

Faces and Places of Cooperative Conservation

PROFILES IN CITIZEN STEWARDSHIP

White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation
St. Louis, Missouri • August, 2005





EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

Dear Friends:

I am pleased to share with you *Faces and Places of Cooperative Conservation*, a story that tells much about environmental stewardship in America.

This compendium of case studies illustrates the richness and diversity that characterizes conservation today. At the start of the last century, conservation became a cause. Today, conservation is a way of life for millions of Americans. From small and large farms and ranches to state, public and tribal lands, from coastal shores to inland lakes and rivers, and from inner city cores to outer suburban rings, Americans are enhancing their local environments and changing the landscape of America for the better. We enter the 21st century with a vision of cooperative conservation characterized by grassroots, voluntary partnerships working at the local level where conservation becomes reality.

Faces and Places gives us a glimpse at what Americans are doing to bring cooperative conservation into thousands of small and larger acts of stewardship. It speaks to the wisdom of Americans – to their inventiveness and practicality in finding ways to exist in productive harmony with nature. The profiles of stewardship that you will find in the pages that follow amply illustrate how thriving communities and dynamic economies can harness their energies toward greater conservation.

Cooperative conservation is the conservation policy of the United States, embodied in the Executive Order issued by President George W. Bush on August 26, 2004, and celebrated in the White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation, August 29-31, 2005. My hope is that the profiles shared in the pages that follow will be just one chapter in an unending story of conservation in America – of citizens from every walk of life assuming individual and community responsibility for the care of our air, water, and lands.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James L. Connaughton".

James L. Connaughton
Chairman

Acknowledgements

We thank the many individuals, groups, organizations and agencies that contributed to the making of *Faces and Places of Cooperative Conservation*; their willingness to help is indicative of the cooperative spirit that pervades conservation in America today.

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Above all, we thank the American people, the practitioners of cooperative conservation. It is because of their conservation courage, creativity and commitment that *Faces and Places* is possible; they are the 21st Century stewards of America's natural heritage.

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The Landscape of Cooperative Conservation

Grand County, Utah

In the rural areas of Grand County at southern Utah's Sand Flats Recreation Area are reminders of a remarkable story of the success of conservation and the triumph of cooperation. By the spring of 1993, the Sand Flats Recreation Area near Moab had become one of the foremost mountain-biking destinations in the United States. Administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and renowned for its Slickrock Bike Trail, Sand Flats had also become the premier destination for bike-riding college students on spring break.

Chaos unfolded at Sand Flats that particular week as too many people crowded onto grounds lacking adequate parking for cars, sufficient space for tents, and enough toilets to meet minimal personal hygiene needs. People filled every available spot, sparking fights as one person's space collided with another's. Fires for cooking lit the night sky, and were fed with whatever wood could be found, including posts from BLM signs.

What occurred during that spring break in 1993 was not acceptable to the people of Moab and Grand County. The lack of infrastructure in Sand Flats to accommodate visitors, persistent overcrowding, and the lack of management to protect a stunning natural environment discouraged other visitors seeking a quality outdoor experience. Yet popular outdoor magazines were touting the biking virtues of the Slickrock Bike Trail. A mecca for mountain bikers, it was drawing larger crowds than ever before to the Sand Flats Recreation Area.

Local citizens had already started to act. A county-appointed, 12-member Slickrock Area Planning Committee issued a report in November 1991 identifying the challenges posed to the community by the increasingly popular recreation area. The report, and the catalyst of spring break 1993, brought Grand County and the BLM together to come up with a plan to tame the wild west atmosphere of Sand Flats. The agency and the county both knew that the BLM lacked the funding and staff to manage the Sand Flats Recreation Area. An innovative solution was needed to steer the recreation area and the community on a new course.

