions that matter most, that we can drive the world toward a better outcome and an outcome that is a sustainable one, and that includes the federal government. We live in a moment in time where the environment and climate change have great purchase at a local level with cities and states and communities and corporations but has become a source of political conflict at a federal level, which is stunning when you think about over the history of the environmental movement. If you were going to add up the great environmental precedents, it's 50/50, Republican and Democrat. And

yet, as a combination of money and -- from special interest groups and our political system, which favors extremes at times, we are in a bad place. And we need to get out of that bad place. And there are -- we will not get to lasting legislation and a price on carbon unless it's a bipartisan effort. And so, we have been working closely with key Republicans and Democrats, and we are driving toward a narrative to put a price on carbon that's at the right moment and to create the openings to do that. I think it will require more transparency around donations to campaigns. I think, over the long run, some tweaks to the way elections are run might be helpful. But I think, at least for WWF, we seek, quite clearly, that the U.S. Congress plays an outsized role, not just in setting and putting in place the right regulatory framework here in the US but also the ripple effects that creates around the world. A lot of people said when we pulled out of Paris, many, many other countries would follow. Just the opposite has happened. The only other countries that hadn't quite signed on have now signed on, including North Korea and Nicaragua. And so, American leadership matters a lot. It matters at a state level, a city level, and also, at a federal level, and I think it's one of the most important tasks we have is to get to the right climate legislation at a federal level that will require the private sector playing a much more active role, and it will require people making this an issue in both parties and being clear and consistent that that's what they deserve and that's what their kids deserve, because that it's fundamental to the future for us all.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: And so, are we close to that happening or -- I mean, some of this is, as you said, kind of in the works. Is there enough of a critical mass of people on both sides of the political aisle, as well as bringing in the private sector, that even if it's not front-and-center in the news, that progress is actually happening?

>> CARTER ROBERTS: Well, one thing I've learned is never to try to time the stock market and never tried to time when legislation going to pop out, but I do see signs when you see key Republican legislators sponsoring legislation to fund renewable energy and on specific energy breakthroughs. I see more and more conversations happening with the private sector calling for action, and we're seeing climate change become much, more of a conversation across parties, maybe not in the public, but quietly. I don't know when that moment will be. It cannot come soon enough because every year that passes is a year that's going to cost us more in solving the problem. But, you know, we have some spectacular -- we have some election cycles coming up that no one can predict what will happen. What we need to do is to make sure that all of society makes this a fundamental issue for politicians of both parties to address.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: And it seems like, you know, one of the strengths of WWF has been to maybe change the framing of conversations in creative ways throughout your history. So, you know, if it's the Our Planet series or if it's, you know, labels on certain products at the grocery store or conversations with government officials that you guys are trying to maybe change the nature of what's being discussed.

>> CARTER ROBERTS: You know, there are all kinds of great NGOs out there. Some of whom are niche players who do really cool stuff in one realm or another around one solution or another. We are -- we tend to encompass all of the different strategies, and I think that gives us a responsibility to really connect the dots between those strategies, between the consciousness-raising to partnerships with the private sector to mobilizing the public, and I would say, most particularly, the voice of young people, teenagers, students both in high school and college and in graduate school. We are seeing

that as a phenomenon around the world, not just Greta from Sweden but it is a phenomenon around the world in every continent. And so, we do feel like we have a responsibility to connect the dots to provide a platform, but ultimately, to be quite clear about one of the handful of outcomes the world most needs on climate change, on energy, on food production, and on trade and sustainability writ large and to help the world accomplish what it is already committed to in the Paris agreement and the sustainable development goals and other agreements where the goals are clear. They're quite ambitious. It's our job to knit together society and to motivate people and institutions to go faster. And so, but our real stock and trade are partnerships with other institutions, it's not all about the panda. Our best work is when the panda is not quite so obvious, and you know, having spent four years at Princeton, I had a liberal arts education. I and my roommates, I think, learned that connecting the dots is super important. And I really appreciate your taking the time to talk to me today, and I gather this is all going to lead up to a conference in the fall, right?

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: This is, indeed, and I think this is the perfect place end for us to. I think this has been a fascinating conversation to hear how you guys are connecting those dots and helping other people do the same. So, as you mentioned, we are celebrating 25 years of the Princeton Environmental Institute, and there is a conference October 24th and 25th in celebration of that. Several of our podcast guests will be speaking at the forum and there will be many more exceptional minds in all aspects of the environment and sustainability. So, Carter, thank you so much for joining me today for this really wide-ranging conversation. I really enjoyed it,

>> CARTER ROBERTS: A pleasure. I'll do my best to join in the fall.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: Wonderful.

>> CARTER ROBERTS: Thank you.

>> CATHERINE RIIHIMAKI: Carter Roberts is the President and CEO of the World Wildlife Fund. He is also the host of Panda Pod, a new podcast from WWF. You can follow him on Twitter at [@Carter\\_Roberts](#) and read more about WWF at [worldwildlife.org](http://worldwildlife.org).

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