

Conservation without Conflict - Purpose Statement

We value land for the recreational experiences it affords, the well being it provides our families, the support for our ways of life, the ecological benefits it delivers to our communities, and for the wildlife it sustains. Land and wildlife unites us and enhances our quality of life. Our collective desire is to pass these tremendous benefits and our outdoor experiences on to successive generations. Conservation without Conflict is both an approach and a coalition. Members have diverse goals and values, including economic profit and sustainability, hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation, conservation, national security, and public service, but we all come together around common conservation interests and a sense of good land stewardship. Our goal is to demonstrate to policy makers, funders, conservation groups, and the public and private sectors that investments in collaborative conservation protect land and the values we ascribe to it.

Wildlife belongs to all Americans. In meeting the responsibility to ensure the future of wildlife, Federal and State governments often use regulations to protect and manage species. Regulations have an important role in our history of conserving the abundance and diversity of our nation's fish and wildlife resources and ensuring access and opportunity to enjoy them, thus safeguarding our rich natural heritage for current and future generations. But, regulatory action often does not promote collaboration, which is necessary to achieve the level of conservation required to ensure the future of wildlife. Indeed, regulatory inflexibility can create a counterproductive and adversarial tension as landowners try to balance their individual priority needs with public expectations for conserving fish and wildlife. Across our country, and especially in the eastern United States, the future of fish and wildlife depends heavily on private landowners. Each of these landowners value different essentials from their lands, whether it's farming, timber, energy, economic profit, hunting and fishing, national defense preparedness or any of thousands of other uses. Working collaboratively towards conservation goals can conserve wildlife species and help support all of our shared values and ownership objectives on private lands.

A collaborative approach, along with appropriate and effective incentives that recognize the benefits landowners provide to America's fish and wildlife, can help landowners keep working lands working. This approach realizes the economic and cultural benefits of working landscapes, allows recreational opportunities, and contributes to the enhancement of important habitats. Collaboration that promotes this essential balance of mutual gain among partners is more successful in providing conservation at the scales needed, and will be more sustainable than a relationship relying on regulatory approaches alone or at all. This is the essence of Conservation without Conflict.

This coalition will initially focus on sharing successes and best practices, encouraging the use of existing incentives, suggesting new approaches and incentives, and providing capacity and support to implement actions designed to preclude the need to list at-risk species and recovering endangered and threatened species. Outreach and communication about successes by the coalition is of paramount importance. We will work to keep forests, farms, ranches and defense installations working for people and wildlife. Our goal is to use sound science and proactive, collaborative conservation to recover federally listed species and conserve as many species of fish, wildlife and plants as possible, negating the need for the ESA's protections. If federal protection is required, we will creatively use the ESA's flexibilities to use existing and develop new collaborative incentives, and provide regulatory predictability and assurances for private landowner or corporate conservation efforts. With demonstrated success creating regulatory flexibility and incentives around at-risk and listed species, we foresee broadening our scope in the future and translating the success of this approach to other areas.

Conservation without Conflict is the future of conservation in America. We will learn where collaborative conservation is working well and provide a framework to make collaborative conservation the way that government, landowners, industry, and society develop and work towards common goals.