Grand County and the BLM crafted a cooperative agreement in June 1994 that authorized day-to-day management of the

5,260-acre Sand Flats Recreation Area by the county. Under the agreement, Grand County would collect fees for the recreation area and, in partnership with the BLM and with advice from a Citizen Stewardship Committee, would set the priorities and uses for fee revenues. One immediate benefit was the county's ability to use the fees to lease State in-holdings at Sand Flats (1,980 acres) and put the whole area under unified management. The county and the BLM agreed to cooperatively develop infrastructure for camping and parking, a task initially completed with the aid of Americorps volunteers and, today, continued by the partnership.



Cyclists enjoy the view at Utah's Sand Flats.

The budding partnership spirit in shared stewardship went even further. The county and the BLM joined with the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service and the Canyonlands Natural History Association to acquire, build, and operate a one-stop Moab Information Center for tourists. The county bought the land and built the center, which it then leased to the association. As managing partner of the center, the association would cover all operating costs for the center out of the sales revenues garnered annually from over 200,000 visitors. The BLM, in turn, provided supplemental construction funds and, with its sister agencies, now help fund staffing for the facility.

The outcome of the cooperative agreement at Sand Flats between the county and the BLM has been positive. The BLM is now able to ensure the level of management needed to protect and conserve the highly scenic and popular recreation area. Grand County is able to enhance local employment and quality tourism. The Moab tourist industry, the foundation for the county's economy, now enjoys a diverse clientele. The local economy is booming, tourists are well served, and the land is protected and properly managed.

The faces and places of Sand Flats and Grand County, Utah, tell only one story among many citizen and community conservation efforts. Yet the themes of Sand Flats are universal and common, in part or in whole, to every practice and practitioner of cooperative conservation. The themes emerge on private and public lands, rural and urban settings, from plains to the mountains, coastal shores to inland lakes and waterways. It is this commitment of

all the partners working together at the grassroots level towards preserving our natural resources and communities that President George W. Bush sees as the future of cooperative conservation for the 21st century.

Cooperative conservation is common sense conservation of the Nation's lands, waters and wildlife by people from every walk of life. It is rooted in collaborative decisionmaking, shared governance, and bottom-up action. It is as straightforward as a landowner working with a single partner to restore habitat, and as complex as a community of tribes, conservation groups, and government agencies working to establish a collaborative framework to achieve landscape-scale conservation goals, be it in Puget Sound, the Great Basin, along the southern Gulf Coast, or in the greater Chesapeake Bay region.

The sheer magnitude of citizens engaged and committed to caring for their environments is breathtaking.

No matter how one pigeonholes cases of cooperative conservation, certain features are common to all of them, including the Sand Flats Recreation Area. Cooperative conservation rests on collaboration, though it does not supplant the current regulatory foundations of modern environmental law. Its practitioners fix environmental problems by working together to find common solutions. The BLM and Grand County found a solution to the Sand Flats crisis by doing what made the greatest sense: sharing the day-to-day work of stewardship.

Cooperative conservation is nonpartisan. It belongs to every American practicing it in thousands of small and larger acts, all adding up to millions of acres, miles of waterways, and countless species benefited. The 7,240 acres of the unified Sand Flats Recreation Area are not that many when measured by the yardstick of square miles, but when measured by the yardstick of meaningful practices and lessons learned, the Sand Flats experience can change how we think about conservation—and how we take action.

Cooperative conservation presumes that strong economies and vibrant communities are part and parcel of healthy landscapes. This conviction is what moved Grand County, the BLM, and the citizens of Moab to fix a problem that was neither good for the public lands nor good for their local economy.

Cooperative conservation is voluntary in nature. It builds upon local innovation and citizen entrepreneurship. It motivates action through incentives. It draws upon community perspectives. It results in landscape-scale conservation. It offers an alternative to polarization and litigation.

What is most amazing is that these ideas and practices of cooperative conservation are commonplace on the landscapes of America, affecting not just a small recreation area in the southern

Utah desert, but millions and millions of acres of the nation's most valuable and beloved lands and waters. In the pages that follow, we will take a narrative journey across the width and breadth of America to witness the faces and places of cooperative conservation in all of their richness and diversity, and to capture a glimpse of how Americans are re-inventing conservation. Their stories—those of everyday Americans—reflect the rise of a new environmentalism anchored in cooperation.

