

About Cooperative  
Conservation  
Training Opportunities  
'Action' Stories  
News  
Funding Opportunities  
Get Involved  
Library

## About Cooperative Conservation



Cooperative Conservation describes the efforts of landowners, communities, conservation groups, industry, and governmental agencies who join together to conserve our environment. Through cooperative conservation, citizens from every walk of life enhance, restore, and protect lands, waters, air, and wildlife resources on public and private lands. Through cooperative conservation, citizens play a central and substantive role in the stewardship and governance of the environments in which they live, work, and play.

Cooperative conservation has as many faces as it does places in which it is practiced. Its principles are simple. It is voluntary and incentive-based: people associate together voluntarily to pursue common conservation goals. It rests on cooperation and collaboration: problems are solved by people working together. It is rooted in local action and reliant on local, experiential knowledge as well as science. It is non-partisan: cooperative conservation is the practical option to litigation and polarization that otherwise divide Americans. Finally, it is entrepreneurial: innovation and creativity by citizens is the engine that drives cooperative conservation problem solving.

What does cooperative conservation look like on the ground? We see landowners bringing fields, forests, streams, and wildlife back to health, often using the tools of the Farm Bill and the voluntary programs of the Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies. We see conservation groups, citizens, and local communities joining with universities, the private sector, and governments to restore the health of places like the Uncompahgre Plateau in southeast Colorado or the coastal habitats of Puget Sound in Washington. We see citizens working in their urban neighborhoods to clean up rivers, restore brownfields, and reverse urban decay to make way for greenways and parks. We see conservation alliances working with the owners of obsolete dams to remove barriers to fish migration.

Look around the Nation and we see ventures in cooperative conservation. We see ranchers in New Mexico setting aside land in conservation easements to protect open space. We see an environmental group in Maine buying coastal islands to protect them. As leaders in cooperative conservation, our managers of our national parks, national forests, wildlife refuges, and other public lands are engaging citizens, communities, industries and local governments as hands-on partners. White Mountain Apaches in Arizona are protecting the Mexican Wolf, recovering the Apache Trout, and turning wildlife into an experience all Americans can enjoy. We see over 100 landowners in the southeast banding together under a Safe Harbor Agreement and working with environmental groups and the U.S. Army to save the red-cockaded woodpecker. We see corporate America stepping up with private and public partners to direct dollars to the restoration of some of the most vital coastal areas in the nation. Cooperative conservation describes every person in every place with passion and imagination that take them from observer of nature to participant in its perpetual stewardship.

Programs that exemplify cooperative conservation include:

- [US Landcare](#) is a private-public partnership between people who work the land, communities, businesses, and governments that seeks to strengthen our Nation's ability to conserve natural resources, enhance profitability, and cultivate and expand a community conservation ethic. A one page summary of US Landcare and examples are provided in "[What is US Landcare?](#)" Also the Society of American Foresters published an [article](#) about US Landcare in the May 2006 issue of "The Forestry Source."
- NOAA has a long history of [cooperative conservation](#). From improving habitat and rebuilding fishery stocks to helping mitigate the effects of drought and reduce the damage from natural disasters, NOAA has always relied on partnerships to help achieve its mission. By drawing on outside expertise and experience, NOAA is able to multiply the benefit of its programs.
- The [American Heritage Rivers](#) initiative is an innovative response to help river communities seeking federal assistance to meet tough challenges. Without adding regulations on private property owners, State, local, and tribal governments, the initiative is about cutting red-tape and making more effective use of existing federal resources.

- [Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program](#) is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. RTCA staff provide technical assistance to community groups and local, State, and federal government agencies so they can conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways.

View the [Executive Order Facilitation of Cooperative Conservation](#).

View the [Conferees Listings](#) for the August 29-31, 2005, White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation held in St. Louis, Missouri.