

Intentional Dialogue on the Region's Most Divisive Topic

Conflict between large-scale economic development and environmental concerns remains one of the region's most persistent, least-discussed challenges.

THE CHALLENGE

- The [Moving Forward Together analysis](#) shows there is often limited consensus on regional assets and long-term goals, which can be a serious barrier to collaborative action.
- Good-faith discussion spaces are rare; debate is often dominated by social media or held in formal hearings featuring competing statements, rather than real dialogue.
- Fully bridging this values-based divide may not be possible, but there's room to build understanding, especially around environmentally sustainable economic drivers.

OUR ROLE

We recognize how weighty this issue is and are open to conversations with anyone interested in good-faith dialogue. We don't plan to lead these conversations ourselves in the near term, and welcome others who want to step up.

TAKE ACTION

REGIONAL

- Explore what taking the lead could look like
- Identify a counterpart you're comfortable meeting with to learn more
- Explore NRRI's [Midwest Industrial Transformation Initiative](#) (MITI)
- Research how other communities have navigated similar divides

LOCAL

- Invite opportunities for local learning
- Highlight successes in reclamation and conservation

See the full report and project updates at <https://www.northspan.org/thriving-rural-communities/>