Touring the Landscape of Cooperative Conservation

Today, Americans are doing the business of conservation in ways and at scales none of us could have imagined 35 years ago when Earth Day was first celebrated. The sheer magnitude of citizens engaged and committed to caring for their environments is breathtaking.

The 152 conservation profiles in the chapters that follow, and the 800 snapshots of local conservation action appended at the end, offer a glimpse into the world of cooperative conservation. We can see in the stories they tell the incredible ways in which Americans are conserving our heritage of wildlife, fish and plants, our urban cores and corridors, our parks, monuments and preserves, our population-packed coastal areas, our rangelands and forests, our streams, rivers and watersheds, and our farms and farmlands. Follow these stories and you will witness and experience the landscape of cooperative conservation.

Conserving Wildlife, Fish and Plants The story of the red cockaded woodpecker is a good starting point on the cooperative conservation landscape. Once common to southeastern pine forests, the red cockaded woodpecker is now listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Government plans and programs are in place to protect the species, but the real story of its recovery is told in the individual actions of many players. Over 200 small and corporate landowners, two military bases, and an array of conservation organizations and federal and state agencies have joined in multiple efforts to save the woodpecker. By mixing the tools of landowner-friendly Safe Harbor Agreements with the conservation opportunities afforded by extensive military buffer lands at Fort Bragg and Fort Benning, the red cockaded woodpecker is making the first strides toward recovery.

Midway across the nation, in the hill country of central Texas, a similar collection of players is aiming its efforts at the recovery of the golden-cheeked warbler and the black-capped vireo, both ESA listed species. Ranchers have joined with Fort Hood and other partners to form the Leon River Restoration Project. Together, they are managing their lands to increase warbler and vireo numbers and protect their properties as working landscapes—healthy rangelands for livestock and operational lands for military training exercises.

Further west, the White Mountain Apaches of eastern Arizona are blazing different trails in the art and practice of species conservation. Home to what had been the last known populations of endangered Apache trout, the tribe has worked with state and federal fish and game agencies to bring the species back

from the brink of extinction, in part, by implementing a catch-release, public sport-fishing program. In managing its extensive ponderosa pine forests, the tribe is protecting habitat for the Mexican Spotted Owl and growing an elk herd envied by hunters nationwide.

The path to cooperative conservation of species also leads to Wisconsin, where landowners and communities, afforded special regulatory protections, are helping to restore the Karner blue butterfly and making it a mascot of community pride. The Wyoming Wetland Society established a captive breeding program for the listed Trumpeter Swan that is now enabling the recovery of that species. The City of Mobile, Alabama created a conservation bank—a perpetual sanctuary—for the gopher tortoise. The city is using that bank to increase the numbers of tortoises and allow low-income housing in areas that might otherwise have been off-limits. Environmental Defense is using incentives to enlist landowners in what it hopes will be a precedent-breaking recovery of the listed bog turtle. And the Marine Corps in Hawaii is working with citizen partners to make fire breaks for red-footed boobies and to use training maneuvers as an opportunity to control mangrove and pickleweed invasions that now threaten the Hawaiian stilt.

Partnered wildlife conservation is not limited to at-risk species. Ducks Unlimited and ranchers in the prairies of the Dakotas are working cooperatively with an array of federal agencies to restore wetlands and native grasslands for a range of sensitive bird and duck species. Sportsmen and ranchers on BLM lands in the Henry Mountains of southern Utah are cooperating to keep summer range available for bison herds. Ranchers are moving their livestock to accommodate sportsmen, and sportsmen are covering the costs to ranchers of lost forage and reduced livestock herds. States are cooperating with federal agencies and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation to bring elk back to the southern Appalachians. The Fish and Wildlife Service is working with states, tribes, and Trout Unlimited to restore the legendary “Coaster” brook trout in Lake Superior.

