

Voluntary Conservation Tools and Programs

By

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Final Working Paper

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I. PURPOSE

One of the eight required sections for Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies addresses conservation actions that will be taken to ensure the perpetuation of native habitats and species. Many of these actions will be presented as on-the-ground activities like restoring riparian and upland vegetation, securing in-stream flows for aquatic organisms, etc. Other proposed conservation actions may suggest the redirection of existing conservation funding that is available for conservation projects on public or private lands, to improve the coordination among disparate programs, or making existing landowner incentive programs more strategic. Some conservation actions may lead to policy changes at the state or federal level.

In any case, funding from the State Wildlife Grants Program, even if it is doubled or tripled in the years to come, will never be enough to fully implement a coordinated statewide strategy. Given that so many species of fish and wildlife depend on habitat found mostly on private land, using and potentially enhancing conservation incentive programs are likely to be an important part of each state's conservation strategy.

In cooperation with, and under the direction of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Defenders of Wildlife staff developed the following narrative on voluntary conservation tools. The original materials were discussed and modified by a diverse group of stakeholders advising the agency, and the draft was incorporated into Oregon's statewide strategy. The narrative to follow was modified to make it more generic and applicable to other states. It is offered here to state agency planners and their partners to use, modify, or ignore as appropriate in the course of developing the statewide strategies.

This material is based on several years of research and experience working with a variety of stakeholders on private lands. The paper presents the non-regulatory, voluntary programs and tools, such as incentive programs, market-based approaches, or recognition programs that can be used to create a broader suite of conservation actions that will engage a diverse cross-section of stakeholders. From farmers to conservation groups and government agencies to woodlot owners, all have demonstrated interest in working together toward collaborative and voluntary approaches to conservation.

Definitions

Voluntary vs. non-regulatory: This paper assumes the terms "voluntary" and "non-regulatory" are synonymous, but uses "voluntary" in its broadest sense to connote positive action and partnerships.

Voluntary conservation tool: a non-regulatory method of providing assistance for conservation not associated with a specific, named program. For example, cost-sharing, technical assistance, rental payments, tax credits, acquisition, easements. Tools have advantages and disadvantages that are independent of whatever program they may be associated with.

Voluntary conservation program: an agency or organization's non-regulatory named program, which uses one or more conservation tool. Programs have advantages and disadvantages that may relate to what tools are used, and also may simply be related to how the program is designed or administered.

Table of Contents

I. PURPOSE	2
II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
III. INTRODUCTION	5
IV. ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE PROGRAM	6
IV. VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION TOOLS	12
Property Tax Benefits.....	13
Income Tax Credits and Deductions	13
Regulatory Assurances for Endangered Species Act.	14
Regulatory and Administrative Streamlining.....	14
Direct Funding	15
Land Acquisition, Easements, and Exchanges	15
Market-Based Approaches	16
Certification Programs	16
Technical Assistance	16
Information and Training	17
Landowner Recognition	17
Existing Federal Conservation Programs	17
Conservation Reserve Program	18
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program	19
Conservation Security Program	19
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	20
Forest Legacy Program	20
Landowner Incentive Program	20
Partners for Fish and Wildlife	21
Private Stewardship Grants Program	21
State Wildlife Grants	21
Wetlands Reserve Program	21
Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program	22
V. IMPROVING EXISTING CONSERVATION TOOLS AND PROGRAMS	22
Conservation Easements	22
Federal Farm Bill Programs	23
Forest Legacy Program.....	24
Land Acquisition	24
Local Landowner, Watershed, or Conservation Groups.....	25
Recognition Programs	25
State Wildlife Grants Program; Landowner Incentive Program.....	26
Underutilized Federal Funding to States	26
VI. NEW CONSERVATION TOOLS AND PROGRAMS	27
Business Opportunities	27
Education and Outreach about the Strategy and Conservation Goals	28
Flexible Incentives Account	29
Local Partnerships	30
Payments for Ecosystem Services	30
Managing for Land for Multiple Values.....	31
One-Stop Shopping: Several Delivery Options	31
Statewide Habitat Conservation Banking	33
Support for Local Governments	34
Tracking of Programs and Participation	35
VII. CONCLUSION	36
APPENDIX A: SAMPLE OUTLINE	37

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Effective implementation of a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (strategy) will rely on engaging private landowners in stewardship and conservation activities on their lands. Whether defined as biodiversity, wildlife diversity, or habitat and species diversity, private landowners play a significant role in conserving the variety of native habitats and species. This paper outlines ten elements of an effective voluntary conservation program, various types of voluntary conservation tools, how existing programs might be adapted to better meet conservation goals, new opportunities for voluntary tools, and a sample outline for how states might present voluntary conservation tools and programs.

Effective voluntary programs consider a range of factors. For example, they are adaptable to the needs of individual landowners, unique ecological conditions, and strategic conservation goals. For landowners, effective programs are easy to access and understand, offer desired benefits, and provide opportunities for local decision-making. For species and habitats, effective programs are consistent with conservation goals, aggregate efforts and effects across scales, and provide long-term conservation benefits. Ideally, each voluntary conservation tool can be directly linked back to a habitat conservation goal in the strategy, targeted to priority habitats, and inclusive of the range of priority habitats and species. Monitoring effectiveness of a state's suite of conservation programs is also an important element of success.

A lot of the challenges facing existing voluntary programs relate to program administration. If program coordination improves and funding is adequate, conservation tools can also be leveraged with the existing work being done on many private lands. Landowner participation is a critical component of success. Incentive programs need to provide the benefits needed and wanted by landowners, and programs can provide options for people who work well with government and for those who distrust government. The amount of paperwork, permitting, and other administrative elements can be streamlined to make it easier for landowners to participate. Many landowners value their time very highly. Technical assistance in permitting or designing restoration projects make it more likely that voluntary programs that appeal to landowners will get used.

