



## CONSERVING NATURAL RESOURCES FOR A STRONGER AMERICA:

*Recommendations for Natural Resource  
Policy for the Next Four Years*





## NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN AMERICA TODAY

For over a century, America has been the world's conservation leader. Initiatives created here, with support from both parties, have become global standards for conserving natural areas, for assisting farmers, ranchers, fishermen, hunters and foresters as stewards of our natural resources, and for restoring and protecting the quality of our air, land and water.

Despite all of our progress, increasing demands for food, land, energy and water coupled with a changing climate are placing new pressures on natural systems and the benefits they provide to people.

Conserving America's natural resources will make our economy stronger and create economic opportunity for many Americans. Investments in natural infrastructure, in sustainable agriculture, fishing and forestry, in lower-carbon sources of energy, and in leveraging the power of nature to adapt to and reduce the risks from natural hazards and a changing climate are integral to creating long-term and resilient economic growth.

America cannot address these challenges in isolation. In a global economy, resource degradation in other countries harms America's interests and threatens our national security. When we help other nations manage natural resources more sustainably, we make our own country stronger.

The American people continue to support investments in the productivity of our natural resources. A recent public opinion poll conducted by The Nature Conservancy using a bipartisan polling team revealed overwhelming approval for conservation. A strong majority of Americans from

across the political spectrum agree that protecting the environment and growing the economy are compatible goals.

Current fiscal realities require that government must find more cost-effective and efficient ways to accomplish its objectives. This means taking a creative, open-minded approach to the operation of existing programs and existing public subsidies for private activities to ensure that taxpayers are getting a strong return on their investment in government activities.

With leadership from the White House and Congress, and with the support of the American people, the United States can build on its rich bipartisan conservation and resource management tradition to ensure healthy air, lands and waters around which all Americans can create secure and rewarding lives.

## OUR OVERALL APPROACH

### **The Nature Conservancy proposes initiatives that:**

- Push toward more efficient solutions to resource management problems
- Are ambitious but also practical, with long-term benefits
- Take advantage of the power and value of nature
- Respect human needs
- Use market mechanisms to accomplish resource management goals
- Emphasize cooperation across agency, political and organizational boundaries
- Recognize public sector fiscal constraints

## AMERICANS SUPPORT CONSERVING NATURAL RESOURCES

The Nature Conservancy recently released a bipartisan poll conducted by Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (Democratic) and Public Opinion Strategies (Republican) from June 16-19, 2012. The results show support for conservation among American voters that crosses party and ideological lines. The poll also reveals overwhelming approval for the idea that there can be a positive relationship between the protection of the environment and economic growth.

Specifically, of American voters polled:

- 82% believe that conserving our country's natural resources—our land, air and water—**is patriotic**
- 79% believe that **we can protect land and water and have a strong economy** with good jobs for Americans at the same time, without having to choose one over the other
- 74% believe that even with federal budget problems, **funding to safeguard land, air and water should not be cut**
- 77% believe that if elected officials truly wanted to protect taxpayers' interests, they **would address environmental problems now**, rather than waiting later when they are more expensive or impossible to fix
- 70% believe that our state and national parks, forests, monuments and wildlife areas are an **essential part of their state's economy**
- 77% believe that **one of the things our government does best** is to protect and preserve our national history and natural beauty through national parks, forests and other public lands

More details on the poll can be found in a memo from the pollsters at <http://www.nature.org/aboutus/june-2012-public-key-findings.pdf>

### OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend five major initiatives to benefit both people and nature:

INVEST IN NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

HELP COMMUNITIES CONSERVE THEIR  
LANDS, WATERS AND COASTS

FINANCE CONSERVATION IN  
INNOVATIVE WAYS

ADDRESS THE REALITY OF A  
CHANGING CLIMATE

ENHANCE AMERICA'S GLOBAL  
LEADERSHIP IN CONSERVATION

## I. INVEST IN NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE



Our lives, economy, security and well-being still depend upon clean air and water, productive soils and complex systems of plants, animals and geology. Natural systems provide water supply, flood control, air quality, storm protection, recreation and other services to our economy. Such conservation can be a highly cost-effective solution for pressing infrastructure needs.