Urban Cores and Corridors Cooperative conservation thrives in unexpected places. It can be found on empty lots in old city neighborhoods. The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society led the way to conservation in Philadelphia’s City Center by restoring vacant lots with trees, grass and wood fences. The idea caught on; it was adopted by the city and is now the official implementation plan to help distressed neighborhoods revitalize. The Bronx River Alliance formed to restore an abandoned concrete plant site, replacing it with salt marsh and upland plants. The next step is to complete a larger park on the site, providing a vital link in the greenway that runs along the Bronx River. The Clean Charles Coalition in Boston is promoting awareness of the Charles River as an urban resource, and fostering among local residents a sense of responsibility for the river.



Farmers sell produce in Cuyahoga Valley.

Downtown Caldwell in southwest Idaho is not a major city, but its residents are engaged in what amounts to a major downtown revitalization. After years of development that buried Indian Creek under asphalt, a broad-based community partnership is set on “daylighting” Indian Creek, bringing it back to life by restoring its aquatic and riparian habitat and making it a natural centerpiece of a more desirable city center.

Two projects, in particular, demonstrate the potential and scope of cooperative conservation for the largest of the nation’s urban areas. In Chicago, a partnership formed to restore the area’s remnant natural plant communities, including the tallgrass prairies that once dominated the region. The Chicago Wilderness consortium, formed in 1996, is leading the way in re-establishing the grasslands and oak woodlands that once flourished in the area and gave the landscape its distinctive flavor.

At the other end of the country, a somewhat different path is being taken to urban cooperative conservation. A local California developer with a vision of sustainable development has joined portions of the old Irvine Ranch in Orange County with smaller parcels owned by the state of California and The Nature Conservancy to create the 50,000-acre Irvine Ranch Land Reserve. The reserve provides a patch of wilderness within a 30-minute drive of a population exceeding 4 million people. The Irvine Ranch Land Reserve Trust manages the property for multiple sustainable uses, including public access, recreation, and conservation

education. It provides a connecting corridor for millions of local people between their bustling urban lives and a natural world that is retreating from view elsewhere.

Parks, Monuments and Preserves Cooperative conservation is also transforming the day-to-day business of how we protect and manage our most cherished national landscapes in America—our National Parks, National Monuments, and wildlife refuges. The National Park Service in California has joined with California State Parks to create clusters of co-managed parks. It started at the Redwood National Park, where an integrated Redwood national and state park was created. Since then, the idea has spread to other park clusters within the state. The agreement between the National Park Service and California State Parks allows adjacent park units to pool their resources to achieve consistent operations, share facilities, tackle common resource challenges, reduce operational costs, and provide seamless service to park users. Much the same concept is transforming management at the BLM Jupiter Inlet Natural Area at Jupiter, Florida, and at the agency’s Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument in central New Mexico, where the Pueblo de Cochiti and the BLM are co-managing the monument. Perhaps one of the most innovative outcomes of co-management is the Boston Harbor Island National Park Area, where the NPS coordinates park operations among multiple partners, but owns none of the land comprising the park.

Citizens are increasingly becoming a vital part of national parks nationwide. The Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Ohio has given private individuals long-term leases in the park to operate living farms, provide stewardship for the land, and make a living off the produce they grow and the livestock they raise. Ebey's Landing National Historic Reserve is the culmination of a community's drive to protect open farm space and preserve its local culture through a mixed ownership park that gives all partners a say in the park's operations. Joint-management is the centerpiece of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, where the Appalachian Trail Conservancy maintains the 2,175-mile trail system for the National Park Service and the American people.

Some collaborative management is heading toward network governance. The Detroit International Wildlife Refuge is working with a variety of state, city, community, landowner and business partners in Detroit to create a new kind of wildlife refuge—one managed as part of a larger metropolitan landscape and funded through networks of contributing partners. Crissy Field, part of the National Landmark Presidio in California, is managed by the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Its restoration and current management draw from community participation and rest on an enduring sense of community ownership in the field and in the larger park.



A Northwest Straits staffer collects samples.