Finally, a state needs a specific mechanism to coordinate the range of existing voluntary programs within the state. This "one-stop shop" could be provided by an extension service, government agencies, a non-profit group, a private enterprise, or a coalition of partners, but it

Types of Voluntary Conservation Tools

- Tax benefits (property, income)
- Regulatory assurances
- Regulatory and administrative streamlining
- Direct funding
- Land acquisition, easements, exchanges
- Market-based approaches
- Certification programs
- Technical assistance
- Landowner recognition
- Business opportunities
- Local partnerships
- Managing land for multiple values
- One-stop shopping
- Habitat conservation banking
- Local government support
- Project tracking

needs to be someone that can work with program providers and landowners together to strategically design conservation programs.

Effectively using voluntary conservation tools to implement the state strategies will involve adapting existing federal (e.g. Farm Bill programs), state (e.g. tax credits), and local programs (e.g. partnerships) to link them more directly to a strategy's conservation goals. It will depend on new combinations of existing and improved programs, and some new programs (e.g. a statewide conservation banking system). Together these tools can link efforts on public lands with stewardship on private lands to conserve habitats and wildlife diversity for multiple objectives and over multiple jurisdictions.

III. INTRODUCTION

In the United States, the patterns of public and private ownership result in some habitats occurring primarily on private property. Most fish and wildlife species use habitats on private land, and some species are dependent on habitats found only on private land. Therefore, non-regulatory or voluntary conservation tools for privately owned land need to be a major focus to ensure effective implementation of the conservation efforts identified in a strategy.

Publicly owned lands also play an important role in species and habitat conservation in many states. Coordination of land uses and management activities on adjacent lands is important for both private and public landowners because species, habitats, and water features cross property boundaries. Natural and human-influenced processes such as flood, drought, disease, fire, and invasive species also cross property boundaries, requiring coordination for effective conservation and protection of economic interests. In addition, many public lands could provide greater conservation benefits through restoration efforts or changes in management activities.

Voluntary tools are critically important for encouraging landowners to make meaningful contributions to species and habitat conservation that also benefit landowners. Most landowners prefer to collaborate in voluntary conservation efforts rather than have additional regulations or programs imposed. For many landowners, financial and practical assistance provides the needed incentive to undertake conservation activities. In return for receiving publicly-funded financial incentives or other benefits, landowners conserve publicly-valued habitats and species on their property. In addition, these proactive conservation efforts can help avoid the need for future listings under the Endangered Species Act or help meet other conservation goals.

There are many types of voluntary conservation tools available to assist with species and habitat conservation on private and public lands. Several tools are available only on private land (e.g. income and property tax benefits, acquisition of land as fee title or conservation easement, and market-based approaches). Additional tools are available on private and public land (e.g. regulatory assurances, regulatory and administrative streamlining, cost-sharing or grants, land exchanges, technical assistance, information and training, and landowner recognition). Most of these efforts involve cooperative partnerships between public agencies, private landowners or landowner groups, conservation groups, community groups, and/or land trusts.

This paper presents ten elements of effective programs, examples of some types of voluntary conservation tools and how they have been used, opportunities for adapting existing programs to habitat goals, potential new programs, and a sample outline for including voluntary conservation tools into a strategy.

IV. ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE PROGRAM

The voluntary habitat conservation programs currently available and potentially available to states are diverse and numerous. However, the suite of programs currently available is not adequate to meet the species and habitat conservation needs described in many strategies. The most widespread challenges to existing programs include:

- lack of a focus on conservation goals or habitats
- inadequate funding
- opportunistic rather than strategic delivery
- poor coordination between agencies and programs
- lack of monitoring of ecological outcomes

Some programs also suffer from low participation, complex administrative processes, or inadequate staffing. Some of these deficiencies can be addressed with changes to existing programs, while others can only be addressed through new programs.

To achieve habitat conservation goals, voluntary conservation programs need to be effective for both landowners and for on-the-ground habitat conservation. The voluntary conservation tool that is best-suited to a specific property depends on the land use, ecological conditions, funding available, local economic and community factors, landowner priorities, and other issues. Landowners are highly variable in their interest level and reasons to conserve

For landowners, effective programs are:

- easy to access and understand
- offer desired benefits
- provide opportunities for local decision-making

For species and habitats, effective programs:

- coordinate with conservation goals
- aggregate efforts and effects across scales
- provide long-term conservation benefits

species and habitats. They also vary widely in the type of incentives they need to proceed with conservation activities. Some landowners are knowledgeable about and motivated by conservation and may simply need information or technical assistance. Other landowners are willing to participate in conservation with adequate compensation, and they may be simultaneously meeting other objectives. Some landowners are not interested in conservation programs because of other priorities, distrust of government, or a belief that they should participate in conservation efforts without compensation.

Each voluntary conservation tool also has its advantages and disadvantages. For example, stewardship agreements involve a long-term commitment to conservation by the landowner. Restoration projects have highly variable results, depending on the methods used and

commitment to maintenance. Land acquisition by a conservation-oriented land manager may be the most certain and permanent approach to habitat conservation, but it may not mesh well with community values in some places. Conservation easements are usually permanent but may be used for purposes other than habitat conservation.

The range of available programs needs to be broad and diverse to accommodate these factors and provide flexibility for the program provider and the landowner. Effective voluntary habitat conservation programs are a combination of art and science. Complex ecological, political, social, economic, and landowner factors need to be considered, in both developing and delivering programs.

