



Honoring the Best

Who should we look to for leadership in business and government?

The best leaders in business are those with a clear vision and a passion for doing the right thing for their stakeholders and community. We have abundant examples of such leaders in Washington, but some rise above the rest, earning the respect of their peers for their excellence in management and entrepreneurship, public service, and cooperation between business and government. Their leadership bolsters the economy, creates jobs and ensures a high quality of life.

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To celebrate their achievements, we have established the first Washington CEO Leadership Awards in three categories:

- CEO of the Year, awarded to a senior business executive with a distinguished track record of leadership that promotes growth and profitability, cultivates a strong, capable workforce, produces an innovative product or service, and contributes to community. This year's winner: Randy Talbot, chief executive officer of Bellevue-based Symetra Financial.
- Nonprofit CEO of the Year, given to an executive from a charitable organization whose leadership and vision exemplify a passion for community betterment, who builds strong relationships among all stakeholders and who is a capable manager. Gene Duvernoy, president of the Cascade Land Conservancy, is this year's winner.
- City of the Year, awarded to a Washington community that best recognizes the importance of creating relationships and partnerships with business and residents, efficiently administers planning and permitting policies, and has a nonregressive tax structure and has excellence in education and livability. The city of Bellevue tops the charts.

RANDY TALBOT

Randy Talbot's story, you might say, is one of riches to riches.

When Safeco decided to shed its life insurance division in 2004, it offered Talbot a lucrative financial package. He said "No thank you" to Safeco's directors, put his 1,300 employees at ease and headed for Wall Street to secure acquisition capital. Investors put up more than \$1 billion, and three years later, Symetra Financial posted unaudited profits of \$167.3 million on revenues of \$1.59 billion. With a team

of trusted executives and talented staff members that he put together at Safeco, Talbot's vision has become a company that will anchor the state's financial services community for years to come.

Talbot doesn't shirk community involvement. He's on the board of the Performing Arts Center Eastside and the Washington Roundtable, among others.

Bryan Corliss profiles Talbot on page 24.

GENE DUVERNOY

Gene Duvernoy (profiled on page 26 by Aaron Corvin) heads Washington's largest independent environmental stewardship and conservation program, an organization he has built step by step since 1991.

Duvernoy is thoughtful, pragmatic and articulate, and he understands the importance of building long-term relationships. Among Land Conservancy sponsors are major developers -- both commercial and residential -- banks, law firms, Boeing and the Master Builders Association. Duvernoy seeks market-based solutions to preserve land to make cities more livable. Conservation, he says, can go hand in hand with a strong economy.

In 2007, the Land Conservancy placed 1,452 acres under protection in King, Kittitas, Pierce and Snohomish counties and received \$493,000 in federal grants to preserve urban forests in Seattle and Tacoma. Since 1989, 140,000 acres have been protected in western Washington.

THE CITY OF BELLEVUE

The construction cranes that punctuate the skyline of downtown Bellevue are the envy of cities across Washington state and the nation. But as Mike Ullmann writes on page 28, Bellevue's economic viability didn't occur by accident.

Rather, it's the result of hard work by political leaders and the business community, a commitment to quality schools, a passion to maintain livable neighborhoods, a tax base that works for both businesses and homeowners, quality health care and a strong retail community that makes downtown Bellevue a regional shopping destination.

Major employers -- Microsoft, Expedia, Eddie Bauer, Symetra Financial, T-Mobile USA, Verizon, Paccar, Puget Sound Energy and others -- rely on a diverse workforce that is a poster child for the global economy. Forty percent of Bellevue's population is nonwhite and a large percentage is foreign-born.

It's our hope that leaders in business, philanthropy and government will be inspired by the success of these winners of the Washington CEO Leadership Awards and that their good work will serve as the impetus for similar excellence across the Evergreen State.