Coasts and Nearshore Marine Areas Challenges along our nation's coasts and nearshore marine areas are significant, affecting coastal waters from the Chesapeake Bay to the Gulf of Mexico to Puget Sound in northwestern Washington. Citizens are the driving force behind numerous innovative coastal initiatives and are increasingly manning the frontlines of national coastal conservation efforts.

Citizen groups have a long tradition of spearheading coastal restoration in the New England and Mid-Atlantic region that stretches from Maine to the Chesapeake Bay. Community groups in Merrymeeting Bay have restored vital coastal marshes, and the town of Barnstable, Massachusetts is restoring a critical 40-acre coastal wetland. Further south in the Chesapeake Bay, community groups helped the Navy rebuild and stabilize shoreline vital to Navy facilities by planting submerged aquatic plants, installing and seeding two oyster reefs, and planting marsh grass over a 1.5 acre area. Landowners on the bay and along its tributaries are also restoring coastal wetlands as part of several federal cost-share programs. Although these efforts individually are relatively small steps in the overall Chesapeake Bay restoration effort, they are, cumulatively, ecologically essential.

Cooperative conservation is also making a difference along the southeastern coast. The Onslow Bight Conservation Forum, a broad-based partnership, is seeking to protect the saltwater marshes, wetlands, and longleaf pine savannahs that stretch from Cape Lookout to Cape Fear, North Carolina. The South

Carolina Winyah Bay Focus Area, a coalition of landowners, business owners, conservation organizations, and federal and state agencies is protecting the coastal stretches of the bay against the encroachment of development through conservation easements.

The Gulf Coast has its share of cooperative conservation efforts. Coastal America, a federal interagency initiative, is working with American corporations to engage them in the funding of coastal restoration work. Led by such corporate giants as Duke Energy, the Gillette Company, and the National Association of Manufacturers, corporate dollars are now supporting the restoration of more than 200 acres of tidal marsh at the San Jacinto

National Monument on the Texas Gulf Coast. In Galveston Bay, federal agencies created two islands and over 4,000 acres of wetlands as part of a dredging operation for the deep-water ports of Houston and Texas City, and through a collaborative process with local governments, businesses, and communities, determined both commercial and environmental goals.

Puget Sound is home to many of the most innovative cooperative conservation initiatives. At the Olympia Oyster Restoration Project tribes, private owners of tidelands, the local seafood industry, schools, environmental organizations, and

state and federal agencies are restoring oyster habitat and oyster populations. They have seeded over 50 million oysters at 80 sites.

Puget Sound is also home to one of the most comprehensive cooperative conservation efforts in the region's history. Authorized by Congress in 1998, the Northwest Straits Marine Initiative sets the framework for citizen governance of the coastal and near-shore zones of the Northwest Straits through county-based Marine Resources Committees (MRC) coordinated by a voluntary Northwest Straits Commission and staffed by citizen volunteers from the seven-county region. In just the first five years of the initiative, MRCs and their citizen volunteers have met the major coastal conservation goals set for them by the Congress. They have mapped and surveyed shoreline habitat in all seven counties; developed policy and protocols for removal of derelict fishing gear, gill nets, and crab pots from the marine floor; identified the critical habitat of forage fish essential to salmon, marine fish, birds, and marine mammals; and assisted the planting of Olympia oysters in surrounding tidelands.

Rangelands and Forests Cooperative conservation has been especially visible in the forests and rangelands that make up our rural, working landscapes. Many forest and rangeland collaborative groups are pioneering new paths for network governance and community stewardship on private, public, and mixed-ownership landscapes.

The Pingree Forest Partnership in the Maine North Woods created the largest conservation easement in history, protecting

762,000 acres of working forests from the threat of subdivision and development and ensuring in the process the long-term stewardship of over 2,000 miles of stream and river shoreline and 72,000 acres of woodlands. The Downeast Lakes Partnership, a community initiative in Maine, secured a 27,000-acre community forest as the core area for its tourist economy and protected another 312,000 acres of forestland through conservation easements. These lands will support the livelihood of local people and serve the larger public through open access and long-term conservation of open space.