Ten elements of an effective voluntary conservation program

Below are ten elements that contribute to the effectiveness of voluntary habitat conservation programs in meeting conservation goals and landowner needs. These elements were derived from Defenders' research and experience in partnership with a variety of stakeholder groups. The voluntary conservation programs available to states vary in their ability to address these ten elements and to meet statewide habitat conservation goals. For each element, the objective and challenges are presented, along with opportunities of each element to be improved by implementation of a strategy. These opportunities set the context for the proposed changes to existing programs and proposed new programs that are presented later in the paper. Consideration of these elements can assist policy makers and program providers to improve the effectiveness of programs to meet conservation goals and landowner needs.

1. Habitat Conservation Goals

Objective: Programs identify specific habitat conservation goals that coordinate with regional or statewide conservation goals, plans, and priorities.

Opportunities: The development and implementation of a strategy provides an excellent opportunity for aligning conservation programs with ecoregional and statewide habitat conservation goals.

Challenges: For most conservation programs, program goals and project prioritization are not coordinated with regional or statewide habitat conservation plans. Individual landowners or agency staff can tailor programs to address at-risk habitats, but most programs do not approach conservation goals systematically. Until now, a statewide strategy did not exist in many states for conserving fish, wildlife, and habitat.

2. Habitat Focus

Objective: Programs and projects focus on diverse native habitats and a variety of native species.

Opportunities: Many strategies will be developed with a focus on habitats, so there is an opportunity to strategically target conservation programs to priority habitat types.

Challenges: There is a strong tendency for programs to emphasize particular species or habitat types, leaving others with little attention or

funding. This emphasis usually stems from the focus of regulatory efforts and voluntary programs on threatened and endangered species. Some landowner assistance programs are not designed to focus on habitat, and instead focus on other landowner goals, such as crop production, soil or water conservation, water quality, listed species conservation, or reforestation. These programs primarily address other conservation values or landowner needs, with habitat conservation being absent or secondary as a goal.

3. Strategic and Inclusive Approaches

Objective: Most program delivery is designed to implement regional or statewide habitat conservation goals. Some programs are also available to other interested landowners that are outside of priority areas or habitats.

Challenges: Most programs are not adequately focused to achieve specific conservation goals, and have no process for selecting participants based on priority habitat types or conservation areas. Instead, most programs accept any interested landowner that meets basic eligibility requirements. Some programs prioritize projects that meet certain criteria, which is more strategic, but this approach usually results in projects being scattered across the landscape. Most programs have no mechanism for clustering participation in order to achieve greater conservation benefits in one high priority area. Some programs use an opportunistic approach because in the short term, it is cheaper and easier to administer, given limited funding.

Opportunities: Priority areas and habitats are identified in many strategies or from other regional or local conservation plans. Landowners in priority areas can be approached for participation in voluntary conservation programs. Program implementation can cluster delivery focus areas to achieve critical mass of habitat conservation at the landscape scale. Clustering delivery efforts may be particularly helpful for certain specific habitats and for management issues that cross ownerships, such as invasive species and fire.

4. Ecological Monitoring

Objective: Ecological outcomes are monitored at a regional or statewide scale to evaluate progress toward conservation goals. Results are also tied to individual programs whenever possible. Programs are adjusted as needed to improve effectiveness.

Opportunities: Any new statewide habitat monitoring system developed as part of a strategy can be integrated with existing and proposed conservation programs. Individual conservation programs can be evaluated based on monitoring results. An adaptive management approach allows programs to be adjusted to improve effectiveness.

Challenges: Program monitoring is often limited to counting people, acres, or trees planted. Some programs encourage or require monitoring of conservation actions for individual projects, such as survival of planted trees. A few programs or agencies may monitor local habitat outcomes, such as measuring increased shade from planted trees, water quality improvements from fenced or restored riparian areas, or flow increases from water conservation measures. No

programs or agencies have been adequately monitoring desired habitat outcomes from conservation programs, such as habitat quantity, quality, and functionality. Each level of monitoring is more challenging, with regional or statewide ecological or biological monitoring being the most difficult to design and implement.

5. Partnerships and Coordination

Objective: State, federal, and local agencies and other organizations work together to identify shared conservation goals, coordinate program delivery, coordinate management activities, and pool their resources to offer greater incentives and benefits for landowners. Conservation outcomes improve with coordination of efforts.

Opportunities: Relevant agency staff could work in a team to visit an interested landowner, understand issues and opportunities of the property, and identify programs that would fit the property and landowner well. Another concept for coordination of program delivery is one-stop-shopping, where a landowner has access to many programs by contacting one agency and filling out one application.

Challenges: A wide variety of agencies are involved in delivering conservation programs, often with little coordination of efforts. Each agency and program has its own objectives, messages, and target audience, which makes the universe of conservation programs complex, confusing, and often inaccessible for landowners who wish to participate.

6. Funding

Objective: Adequate funding is available to allow current and future strategic planning, program implementation, and staffing. Landowners, agencies, businesses, and community groups contribute to projects in-kind or with matching cash, multiplying the value of cash funding, and are highly committed to the success of their projects.

Opportunities: Effective implementation of a program depends on stable, long-term state funding. Public funding is appropriate to use for assisting private landowners in voluntary conservation of public assets such as species and habitats. Some landowners will initiate conservation activities with only technical assistance, but many landowners need financial incentives to help compensate for the direct costs of restoring habitats or for lost income from reduced agricultural or forestry production. Some states have created flexible incentives accounts, providing flexibility in funding innovative projects that implement statewide, regional, or local conservation plans. The account can receive public or private funds, and is administered by a state agency.