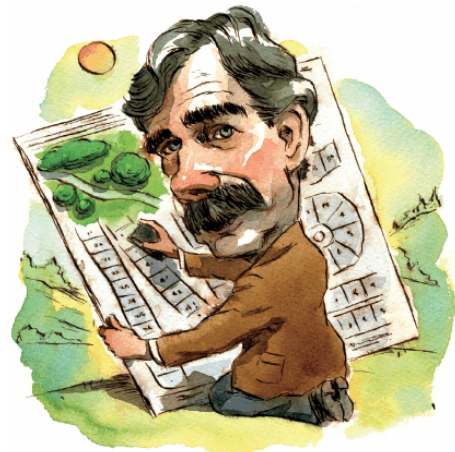
Bob Ritter is publisher of Washington CEO Magazine.

The Landscape Artist

Cascade land conservancy's Gene Duvernoy focuses on practical solutions to preserve land

Of all the adjectives used to describe Gene Duvernoy, "pragmatic" seems to rise to the top.

Just ask those who work for the president of the nonprofit Cascade Land Conservancy and



those who, ostensibly, are his enemies. Duvernoy craves solutions, not problems. You never walk into his office with a problem without already having thought of a possible solution, says his chief of staff, Natalie Cheel.

Unlike more traditional environmental activists, he doesn't vilify developers, focusing instead on what makes sense in a given situation. "I'm a developer; I should be his archenemy," says Peter Orser, president of Quadrant Homes, but Duvernoy "listens to all of those perspectives. He seems to operate at a higher level that tries to take the best from all the different influences on a particular outcome."

He controls his ego, which, for better or worse, is always a factor when you're running an organization, one that has -- directly or indirectly -- shielded some 140,000 acres of land from development in western Washington since 1989. "He's not a high-ego guy," Orser says. "He's smart, and he's got a command of a lot of facts."

Duvernoy, who has led the organization since 1991, avoids environmental dogma, favoring instead market-based solutions that account for the need to both build houses for people and conserve greenbelts. "He's absolutely a pragmatist," says Seattle developer Bruce Blume, founder and chief executive of The Blume Co. and one of many advisers to the Cascade Land Conservancy.



Duvernoy's accomplishments alone are enough to thrust him into the spotlight. Consider the numbers recently posted by the Cascade Land Conservancy: In 2007 alone, it protected 1,452 acres in King, Kittitas, Pierce and Snohomish counties; earlier this year, it secured roughly \$493,000 in federal grant money for the care and restoration of urban forests in Seattle and Tacoma; currently, the nonprofit is advancing some 250 conservation projects and is spearheading a new regional marketplace to trade development rights for the protection of farms, forests and other natural areas.

The Cascade Land Conservancy's ultimate goal is listed in its 100- year plan, "The Cascade Agenda": to conserve 1.3 million acres of farmland, forests, parks and natural areas. And, as the 55-year-old Duvernoy emphatically puts it, "we're going to do it."

It is instructive, however, to understand why Duvernoy does what he does. For Duvernoy, conserving land and making cities more livable isn't a matter of setting a goal and accomplishing it; it's a matter of fulfilling a difficult, complicated, lifelong mission. "You can't be in this business if you're a pessimist," he says.

Duvernoy grew up in a family of six children in New York, spending time in both Manhattan and Long Island. He loved nature when he was a boy. He would chase butterflies with a net, prompting his siblings to call him "bug boy."

His first experience with environmental politics came in the early 1970s when he was exposed to the fledgling environmental movement as a student at Carnegie Mellon University. "We were all very public-spirited," he says. Carnegie Mellon gave Duvernoy what he wanted most: a highly rigorous, nonideological education. "It spoke to the way I want to see the world," he says. After graduating with a double major in civil engineering and public affairs, he went on to earn law and business degrees from Cornell University.

In 1980, he arrived in Seattle, not for work but to help a brother build a sailboat. Immediately, Seattle felt like home. Duvernoy worked in King County government for a time, managing farmland preservation and open space projects. Ultimately, he says, he decided he wasn't "cut out for long-term government" work because the gears of progress sometimes ground too slowly.

In 1990, he became familiar with a young organization known as the Seattle-King County Land Trust. His sense was that it had "the juice to be game-changing." A year later, he was leading the organization, now called the Cascade Land Conservancy. Since then, Duvernoy has transformed the group into Washington's largest independent conservation and stewardship program with allies at virtually every level of government and in the offices of some of the state's biggest developers. "There's a balance between the green vision and the vision of what I call economic development," Quadrant Homes' Orser says. "Both of us believe that one cannot live without the other."