Westward across the prairies and high plains is the Blackfoot Challenge, a watershed project begun by private ranchers and now extending to adjacent public lands in the 1.5 million-acre Blackfoot River Watershed. The Blackfoot Challenge has grown to more than 500 private citizens and a lengthening list of federal and state agencies, businesses, and conservation groups. It represents one of a growing number of collaborative endeavors blazing new paths in collaborative land governance and building the institutional framework to sustain that governance.

Directly south of the Blackfoot by 1,000 miles is another landscape-level experiment in cooperative conservation: the Malpai Borderlands Partnership of southwestern New Mexico and southeastern Arizona. Born from the need of local ranchers to restore their private rangelands to productive use for both themselves and wildlife, the partnership has been creative and

Every state and almost every watershed is place to a growing complement of engaged citizens working cooperatively to conserve and protect these waters.

successful. It established the first “grass bank” in history—a forage reserve that local ranchers could use when resting and improving their grazing lands and a powerful tool to prevent land fragmentation resulting from development. Echoes of the Malpai Partnership can be heard in local grass-banking initiatives and in collaborative range restoration projects such as the Comanche Pools Prairie Resource Partnership in Oklahoma and Kansas, part of the larger High Plains Partnership.

Cooperative conservation on public lands is evolving quickly within watersheds and across landscapes. The Quincy Library group in northeastern California set a precedent for shared stewardship of national forests through congressional action that elevated the 30-member citizen committee to an experiment in community governance of forest lands and resources. Community-based stewardship contracts on national forests in northern Idaho and northwestern Montana are creating additional opportunities for local engagement in the management of national forest resources. Such contracts give communities a direct hand in forest management, while also providing employment opportunities in the wood industries.

The Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition, a community group operating out of Ely, Nevada, is working with the BLM, helping establish a collaborative framework in which the citizens of the region can be integral players in the planning and implementation of sage grouse restoration in the Great Basin. In many ways, the Eastern Landscape Nevada Coalition is a youthful reflection of a more established collaborative effort, just east of Tucson, Arizona. The Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership, a community group representing a broad spectrum of interests, laid the foundation for the creation of Las Cienegas National Monument. Both the BLM and the partnership are working toward full community participation in the everyday stewardship of the monument. They are looking to new operating principles, such as adaptive management, to guide their conservation efforts. The Public Lands Partnership of the southwestern Colorado Uncompahgre Plateau Project is putting citizens at the center of innovative developments to combat invasive species and produce native plant materials for land revegetation.

Streams, Rivers and Watersheds Citizen stewardship of the streams, rivers, and watersheds of America is a cornerstone of cooperative conservation. Listing the names of locations and partnerships instrumental to the stewardship of our waters is, by itself, a virtual geographic journey that spans all of America’s faces and places. Every state and almost every watershed is place to a growing complement of engaged citizens working cooperatively to conserve and protect these waters.

The Connecticut communities of the Norwalk River Watershed are just now mastering the skills they need to manage the river and its watershed for improved water quality. A partnership of landowners, environmentalists, universities and government agencies are working on the North Fork Potomac Watershed in West Virginia to implement new and better agricultural management practices that will enhance water quality for downstream communities. The landowners of the Buffalo Creek watershed in Pennsylvania are working with a local university and federal agencies to restore riparian area health through improved grazing practices, new livestock waters, and the creation of riparian buffers to reduce stream damage and pollution from cattle.

The Suwannee River Partnership in north and central Florida is cooperating with farmers to implement best management practices to improve water quality through voluntary participation. The Murdock, Nebraska community is working with landowners, local businesses, and state and federal agencies to rid the town’s ground and surface water of carbon tetrachloride pollution through the use of affordable technologies, such as tree plantings and sprinkler-induced water aeration. The Kaskasia Watershed Association in southwestern Illinois is trying to reverse the loss of wetlands that has left only 1 percent of the original wetland acreage intact. To the north, landowners along the Illinois River are using the federal Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to restore wetlands lost to dams and levees.