Challenges: The majority of state incentives programs and most federal habitat-focused programs are under-funded. Lack of funding can lead to program implementation that is based more on convenience rather than on targeted conservation goals and priority areas. Some states have committed funding to habitat conservation through lottery funding or special license plates. However, this funding cannot address all of a state's conservation needs. Funding priorities for conservation programs that implement a strategy clearly need to reflect its conservation goals and priorities. However, further refinement of those priorities presents numerous challenges.

Decisions may be required about funding levels for rural versus urban conservation efforts, for conservation on private versus public land, for incentives versus acquisition, for restoration versus protection, and for one habitat versus another. These decisions need to accommodate diverse conservation programs and accommodate approaches that may be specific to each priority habitat. Other legislative efforts have focused on removing disincentives or tinkering with the details of existing programs, rather than developing and funding new programs.

7. Landowner Participation

Objective: Landowners can easily access and understand programs. Programs provide incentives and benefits that landowners value and that create opportunities for local decision making. Programs also provide a balance between flexibility to meet individual landowner circumstances and consistency to ensure fairness in program delivery. Programs are used to full capacity.

Challenges: Some state conservation programs are currently below capacity in landowner participation, making it impossible for the programs to achieve their conservation goals. Some landowners are unaware of programs, feel that programs are not flexible enough, and/or do not trust government agencies or conservation organizations who deliver programs. Landowners may perceive program delivery as top-down, and they often lack opportunities to get involved in local decision-making on issues that affect them. Other landowners may be wary of the legal implications of projects that could affect federally listed species. Some landowners feel that the incentives are not large enough. For example, property tax programs may be underutilized because the landowner either retains an existing low tax rate, or the reduction from a low tax rate to a tax exemption does not amount to much savings. Some programs are not available to landowners where states or local governments decide not to participate (e.g. Forest Legacy Program). In addition, many cost-share or direct payment programs require landowners to bear the cash cost for implementing a project, then get reimbursed later, resulting in a substantial financial burden in the short term.

Opportunities: Effective conservation programs depend on landowner participation. Many landowners are more enthusiastic about conservation programs when they are included as local partners, rather than being told what to do by perceived outsiders. When landowners and other local grassroots groups are partners in goal setting and decision making, they have a stake in the outcome and are more committed to success. Program flexibility is also important to encourage landowner participation. The primary barrier to participation for some landowners is simple lack of awareness about available conservation programs. Outreach efforts can be integrated into individual program administration and into coordination efforts between agencies and programs. Trusted local groups, such as cooperative extension or soil and water conservation districts can be used to deliver programs or conduct outreach. Promoting examples of projects to other landowners, through landowner recognition, demonstration projects, and landowner groups, can encourage peer learning and greater participation for landowners.

8. Administration

Objective: Paperwork, timelines, and access to programs are designed to accommodate landowner needs and to encourage participation, implementation, and effectiveness. Administrative processes are also streamlined to make effective use of agency time and other resources.

Opportunities: Streamlined administration can help landowners with complex paperwork and other processes. Information, training, and networking opportunities can help empower landowners to manage their own projects. A liaison can work to inform program implementers on the needs of landowners.

Challenges: Most conservation programs require a significant investment of time by participants. Participants must develop plans, keep records of operations, fill out applications, file for permits, coordinate with agencies, and track budgets and reimbursements for each program. Some landowners may be unable or unwilling to complete the application and record-keeping process. Some deadlines, including program applications, occur at difficult times of the year in terms of landowner availability.

9. Technical Assistance

Objective: Appropriate and relevant technical assistance is available to support landowners in planning, designing, and implementing projects.

Challenges: Technical assistance is severely under-funded, and there is little coordination of efforts. Landowners may need assistance with many different aspects of conservation projects, including planning, applications, permitting, coordination with partners, record keeping, engineering design, implementation, and monitoring. Lack of adequate technical assistance can be a disincentive for landowners to participate in programs, or can push landowners toward easier projects that are a lower conservation priority.

Opportunities: Landowners need assistance with many aspects of conservation projects, including planning, applications, coordination with partners, record keeping, implementation of specific conservation activities, and monitoring. Some interested landowners, with high priority conservation opportunities, need assistance to ensure that their application reflects the priority of their project and can compete successfully for funding. Engineering design and project management are also significant unmet needs for certain types of projects. Technical assistance could be available not only within specific programs, but separately, allowing resources to be pooled and shared. Some landowners would undertake habitat restoration projects, without financial incentives, if they knew what to do. Information sources that landowners can access may not be focused on habitat, so another key opportunity is to provide habitat training and information to other technical assistance providers that landowners may encounter.

10. Staff

Objective: Staff who deliver and administer programs have diverse technical and people skills, good relationships with partner organizations, and dedication to conservation. They are also integrated into and trusted by the community they serve. Effective individuals positively affect landowner participation and conservation outcomes.

Opportunities: Adequate funding is essential for attracting and retaining effective staff who deliver conservation programs. Staff need to be knowledgeable about a wide variety of programs available to landowners, and can assist landowners in selecting appropriate programs that suit the landowner's priorities and the habitats and other features of the property.

Challenges: Some agencies may not recognize the full suite of technical and social skills needed for effective program delivery. Instead they may focus hiring efforts toward staff with good technical skills, or shift existing staff into program delivery. Another problem is lack of funding, which undermines program effectiveness by limiting hiring to less-experienced staff on a temporary basis. In this situation, staff move on to better-paid and more secure situations, leaving the agency to hire new inexperienced staff. Integration into the community is difficult to achieve when staff turnover is high.