We can do more to harness the economic value of natural systems. Federal, state and local governments should promote investments in “natural infrastructure” by reforming key policies and targeting public funds for optimal ecological and human benefit.

Federal and state governments should:

- **Invest in natural infrastructure.** Task the President’s Council on Environmental Quality and the Office of Management and Budget to co-chair an interagency task force that would evaluate where restoring and conserving natural systems such as floodplains, forested watersheds and coastal marshes can complement or be more cost-effective than built infrastructure in protecting people and property from natural hazards, providing clean water and clean air, and meeting other human needs. Based on this evaluation, direct public funds and provide incentives to businesses to increase investment in nature-based solutions, including the restoration of natural systems that have tangible benefits to our communities. Americans strongly support this approach. The Nature Conservancy’s recent bipartisan poll found that 83 percent of voters support equal or greater investments in natural flood controls (wetlands, coastal barrier islands and forests) over man-made infrastructure (levees and dams). *Lead Agencies: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (investment strategy); U.S. Forest Service (forest restoration initiatives); National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Coastal Restoration Program); Environmental Protection Agency (air and water quality programs)*

- **Facilitate investment while improving the environment.** Maintain fair, consistent, predictable and efficient environmental regulatory programs that recognize both the value of our natural assets and the need for economic development. Public opinion polling shows that Americans and many leaders of industry agree that our basic environmental regulatory framework is sound and should be sustained, with any changes focused on improving efficiency and transparency, not on lowering standards. It is possible to facilitate needed investments in energy production, housing, transportation, commercial development and the other needs of our growing population while enhancing our environment through use of the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, minimize, compensate) on a landscape or watershed scale. Regulations

should be evaluated to enable cost-effective restoration of natural systems where the objective is to produce a net environmental benefit. *Lead Agencies: Department of the Interior, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency*

- **Support the outdoor recreation economy.** Recognize outdoor recreation in metropolitan, coastal and rural areas not as a luxury or a “nice to have” activity that can be ignored in fiscally challenging times, but as one of America’s largest industries and an essential contributor to personal health and sustaining strong and functional families. *Lead Agencies: Department of the Interior, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Forest Service*

ANNUAL CONSUMER SPENDING (IN BILLIONS)

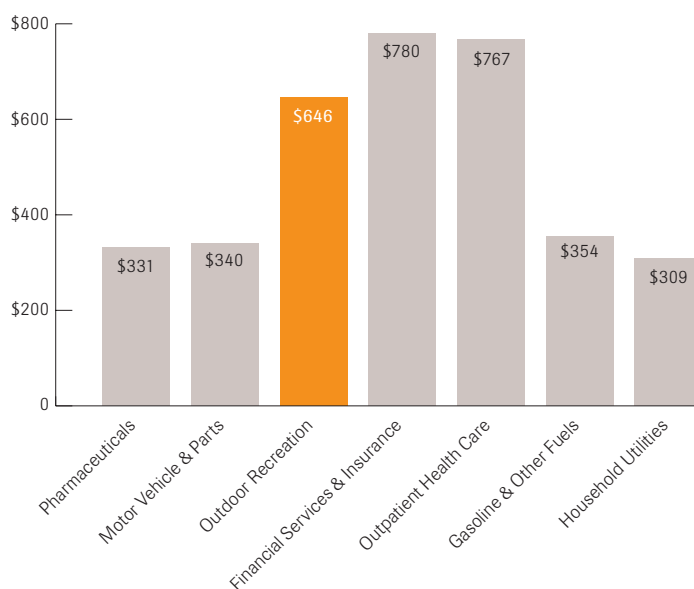


Table 1: Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Personal Consumption Expenditures by Type of Product, based on available 2010 data (as presented in “The Outdoor Recreation Economy” by the Outdoor Industry Association)