Partners in the restoration of the North Lake Basin near Utica, Nebraska, are using surface treatments to rid groundwater of carbon tetrachloride pollution, and then using the purified water to replenish disappearing wetlands. The Cheney Lake Watershed group in Kansas, the Pathfinders on the Colorado “GMUG” National Forests, Trout Unlimited in Utah’s American Fork Canyon, the Tomales Bay Watershed Council in Marin County, California, the Deschutes River Conservancy on Oregon’s Deschutes River, and the Nisqually River Collaborative on Washington’s Nisqually River are just a tiny sampling of the cooperative conservation efforts that are improving the water quality and aquatic habitat of our nation’s streams and rivers.

Farms and Farmlands Fueled by an array of conservation incentive programs for agricultural lands, farmers are actively restoring native prairies, riparian buffers, wetlands, and other vital habitat for fisheries and wildlife. The Conservation Security Program awards farmers for the innovative environmental practices they already have in place. Other programs, such as the state-based Cooperative Reserve Enhancement Program, provide assistance and financial support to farmers who voluntarily convert marginal croplands to wetlands and riparian buffers, enhancing aquatic habitat and water quality. On other farms, state and federal programs provide farmers tools to achieve better energy efficiency in their operations and one-place shopping opportunities for the information they need to conserve their wildlife resources while working their lands.

The City of New York decided against building a \$2 billion filtration plant to purify drinking water polluted by agricultural runoff from upstream farms in the Delaware and Catskill watersheds. Instead, the city opted to encourage farmers to

The landscape of cooperative conservation is rich and diverse, populated by problem-solving paths that extend to almost every reach of our lands, waters, and wildlife.

implement voluntary best management practices that would stem contamination of streams and rivers from farm sediment, manure, and chemical runoff. New York relied heavily on programs such as the federal CREP to supplement its own \$100 million investment to support voluntary best management practices within the watersheds supplying its drinking water. Over 130 farmers joined the city in its effort to reduce non-point source pollution along 150 linear miles of river, protecting waterways with newly vegetated buffers. Limited monitoring results are promising: on one farm, voluntary compliance appears to have reduced dissolved and particulate phosphorous loads in the river system by 30 percent.

Farmlands are integral to landscape health in ways that extend beyond the umbrella of government programs. In Puerto Rico, for example, innovative farmers are taking the initiative in cooperative conservation. They are working with wildlife programs

in their local communities to return their farms to shade grown coffee plantations as a way to enhance the quality of their coffee beans and restore biological diversity and wildlife habitat to their newly canopied lands.

Vintners and wineries in California’s Central Valley, and along its central and northern coasts, are also rethinking land management. They are working to make their operations economically and ecologically sustainable for a wide range of wildlife through Safe Harbor Agreements, conservation easements, and other tools.

The embrace of these land practices by shaded coffee plantations and vineyards is a story repeated across the agricultural landscapes of America. The Missouri Corn Growers Association, aware of voluntary compliance trends in confined animal operations throughout the Midwest, was certain that farmers, if given the chance, would opt for the voluntary compliance of best management practices and the responsibility of self-policing in lieu of federal and state regulation. Agricultural run-off self-compliance programs in Missouri and elsewhere are producing measurable benefits. In the case of Missouri corn growers, voluntary compliance programs have resulted in lower atrazine levels in two key lakes, allowing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to remove the lakes from its pollution listing.

Voluntary Solutions within a Regulatory Framework The success of cooperative conservation can be measured in many ways. Its strength rests in the many voluntary solutions its practitioners bring to the resolution of conservation challenges—its track record of people working collaboratively at local, regional, and national scales to solve problems that might otherwise only have a regulatory answer.

Sometimes, regulatory solutions are mandated by law. Rules and regulations direct parties to take specific actions to address environmental issues of great local, regional, or national import. Yet even in the context of regulatory processes, the spirit and practice of cooperative conservation makes its presence felt. Conservation Banks, landowner assurances under the ESA, incidental take authority in Habitat Conservation Plans, and Safe Harbor and Candidate Conservation Agreements create opportunities for landowners and others to comply with the spirit of the ESA within a context of incentives.