IV. VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION TOOLS

In each state, there are dozens of diverse voluntary programs that contribute to habitat conservation. Some programs are administered by the state, while others are federally funded or offered by private organizations. This chapter describes different types of conservation programs and highlights some conservation program examples from states. There is additional information about incentives programs at <www.biodiversitypartners.org/incentives>.

With the number and variety of voluntary conservation programs available, landowners have flexibility about which program(s) to participate in and which habitat(s) to conserve. Currently, however, there are few statewide programs that provide compelling incentives for landowners and also address high priority conservation goals with a multi-species or habitat approach. Some states have formed advisory committees to recommend changes to state incentives programs. Others have introduced legislation to create new programs or adjust existing programs. With the development and implementation of a statewide strategy, these programs can be tailored to deliver effective fish and wildlife conservation tools across the state.

Voluntary programs for habitat conservation generally fall into one or more of the types described below. All of these tools are available for private land. Several of these tools are not available on public land (e.g. income and property tax benefits, acquisition of land as fee title or conservation easement, and some market-based approaches).

Voluntary Tool Types

Property Tax Benefits

Some states offer reduced property assessments for lands that can provide quality habitat. In many states, agricultural and forest lands are assessed at reduced levels for property tax purposes to ensure that farming and forestry occur at a scale that is socially and economically viable. Some states may also assess open spaces at reduced values. Conservation programs often allow lands with agricultural or forestry reduced

assessments to roll over their reduced taxes, allowing landowners to participate in conservation practices without losing the tax benefits. Programs with property tax benefits have a localized financial impact on county governments and special districts with a local tax base. For most of these programs, landowners' property taxes remain the same because many of them were already participating in a special assessment program (for example, farm or forest special assessment) prior to participating in a habitat-related special assessment program. Therefore, the county (or other taxing district) generally does not lose income from property taxes in these programs.

Agriculture Property Tax Conversion for Wildlife Management, Texas

<www.tpwd.state.tx.us/conserves/private_lands/agricultural_land/>

Land that is used for wildlife management, and otherwise meets agricultural land use requirements, can be appraised as agricultural land. This program, available since 1997, provides habitat guidelines specific to each ecoregion of Texas. Landowners must implement a wildlife management plan that meets flexible guidelines. The program is administered through counties.

Income Tax Credits and Deductions

These incentive programs provide a means for landowners to reduce their state income tax burden with a tax credit for part or all of the costs of a conservation practice. Because such programs have a statewide financial impact, they are appropriate to accomplish conservation objectives with statewide benefits, rather than projects that focus on local benefits. Landowners who permanently donate land, conservation easements, or water rights may be able to deduct the value of the donation from their income for state and/or federal tax purposes.

Natural Heritage Preservation Tax Credit, California

<www.wcb.ca.gov/Pages/tax_credit_program.htm>

The Wildlife Conservation Board provides tax credits for donations of qualified private lands and water rights to state and local agencies or designated nonprofit organizations for conservation purposes. The intent of the program is to foster public/private partnerships designed to resolve land and water use disputes, to reward and assist habitat stewardship and to demonstrate the state's commitment to encourage and reward landowners who perceive habitat as an asset rather than a liability. The program allows private landowners to donate land or water. In exchange for a qualified donation, donors will receive a state tax credit in an amount equal to 55 percent of the appraised fair market value of the contribution. The program is funded by bond funds and expected to begin allocating money soon.

Regulatory Assurances for Endangered Species Act.

A landowner can voluntarily enter into an agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries, and receive certainty that these agencies will not impose additional land use restrictions in the future. Safe Harbor Agreements are for landowners who want to conserve listed species on their property. Habitat Conservation Plans are for landowners who want to proceed with an otherwise legal activity that will result in the take of a listed species. Incidental take is permitted if the plan specifies actions to minimize and mitigate the effects. Candidate Conservation Agreements are for landowners who want to conserve species that are proposed for listing and thereby help avoid the need for them to be listed in the future.

Washington

<wdfw.wa.gov/habitat.htm>

Washington State offers landowners with safe harbor agreements, liability limitation for public access, and no take cooperative agreements, and the state allows certain landowners an exemption from new regulations if a long-term habitat management plan is adopted under its Habitat Incentives Program. The program, established in 1998, allows landowners to enter into an agreement to enhance habitat for food fish, game fish or other wildlife species and in exchange receive state regulatory certainty with regard to future applications for hydraulic

Regulatory and Administrative Streamlining.

A landowner whose conservation efforts exceed regulatory requirements can enter into an agreement with a participating agency. The landowner, in return, may receive regulatory certainty, expedited permit processing, higher priority access to other programs, and/or other benefits.

Private Lands Stewardship Agreements, Arizona

<www.gf.state.az.us>

The Arizona Game and Fish Department has entered into agreements with 75 landowners to enroll approximately 7,000 acres for the benefit of wildlife. The Department offers assistance with compliance by taking into consideration costs to the landowner when a permitting requirement triggers a cost to the landowner, such as an archaeological survey.

Direct Funding

Various public agencies and private organizations provide direct contributions to private landowners or landowner organizations to protect, restore, and enhance fish and wildlife habitat, to improve water quality, or to improve land management practices. These include grants, purchase of conservation easements, cost sharing, and rental payments.

Salmon-Friendly Power, Oregon

<www.portlandgeneral.com/home/products/power_options/habitat.asp>
<nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/oregon/press/press1572.html>

Customers of Pacific Power and Portland General Electric in the Northwest have the option to pay an extra monthly charge with their electric bill, which goes into the Salmon-Friendly Power Fund. The funds are administered by The Nature Conservancy for on-the-ground salmon habitat restoration grants. The grants can also serve as a non-federal match to other federal funding sources. Salmon-Friendly Power grants are available for projects in the service area of Pacific Power and Portland General Electric. The Nature Conservancy has identified specific areas as priorities for this funding.