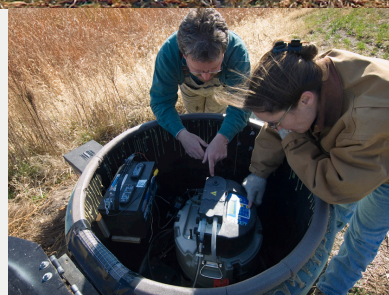


## CASE STUDY: BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS LEVERAGES THE POWER OF NATURE

The Bloomington Drinking Watersheds project in the city of Bloomington, Illinois, shows the cost-effectiveness of natural infrastructure at a local government level. The Lake Bloomington and Evergreen Lake reservoirs, a source of drinking water for 80,000 people, have periodic high levels of nitrates due to agricultural runoff. Until recently, the city's water supply was in jeopardy of exceeding EPA health standards for nitrates, which would require an expensive filtration system at the water plant.

In 2010, a new partnership was formed to improve water quality for residents of the City of Bloomington and for aquatic wildlife. Conservation groups and the City of Bloomington joined with local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offices, Soil and Water Conservation District staff and farmers to launch a voluntary program to construct wetlands to intercept tile-drained runoff within the drinking supply watersheds. This venture was based on a nearby, farm-based demonstration project at The Nature Conservancy's Mackinaw River project, where wetland restoration provided significant water quality benefits.

As a solution based on natural systems, wetlands are cheaper than filtration, the gray infrastructure option. A preliminary economic analysis of the cost effectiveness of the watershed project shows that wetlands prevent nitrate from entering the reservoirs at about one-third of the cost for the City to remove nitrate from the drinking water supply. Wetlands also protect aquatic life and improve water quality in local streams and rivers.



## II. HELP COMMUNITIES CONSERVE THEIR LANDS, WATERS AND COASTS



Landowners, fishermen, hunters, tribes, citizens groups and businesses are coming together on a voluntary basis at the state and local levels to conserve coastlines, rivers, landscapes and seascapes for the benefits they provide to communities. The Obama and Bush administrations directed federal agencies to support community-led initiatives through America's Great Outdoors, the Cooperative Conservation Initiative and the focusing of Farm Bill programs in places with particularly high conservation priorities.

Examples of large-scale, community-driven conservation projects now underway include the Blackfoot Challenge in Western Montana, the Flint Hills Conservation Area in Kansas, the Conte National Wildlife Refuge along the Connecticut River, the Penobscot River Restoration Project in Maine and the Central Coast Ground Fish Project in California.

Several key actions are needed to support this “from-the-bottom-up” approach to conservation:

- **Pass and implement the Conservation Title of the Farm Bill.** Implement the highly successful Conservation Title of the U.S. Farm Bill with a continuing emphasis on focusing funding in areas where Farm Bill programs can achieve the greatest water resource, habitat and other public benefits. *Lead Agencies/Policies: Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Bill programs*
- **Be strategic in adjusting the portfolio of public lands.** Accomplish prudent, well-planned additions to and, when appropriate, dispositions by transfer or exchange of public lands where those adjustments result in net benefits to the public, such as: more efficient management or protection of existing public lands and related resources; increases in access to hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreational opportunities for all Americans whether they live in urban or rural areas; protection of water resources; buffering of military bases or airspace; improved conservation of habitats under represented by current public landholdings; or other net conservation benefits. Increase the role of voluntary purchases of conservation easements from willing landowners to sustain natural resources values on private lands as an integral part of public land management strategies. More than three-quarters of Americans believe that stewardship of public lands is one of the things our government does best, according to a bipartisan poll conducted in June of this year. *Lead Agencies/Policies: Department of the Interior, U.S. Forest Service, Land and Water Conservation Fund*
- **Make conservation more efficient.** Adopt administrative and legislative actions to increase efficiency and to facilitate more effective cooperation and pooling of available resources among federal agencies, and between federal agencies, private landowners and state, tribal and local governments. These efforts should reduce overhead, reform outdated and inefficient planning, eliminate management “stovepipes,” and avoid redundancies. In doing so, they should also promote more cost-effective planning and delivery of funds and services for natural resource management in whole ecosystems or watersheds. Reform of federal fire policy and budgeting is a good example of where efficiency can be increased. Use of all of these approaches can benefit from resource management at a watershed or landscape scale. *Lead Agencies: Council on Environmental Quality, Office of Management and Budget*

---

**77% AMERICANS SAY STEWARDSHIP OF PUBLIC LANDS IS ONE OF THE THINGS OUR GOVERNMENT DOES BEST.**



Source: Poll by Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates and Public Opinion Strategies for The Nature Conservancy, June 2012.



