

**PhD Dissertation**  
**Department of Environmental Science and Policy**  
**College of Science**  
**George Mason University**

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**Title:** The Rewilding Diagnostic: Evaluating Social Enabling Conditions in Rewilding Projects

**Dissertation Director:** Dr. David Luther

**Committee:** Dr. Thomas Akre (Co-Chair), Dr. Karen Akerlof, Dr. Susan Allen, Dr. Jennifer Miller

**ABSTRACT**

Rewilding, the process of rebuilding, following major human disturbance, a natural ecosystem by restoring natural processes and the complete or near complete food web at all trophic levels as a self-sustaining and resilient ecosystem with biota that would have been present had the disturbance not occurred is a complicated and complex topic that spans natural and social sciences. However, the social and political factors leading to the success of rewilding projects have not been adequately addressed in the literature or in practice. This dissertation seeks to determine why there is this gap in the literature around sociopolitical success factors in rewilding, what the actual key sociopolitical success factors and threats are in rewilding projects that we should evaluate, and to provide practitioners with a framework for evaluating those success factors and threats in a project landscape in order to increase the chances of a success in the projects' outcome.