Land Acquisition, Easements, and Exchanges

Private property can be purchased outright, or a conservation easement can be purchased, or land can be swapped for other land of value to the landowner. Acquisitions can be made at fair market value, assessed value, or at a reduced value that may allow the landowner to claim a tax deduction for the value of the donation. Conservation easements can be purchased or donated. They are legal contracts permitted under state law, by which a landowner and another party (the "holder") agree to limit how the landowner's property can be used, to meet conservation objectives (such as fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, scenic views, or to protect forest or agricultural land from development). A conservation easement is usually permanent (although some federal programs offer 30-year easements) and stays with the property even if it is sold. This ensures permanent protection while allowing private ownership and economic use to continue.

The holder of a conservation easement is usually a non-profit land trust or government agency. Other agencies that hold conservation easements can include soil and water conservation districts, tribes, or other entities sometimes defined by state statute. National organizations that hold conservation easements in states include Ducks Unlimited and The Nature Conservancy. Conservation easements are complex and time-consuming to arrange, and there is little funding available for preparing legal documents and agreements, or stewardship of easements. On a more positive note,

Reinvest in Minnesota Reserve, Minnesota

<www.bwsr.state.mn.us/easements/rim/index.html>

The Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve program began in 1986 with the intent to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, and enhance fish and wildlife habitat through permanent conservation easements. Funding comes from state appropriations, Critical Habitat Conservation license plate dollars, and private donations. It is also linked with the Farm Bill's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. Program participants enroll in a conservation easement and manage it under a conservation plan during the length of their contract (45 years to permanent). Thus far, the efforts have been aimed at specific river watersheds.

conservation easements provide an opportunity to use creative partnerships and solutions to achieve conservation while addressing other landowner interests and retaining private ownership. Acquisitions, easements, and exchanges are normally only available when the landowner is willing, the funding is available, a new owner is willing to take on management responsibility, and the land has high enough conservation values to be worth the cost.

Market-Based Approaches

These programs reward landowners who incorporate beneficial conservation practices into their ongoing production and management, and achieve high environmental standards. Conservation trading programs rely on supply and demand to set prices, and allow trading or selling of commodities desired for conservation, such as water rights or pollution credits. Agri- and eco-tourism allows farmers to market the habitat value of their land by offering recreational services to anglers, bird watchers, and other wildlife enthusiasts. Market-based approaches have a lot of room for creative thinking and provide an interesting opportunity for expanding public-private partnerships.

Certification Programs

Certification programs have management standards based on sustainable ecological, social, and economic practices in agricultural or forestry. They provide independent review and certification that the standards are being met. Some programs are market-based and encourage landowners to use sustainable practices by providing them access to suitable markets. Certification programs can be a vehicle for niche-marketing, linking conservation-minded producers with consumers who value their products. Agricultural certification programs include organic foods, salmon-safe products, sustainably raised beef (e.g. Oregon Country Beef), low-input wines, or sustainably harvested wood (e.g. Smartwood).

“Sustainable Forestry Act”, Michigan

[<www.michigan.gov/dnr>](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr)

In 2004, Michigan passed a law requiring all state-owned forest lands to seek and maintain forestry certification by at least one credible, non-profit, non-governmental certification program by January 1, 2006. The Department of Natural Resources is seeking certification from the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and the Forest Stewardship Council. By May 28, 2005 the Department will make a recommendation on whether other state-owned lands, such as game areas and parks should also be required to participate in certification programs.

Technical Assistance

Landowners may need assistance with identifying programs, finding expertise in the public or private sector, understanding regulations, developing conservation plans, applying for permits or programs, coordinating with other agencies, and/or designing specific conservation elements. Assistance is available through a variety of public and private sources, including agencies, local conservation groups, soil and water conservation districts, extension agents, and consultants.

Missouri Conservation Assistance Guide, Missouri
<outreach.missouri.edu/mowin/conseguide2/guide.htm>

The Missouri Extension Service has developed an interactive website that allows Missouri landowners to identify the range of federal and state assistance programs that are available for different types of conservation projects. Landowners can learn what programs are available based on entering simple information about what resources they want to conserve, specific conservation practices, or type of assistance.

Information and Training

Some landowners are self-motivated to conserve species and habitats on their property, and only need information about what to do and how to do it. Some agency staff may also benefit from additional information and training about species and habitat conservation. Information or training may come from agency staff, the extension service, conservation groups, consultants, and/or other landowners. Demonstration projects are an excellent vehicle for sharing information about habitats, conservation activities, programs that can assist landowners, and personal experiences.

Landowner Recognition

Motivated landowners are a key element of effective conservation programs. Recognizing landowners' efforts can provide an added incentive to continue their work and motivate other landowners to participate. Landowner recognition efforts include: profiles in newsletters or on websites, project summaries in annual reports, newspaper articles, awards, on-site project signage, and invitations to share knowledge and experience through site visits or other presentations. Almost every state resource agency offers awards from the department of agriculture to the fish and wildlife agency or from the department of state lands to the department of energy. Non-profit and community groups also give awards.

"Landowner of the Year", Colorado
<wildlife.state.co.us>

This program recognizes landowners who make outstanding improvements to wildlife habitat and/or have provided public access to Colorado's wildlife on their private agricultural or forested lands.