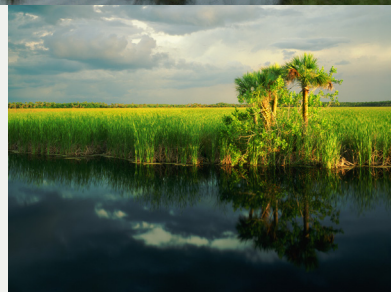


## CASE STUDY: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN THE EVERGLADES KEEPS RANCHERS ON THE LAND AND WATER CLEAN

The Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area is an effective, multi-faceted conservation project, accomplished through the combined efforts of community groups and government agencies. Through both fee simple acquisition and the purchase of conservation easements over ranchlands, the project aims to maintain wildlife habitat and working ranchlands. Ranchers have lined up to conserve their lands voluntarily, including wetlands that can store water needed for restoration of the larger Everglades ecosystem.

The main sources of public investment for this project come from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Department of Defense's Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative, the State of Florida and the South Florida Water Management District.

The multiple benefits of conserving public and private land in the Everglades Headwaters region include flood control, nutrient removal, increased opportunities for hunting and fishing, protection of the habitat of many listed species, protecting military readiness and sustaining the traditional ranching economy.



### III. FINANCE CONSERVATION IN INNOVATIVE WAYS



Deficit reduction will constrain funding for conservation. However, because funding for all natural resource and environmental programs constitute only 1.2 percent of the federal budget, deep cuts to conservation would do little to address the deficit and would result in great harm to the wide range of citizens who benefit from those programs. In fact, conservation programs have not kept pace with our growing economy and population, and are already underfunded. So while natural resource programs can reasonably be expected to shoulder a fair share of deficit reduction, the next President and Congress can reduce the impact of such reductions by targeting resources to achieve better environmental results, reforming programs to make them more efficient, and considering tax incentives, user fees, royalty payments and other

market-based approaches for providing additional resources for stewardship of our country's natural resources.

Our solution is to stabilize and make better use of existing sources of funding and to develop new dedicated resources for conservation that do an even better job of leveraging state and private programs and resources:

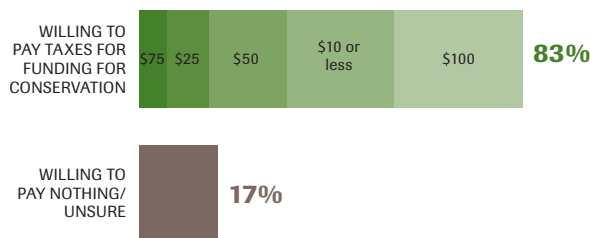
- **Sustain our public natural systems with revenues generated from those systems.** Evaluate the royalty and fee structures for the extraction and use of all federally-owned mineral, energy and recreational resources to ensure that the American people are receiving a fair, market-based return on the use of such resources. Energy and other development on public lands and waters will increase, and a portion of the revenue stream that comes from the commercial extraction and sale of the natural resources owned by the American people and managed by the federal government should be dedicated to the stewardship of the nation's natural resources. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is an existing example of this approach; the LWCF should receive the full authorized amount of \$900 million annually from offshore oil and gas revenues. Four in five American voters support the continued dedication of drilling fees to LWCF, according to a bipartisan poll released by The Nature Conservancy in June. In addition, they also overwhelmingly back dedicating some portion of visitor or resource extraction fees from public lands to conservation—with 92 percent and 86 percent support, respectively. Creative techniques such as stewardship contracting, the use of private capital for water resource infrastructure, ecosystem markets including such techniques as emissions trading, and social impact investing should all be explored to provide support for natural resource management and restoration. *Lead Agencies/Policies: Department of the Interior, Department of Agriculture, Land and Water Conservation Fund*
- **Use environmental fines and penalties to accomplish long-term conservation goals.** Allocate fines and penalties from environmental incidents in a more strategic way to achieve the maximum public benefit. One recent example is the passage of the RESTORE Act, which will ensure that 80 percent of the Clean Water