One of the best results of Duvernoy's balancing act is the Snoqualmie Preservation Initiative, announced in 2001 and wrapped up in 2004, which will protect about 9,000 acres in east King County from development.

The cornerstone of the initiative is a scenic tract of 145 forested acres near Snoqualmie Falls. The land was originally slated for development by a subsidiary of Puget Sound Energy. Duvernoy helped solve the issue by making it more complex. He worked with King County and Weyerhaeuser, and helped strike an intricate deal: Weyerhaeuser could speed up development of land it owned in return for helping to buy the Puget property. Weyerhaeuser also agreed not to develop its 3,500 acres of timberland between Tiger Mountain and Rattlesnake Ridge. King County and the city of Snoqualmie, meanwhile, revised their land-use plans to allow Weyerhaeuser's additional development to go forward.

Steve Dunphy, the land conservancy's communications director, says Duvernoy is "one of these counterintuitive people" who make a situation "more complicated as a way of getting parties to resolve the issue."

A big part of Duvernoy's success is his ability to understand what people with conflicting interests want, as he did with the Snoqualmie Preservation Initiative, and to get them to agree on a plan they can live with. To do that, you have to keep your mind alert and open and get out of the office. Duvernoy reads voraciously (The Elegant Universe and two books about World War II are among those he's reading now), and he roams the region to understand the land and the people and politics behind it. He also goes rock climbing once a week. "He's a scrambler," says Cheel, his chief of staff.

Duvernoy's longtime roots in the region serve him well in talking to people, says Orser, persuading them of his points of view and crafting compromises. Duvernoy understands how important his reputation is: "If I can't call a person, I shouldn't be at this job."

Duvernoy uses a variety of tools to advance the nonprofit's mission of conserving land as population and jobs grow. They range from buying property and securing easements to trading development rights and rearranging development codes and permits. He pushes to use market forces to conserve land while enabling cities to grow. In May 2007, for example, Gov. Chris Gregoire signed the Transfer of Development Rights Regional Marketplace Bill, backed heavily by the Cascade Land Conservancy, which calls for a marketplace in central Puget Sound to trade development rights in Pierce, King, Snohomish and Kitsap counties. The mechanism promotes intensified development in urban areas in exchange for rural land conservation. Duvernoy calls this new tool "a work in progress" and refers to the counties involved as "laboratories."

In any case, Duvernoy is right where he wants to be, both in his life and in his work. He lives in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood with his wife and two teenage children. He's within walking distance of grocery stores and restaurants, and "I can walk to go to the movies. My kids take the bus. What's not to like?"

Duvernoy believes Cascade Land Conservancy will continue to find innovative ways to prevent sprawl and to build better communities. When you tell him there are

people who say he will accomplish these things because he is pragmatic, he smiles and agrees but corrects you just a bit: "Pragmatic optimist."

Cascade land conservancy by the numbers

- Employees: 54
- Operating budget: \$5.7 million (38 percent grants and contributions; 37 percent contributions for land acquisitions; 16 percent program revenue; 5 percent investments, miscellaneous, in-kind; 4 percent sale of land)
- Selected donors: Boeing Co., K&L Gates, Davis Wright Tremaine, HomeStreet Bank, Quadrant Homes, Vulcan Inc., Urban Visions, Russell Family Foundation, Microsoft Corp., Sprint Nextel Corp., Wells Fargo, National Forest Foundation
- Acreage preserved: 140,000, directly or indirectly

Selected projects:

- Snoqualmie Forest Preservation: Maintains 90,000 acres of working forest in the North Bend area through a partnership with Hancock Timber Resources and King County.
- Conserved about 900 acres in multiple projects along the Carbon River in Pierce County. The land will be added to Mount Rainier National Park, the largest expansion of the park in decades.
- Acquired 20 acres of abandoned railroad right-of-way along South Prairie Creek. The project protects critical habitat for wildlife, including threatened and endangered salmon species.
- Holds a conservation easement on the 80-acre Teanaway Farm, located just east of Cle Elum. The easement permanently protects this working land from being developed.

Aaron Corvin is a senior writer at Washington CEO Magazine

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