Existing Federal Conservation Programs

Nationally, the Farm Bill is the largest federal funding source for resource conservation. Most Farm Bill funding subsidizes eight commodity crops, whose production is resource intensive and often not compatible with habitat and species conservation. The 2002 Farm Bill authorized over \$5 billion a year for resource conservation that primarily focuses on traditional soil and water conservation programs, which may have secondary benefits for species and habitat conservation. The Farm Bill will be up for reauthorization in 2007. Programs specialized for habitat conservation are relatively recent, and include the Conservation Reserve Program, the Wetlands

Reserve Program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also provides several conservation programs for landowners interested in habitat conservation. There is little federal funding for family forest owners, even forest lands support significant biodiversity and compose a large proportion of habitat acreage. The only remaining family forest program in the Farm Bill, the Forest Land Enhancement Program, was eliminated in 2003. For a summary of all federal conservation incentives go to <www.biodiversitypartners.org/incentives/programfed.shtml>.

Conservation Reserve Program (Farm Bill)
<www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/crp.htm>

The Conservation Reserve Program allows farmers to retire highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive areas to vegetative cover. The program improves water quality, restores floodplains, reduces soil erosion and sedimentation, and establishes or enhances wildlife habitat. The program provides technical assistance, cost-sharing for up to 50% of the cost of conservation practices, and annual rental payments over the 10 to 15 year contract.

In 2003, \$1.8 billion in payments were made for over 34 million acres. The largest concentrations of lands enrolled in this program occur in the Midwest. Starting in 2007, many of the 10-15 year contracts will be ending, creating an opportunity for landowners and state Natural Resource Conservation Service offices to strategically discuss how or whether to re-enroll these lands, largely occurring on marginal agricultural lands. In 2004, eligibility for the program was expanded to include rare and declining habitats. This change broadens the scope of eligible landowners and adds a specific habitat emphasis that is well aligned with strategies.

Tualatin River Basin, Oregon
<www.swcd.net>

In the Tualatin River Basin just west of Portland, Oregon, Clean Water Services and the Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District have formed an innovative partnership to further augment the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and tailor it to local conservation and landowner needs. The program had no participants in the Tualatin River Basin because agricultural land is rich and the rental payments offered by the program were not enough of an incentive for landowners in the area to retire land from production. In response, the partnership developed the “Enhanced” Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program by using local funds to increase payments for landowners who participate in the program.

Clean Water Services’ customer fees for surface water management and sewage treatment in the urban areas, provide funds for the enhanced landowner incentives, to meet water quality standards in the basin by investing in healthy riparian areas. Clean Water Services has identified priority areas to focus the program’s conservation efforts. The Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District, which has a long history of working with rural landowners, delivers the program. The partnership has also developed a parallel incentive program for landowners who do not qualify for the Conservation Reserve Program or prefer not to participate in a federal program. In the future, the partnership also plans to develop an incentive program for forest land and a program to reward landowners who currently conserve intact habitat.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (Farm Bill with states)

www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/crep.htm

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program is a federal/state partnership that allows states to target local conservation priorities. There are currently 29 agreements in 25 states. For a summary of priorities by state go to: www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/state_updates.htm.

Program goals are to reduce water temperature to natural levels, reduce sediment and nutrient pollution, stabilize streambanks, and restore natural hydraulic and stream channel conditions.

Riparian area must be in a condition that benefits from restoration or not providing normal riparian functions. Many states target their programs toward geographic areas, such as the Chesapeake Bay or the Minnesota River. Others more broadly target practices, such as farming in reservoir drainages or coastal watersheds.

Landowners must meet the eligibility criteria for the federal Conservation Reserve Program. In exchange for retiring land from agricultural production, the program provides landowners rental payments, cost-share assistance, and technical assistance.

Conservation Security Program (Farm Bill)

www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/

This program, new in 2004, rewards farmers for ongoing and planned conservation activities on working private and tribal lands. Activities include improving soil, water, air, energy, plant, and wildlife resources. The Conservation Security Program is an example of a program with “green box” payments that reward whole-farm conservation efforts, rather than the traditional “brown box” Farm Bill programs that provide subsidies for producing commodity crops. Farmers like the program because it rewards good stewardship of their land. The program also encourages landowners to improve their practices to qualify for a higher level of the program.

The Conservation Security Program provides equal access to all producers in participating watersheds, regardless of size of operation, crops produced, or geographic location. See www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/2005_CSP_WS/index.html for a map of 2005 participating watersheds. Eligibility and priority for individual landowners is based on a high level of current and planned conservation activities. A self-assessment allows landowners to determine if they are eligible. Stewardship payments are based on a complex formula that considers existing, new, and enhanced conservation practices. The application process is complex, but Natural Resources Conservation Service staff provide technical assistance to meet landowner needs.

For 2005, 202 priority watersheds were chosen to participate in the United States, with at least one watershed in each state. Program expenditures are capped at \$6 billion from 2005-2014. Over the next eight years, the program will rotate through watersheds, giving every qualified producer an opportunity to participate.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (Farm Bill)

www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/

This program, administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, provides direct funding and technical assistance to promote agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals. The program has four national priorities: reducing non-point source water pollution, reducing air emissions, reducing soil erosion, and promoting habitat for at-risk species. Nationally, 60% of the program's funding is invested in improvements for livestock operations. Each state develops more specific statewide and local priorities. Private land in agricultural production is eligible for this program, with an approved plan, and a contract for one to ten years. The program provides cost-share and incentive payments to assist landowners in implementing structural and management changes.