Act fines from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico will be dedicated toward the restoration and long-term health of the Gulf. The Gulf is a resource of great importance to the nation as a whole, and is in need of comprehensive restoration to conserve its many economic, recreational and habitat values. *Lead Agencies: Department of the Interior, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Agriculture*

- **Change the tax code to incentivize voluntary private actions to conserve and enhance our natural resources.** With the expected rewriting of the federal tax code, explore all incentives and disincentives in the code for the conservation of the nation's natural resources. This includes permanently authorizing favorable tax treatment for the donation of conservation easements to federal, state and local agencies and to non-profit organizations. Tax code changes can improve long-term stewardship of private land, thus reducing the need for public land acquisition. *Lead Agency: Department of Treasury*

#### 83% VOTERS SAY THEY ARE WILLING TO PAY SOMETHING MORE

"How much would you be willing to pay in taxes to fund water quality; natural areas; lakes, rivers or beaches; neighborhood parks; and wildlife habitat in your area per year?"



Source: Poll by Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates and Public Opinion Strategies for The Nature Conservancy, June 2012.





## CASE STUDY: GULF OF MEXICO RESTORATION — MOBILE BAY OYSTER REEFS

The Gulf of Mexico is a valuable resource for its coastal communities and for the nation as a whole. However, in recent years its bays, estuaries and tributary rivers have been steadily declining. The most acute expression of this decline was the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill.

The RESTORE Act recently passed by Congress will direct 80 percent of penalties from the oil spill toward restoration of the Gulf of Mexico. This investment should focus on three areas: restoring shorelines, protecting water resources and ensuring that the Gulf communities and people benefit economically, ecologically and socially from these restoration activities.

*100-1000: Restore Coastal Alabama* is a restoration project in Mobile Bay, Alabama designed to contribute to all three of these goals by building 100 miles of oyster reef and protecting 1,000 acres of seagrass beds.

In 2011, more than 500 volunteers were enlisted to launch the project, with the objective of protecting 10,000 feet of eroding shoreline, creating fish and shellfish habitat and improving water quality. This collaborative effort was accomplished with the help of community volunteers and a wide range of community organizations and local and state agencies. It is seen as a prototype for larger scale restoration that will help to restore the Gulf's seafood industry and put people back to work along the coast.



## IV. ADDRESS THE REALITY OF A CHANGING CLIMATE



Communities across the country and around the world are feeling the impact of changes in our climate, from droughts and crop losses, to more intense coastal storms, to declining water supplies and dying forests. The next President and Congress should work together to promote energy efficiency and clean energy development by putting a price on carbon and supporting advanced energy research. Federal agencies should help communities adapt to climate impacts, especially by investments in natural infrastructure.

- **Put a price on carbon.** Preventing dangerous climate change will require public policy to provide an incentive for clean energy development and improved energy efficiency. A market-based solution is the simplest, least bureaucratic and least intrusive way to decrease emissions, increase energy security and promote the long-term cost savings and economic growth benefits associated with the more efficient use of energy. The next President and Congress should incorporate a carbon tax as a component of comprehensive tax reform. The structure and use of the proceeds of such a tax require careful evaluation. *Lead Agencies: Department of Treasury, National Economic Council, Council on Environmental Quality*
- **Invest in advanced energy R&D and facilitate the siting of lower-carbon sources of energy.** Invest in energy research and development where there is the potential for breakthrough technologies—the grid, batteries, low-carbon biofuels and low-carbon base load power. Support the siting and development of lower-carbon sources of energy through the consistent, government-wide use of the mitigation hierarchy in combination with existing federally recognized conservation plans. Discussed briefly above, the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, minimize, compensate) can be used in conjunction with existing environmental laws and with State Wildlife Action Plans, State Forestry Plans, and other local and state-generated initiatives to facilitate the siting of energy development and other infrastructure while providing compensatory funds for restoration and conservation of natural resources. *Lead Agencies: Department of Energy, Department of the Interior*
- **Leverage the power of nature to combat natural hazards.** Where possible, employ natural infrastructure as a cost-effective complement to traditional “gray” infrastructure in protecting against the increased risks from natural hazards such as flooding, coastal storms, droughts and wildfire. *Lead Agencies: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration*