Cooperative conservation flourishes within other regulatory processes, too. A prime example is the Penobscot River Restoration Project in Penobscot County, Maine. Operating permits for the power generating dams owned by PPL Corporation were up for renewal by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Conservation groups, concerned over the harmful impacts of the dams on Atlantic salmon and other critical species, approached PPL and worked out a voluntary agreement later approved by FERC. The partners reached an agreement whereby the company would retire three of its dams for river restoration but would be given authority by FERC to increase power output on its remaining power dams to 90 percent of current generating capacity.

Cooperative conservation is not an answer to every environmental challenge and conflict. It does, however, offer environmental results in situations and under circumstances that might not have been imagined 35 years ago as conservationists gathered to celebrate the first Earth Day. The landscape of cooperative conservation is rich and diverse, populated by problem-solving paths that extend to almost every reach of our lands, waters, and wildlife. The practitioners of cooperative conservation are opening new frontiers of environmental discovery, innovation, and participation, strengthening our ability as a people to engage in the shared governance and stewardship of our natural surroundings.

Conservation for the 21st Century

The chapters that follow are profiles in citizen stewardship—152 to be exact. They are preceded by no explanatory text; they speak for themselves. They may or may not have links with other projects in the same states or regions in which they occur. They were chosen with no purpose other than to populate the landscape of cooperative conservation with stories that speak to its diversity and richness. They are simply sketches of some of the many ways in which Americans are coming together to cooperatively address, manage, and govern the lands, waters and wildlife of the places that mean the most to them.

Far more stories of cooperative conservation exist than could have been included in the main compendium. A scant 152 profiles barely touch the surface of the landscape of cooperative conservation. The absence or presence of your story, or the story of faces and places more familiar to you, in no way suggests their lack of merit, or the relative merits of the case studies summarized in the chapters that follow. There is no litmus test to gauge which citizen endeavors are more important or profound than others. A project that spans an entire region or watershed may seem particularly impressive, but in the currency of ecology much smaller efforts may have greater biological implications. Models and lessons that can guide and enrich cooperative conservation can come from projects of all sizes, and from the most unexpected places.

The appendix to this document complements the case studies that make-up the primary compendium. Its 800 entries are condensations of complex conservation activities that are often the outcome of years of hard work. Essentially, they are one-line sound bites that only partially capture and reflect the people and conservation projects they represent and summarize in just a handful of words. However, and more significantly, they represent the faces and places of the people and locations that are making conservation history in ways both large and small. Eight hundred strong, they are compelling evidence of the pervasiveness of cooperative conservation and the strong drive of Americans to engage in the care and stewardship of their environments of

choice. The appendix is the uncensored voice of the thousands of practicing conservationists who will, by their example and leadership, take cooperative conservation in directions that even the most prescient among us can not predict.

The organization of the chapters is by regions, themselves somewhat unconventionally defined. We added Virginia to Northeast in an attempt to make ecological sense of places such as the Chesapeake Bay that includes both Delaware and its more southern neighbor, Virginia. The Midwest region has been telescoped to include the high plain states that we most often associate with the West. The same applies to the south-central states that we extended, as a region, into the arid southwest. The regions are not intended to make any particular statement; they were chosen simply to facilitate a proportionate display of cooperative conservation profiles. The appendix also is organized by region, with projects listed alphabetically.

We welcome you to the Faces and Places of Cooperative Conservation. We urge you to think of these 152 profiles and 800 snapshots as part of a much larger picture that only time and experience will reveal in its fullness and complexity. The story of cooperative conservation is hardly begun; its work is barely underway. Its

legacy is years, if not decades, in the future. Still, the excitement of citizens making a difference where they live is infectious; landowners draw in their neighbors, communities build coalitions with other communities, and partnerships of many sizes configure and reconfigure in anticipation of every new environmental challenge. A new conservation ethic is dawning as we begin the 21st century, characterized by Americans building a nation of citizen stewards.



Biological monitoring helps restore marshes.

The Landscape of Cooperative Conservation