## CASE STUDY: WIND ENERGY AND WILDLIFE

The work done by EDP Renewables, a wind project developer, owner and operator, is an example of how to facilitate energy development by making it compatible with the environment.

Meridian Way Wind Farm will power more than 65,000 homes served by The Empire Electric District and Westar Energy in Kansas with renewable energy. The company, aware of the potential environmental impacts of wind turbines on wildlife, has committed to funding a voluntary conservation program that includes the cost of ecological offsets into the wind farm's financial model. This initiative will invest in a 20,000-acre offsite habitat restoration program, including an anticipated 13,100 acres of permanent conservation easements, which will benefit numerous species of grassland birds, with targeted benefits for the greater prairie-chicken.

Partners in this venture include The Nature Conservancy, Ranchland Trust of Kansas and EDP Renewables. The company's funds will supplement additional investment provided by wildlife conservation groups and state and federal agencies.



## V. ENHANCE AMERICA'S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP IN CONSERVATION



Growing demand for food, energy, and water puts pressure on natural systems all around the world. Environmental degradation in other countries undercuts their economic growth and creates political instability—threatening America's security and interests. The challenge is greatest in developing countries, where capacity to manage natural resources is limited. Fortunately, leaders in key U.S. ally nations such as Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia and Mexico recognize that conserving natural resources is essential for sustainable growth. The United States has long provided international assistance for natural resource conservation. The next President and Congress should sustain this bipartisan tradition of international leadership:

- **Continue international conservation assistance programs.** Maintain the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID's) budget for conservation programs at no less than \$200 million annually and the United States contribution to the Global Environment Facility at \$90 million. Integrate conservation into other U.S. assistance priorities, including food security, climate change and health, while concentrating on ecosystems that produce goods and services of highest value to people. *Lead Agencies: Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of Treasury*
- **Continue U.S. pledges to address climate change in the developing world.** Provide substantial assistance, in line with existing United States government pledges, to climate mitigation and adaptation in developing countries. *Lead Agencies: Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of Treasury*
- **Better coordinate U.S. conservation assistance.** Enact the Global Conservation Act, recently introduced into Congress with bipartisan sponsorship. The Global Conservation Act would facilitate the coordination of U.S. international programs that support conservation and related activities in such a way that limited resources would be focused on achieving the highest priority goals. *Lead Agency: National Security Council*







## CASE STUDY: LATIN AMERICAN WATER FUNDS

Access to clean water is an essential requirement for sustainable economic development. The United States is supporting an innovative program to help cities across Latin America invest in natural infrastructure as a cost-effective way to provide clean water. Water funds pool investments from large water users—such as water utilities, hydroelectric projects, and bottling companies—and use the funds to help neighboring landowners conserve and restore natural habitat to maintain healthy watersheds.

The first water fund was established in Quito, Ecuador with support from The Nature Conservancy to protect watersheds that supply the city's 2 million people with 80 percent of their freshwater. Nearly \$1 million in payments from Quito's water and electric companies are used to help communities upstream improve management of working landscapes within the city's watershed.

This self-sustaining model has now been applied to water fund projects in other cities across the region. Some water funds, such as those in Quito and Bogotá, Colombia, pay for community-wide

reforestation projects in villages upstream from major urban centers. In other cases, such as Sao Paulo, Brazil, municipalities collect fees from water users and make direct payments to farmers and ranchers who protect and restore riverside forests on their land through water producer initiatives.

Funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been fundamental to the success of water funds. USAID jumpstarted the creation of the first fund in Quito and has substantially ensured the success of additional funds by providing parallel funding for conservation and monitoring activities.

The Nature Conservancy, FEMSA (a leading Latin American beverage company), the Global Environment Facility, and the Inter-American Development Bank are now working with local governments, companies, and communities to implement water funds in over 30 cities across Latin America to protect water sources for 50 million people.





## AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LEADERSHIP

The actions we suggest here will help strengthen America's economy and make our nation more secure. Americans of both parties strongly support conservation. The next President and Congress have a unique opportunity for leadership. They can focus conservation programs and budgets on priorities that provide the greatest benefits for people and nature. They can lead federal, state and local agencies to work together better to achieve more results at a lower cost. And, they can engage the private sector more effectively as a partner in conservation.

Working together, we can build on America's bipartisan conservation tradition and sustain the healthy natural systems that are the foundation for our economy, our security and our way of life.

## ABOUT THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

The Nature Conservancy is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Founded in the United States in 1951, we now work in 35 countries around the world and in all 50 states in the United States.. Guided by science, we collaborate with local landowners, communities and businesses to implement practical conservation solutions. We are supported by almost a million members and by boards of trustees made up of local leaders in each of the states and countries where we work.

We are wholly nonpartisan and our trustees, members, and staff come from across the political spectrum. Our recommendations are drawn from the hands-on experience of over 60 years in working with people from all walks of life, with businesses and industries, and with governments from the local to the national level. Our experience has convinced us that the health of natural systems and the welfare of human communities are closely linked, and that diverse public and private interests can work together to achieve lasting conservation success.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

**Robert Bendick**

Director, U.S. Government Relations | The Nature Conservancy | [rbendick@tnc.org](mailto:rbendick@tnc.org) | (703) 841-4582

Photo credits: Cover (top to bottom): Ecotourism on Virginia Coast Reserve in Virginia © John M. Hall/TNC, Hunting in Nebraska © Chris Helzer/TNC, Working on the fence at the Centennial Sandhills Preserve © Joanna Pinneo; Page ii: Canoeing in Georgia © Erika Nortemann/TNC; Page 2: Children explore wetlands and grassland prairie at Medano-Zapata Ranch in Colorado © Dale Swenarton; Page 3 (top to bottom): Harvesting on a family farm, on the banks of the Mackinaw River © Timothy T. Lindenbaum/TNC, Checking water monitoring devices © Mark Godfrey/TNC, Glass of water © William Britten; Page 4: Water sample collection on the Penobscot River © Bridget Besaw; Page 5 (t to b): Cattle drive in Florida © Carlton Ward, Jr., Fakahatchee Strand marshes in Florida © Jeff Ripple, Cowboy working the Adams Ranch in Florida © Carlton Ward, Jr.; Page 6: Pronghorn antelope on the Jonah Oil and Gas Field in Wyoming © David Stubbs; Page 7 (t to b): Vietnamese man fills mesh bag of oyster shells in the Gulf of Mexico © Andrew Kornylak, Egret on artificial oyster reef in Alabama © Erika Nortemann/TNC, Volunteers help build an oyster reef in Helen Wood Park, Alabama © Erika Nortemann/TNC; Page 8: Dry river bed © littlemoresunshine via Flickr creative commons; Page 9 (t to b): All photos © Jim Richardson – Rob Manes surveys the Elk River Wind Project in Kansas, Aerial view of the Elk River Wind Project, Grasslands of the Flint Hills in Kansas; Page 10: Park guard in his organic garden in Ecuador © Erika Nortemann/TNC, Rio Malo Waterfall © Erika Nortemann/TNC; Page 11 (t to b): A park guard's family in their organic garden © Erika Nortemann/TNC, A native of the Talamanca-Bribri Indigenous Territory navigates the Yorkin River. ©TNC/Sergio Pucci; Back Cover: LEAF intern counts piping plovers at Cape May Preserve in New Jersey © Erika Nortemann/TNC.