Forest Legacy Program (U.S. Forest Service and states)

www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/flp.shtml

The Forest Legacy Program protects private forestlands from conversion to non-forest uses, to ensure that both economic uses of private forestlands and the public benefits they provide are protected for future generations. Forestland can be conserved through purchase of a conservation easement, which acquires the land's development rights and allows the land to remain in private ownership, or through purchase in fee simple. Each state develops a forest conservation plan and identifies high-priority private forestlands to protect. To receive federal funding, states submit an application package to the U.S. Forest Service, which uses a competitive process in distributing grant funds. The program funds up to 75% of project costs. The total FY2005 budget for the Forest Legacy Program is about \$64 million.

As of 2004, most states are actively participating with the exception of one state whose application is pending, seven that are in the planning phase, and six that are not participating. States have identified Forest Legacy areas in a range of ways, from the entire state to strategic areas within states.

Landowner Incentive Program (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and states)

fa.r9.fws.gov/lip/lip.html

This federal program is usually administered by state fish and wildlife agencies. In 2004, there was \$30 million available for states and tribes. The program's purpose is to support on-the-ground projects that enhance, protect, or restore habitats that benefit at-risk species on private lands. The state agency provides technical assistance to interested landowners, and evaluates and ranks proposals. The agency then submits the state's application package to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to compete with other states for a portion of the federal funding. High priority projects benefit multiple at-risk species, have permanent benefits, and involve multiple project partners. To date, not all states are participating in the program.

Partners for Fish and Wildlife (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)[<partners.fws.gov>](http://partners.fws.gov)

This program provides direct funding and/or technical assistance for voluntary restoration of wetlands and other fish and wildlife habitats on private land (including non-state and non-federal land). Projects are designed to restore native habitat to function as naturally as possible, preferably resulting in a self-sustaining system. Projects focus on habitats that benefit migratory birds, migratory fish, or federally threatened and endangered species, or on habitats that are designated as globally or nationally imperiled. High priority projects also complement habitat functions on National Wildlife Refuges, occur in areas identified by state fish and wildlife agencies and other partners, or reduce habitat fragmentation.

There is no formal application process. Instead, an interested landowner contacts the state program coordinator and they work together, along with public and private conservation partners, to develop the project. Program funds are used for cost-sharing of restoration projects and are not available to lease, rent, or purchase property. Landowners commit to retain the restoration project for at least 10 years. Funding for this program is allocated for all states, with \$33 million available nationally in 2004 and \$17 million projected for 2005.

Private Stewardship Grants Program (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)[<endangered.fws.gov/grants/private_stewardship>](http://endangered.fws.gov/grants/private_stewardship)

This program provides federal grants on a competitive basis to landowners engaged in voluntary conservation efforts on private lands. Individuals, groups, or local governments can also apply for funding if they have identified specific private landowners to participate. Projects benefit imperiled species including federally listed endangered or threatened species as well as proposed, candidate, and other at-risk species. This program supports on-the-ground conservation efforts on private lands, but does not fund the acquisition of real property either through real property or fee title or easements. About \$6.5 million is available in 2005 for this program, with proposals competing at a regional level. In 2004, \$7 million funded 97 projects nationally.

State Wildlife Grants (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and states)[<federalaid.fws.gov/swg/swg.html>](http://federalaid.fws.gov/swg/swg.html)

The State Wildlife Grant Program provides annual grants to states, territories, and tribes to support cost effective conservation aimed at keeping wildlife from becoming endangered. In 2004, there was \$70 million available for states and \$6 million for tribes. The funding is allocated based on land area and population. Currently, these funds are used to support planning and implementation of key fish and wildlife conservation efforts.

Wetlands Reserve Program (Farm Bill)[<www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp/>](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp/)

The Wetlands Reserve Program allows landowners to voluntarily retire current and former wetlands from agricultural production and protect, restore, and enhance the land for fish and

wildlife habitat. The program uses conservation easements to ensure long-term protection of the land, while retaining it in private ownership. The land can be used for hunting, fishing, and other uses that are compatible with providing wetland functions. The program provides three options: 10-year technical and cost-share assistance for activities identified in a wildlife habitat plan, 30-year conservation easements, and permanent easements. For landowners with a permanent conservation easement, the program covers the easement price and restoration costs. Most of the lands occur on marginal, flood-prone, restorable agricultural lands. As of 2003, almost 8,000 projects have been enrolled on 1.5 million acres. Congress currently caps enrollment at 2.3 million acres. In 2004, more than \$275 million was allocated for Wetlands Reserve Program projects.

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (Farm Bill)

<www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip>

The Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program assists non-federal landowners who want to establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat, including landowners who are unable to meet eligibility requirements of other Farm Bill conservation programs. Participants usually enroll for 5-10 years. Most efforts to date have focused on upland habitat (especially native prairie), but each state develops an implementation plan for their state. Some states provide grants to partners, such as soil and water conservation districts or other groups to work directly with landowners. In 2004, \$30 million was allocated for Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program projects.

V. IMPROVING EXISTING CONSERVATION TOOLS AND PROGRAMS

(Presented in alphabetical order)

Existing conservation tools and programs are numerous, but their effectiveness in implementing habitat conservation, including a state's strategy, can be improved. Below, suggested improvements for some existing programs are presented. Recurring themes for these improvements include increased funding, better coordination, ties to statewide and ecoregional conservation goals, and strategic delivery to highest priority areas or habitats.

Conservation Easements

Conservation easements are an important tool for habitat conservation, and are suitable for some properties and some landowners. Preparing and purchasing a conservation easement is a complex and expensive process, necessitating careful prioritization of opportunities to make effective use of funding and other resources.

Many conservation easements are for habitat conservation purposes, presenting an excellent opportunity for coordination between several agencies and organizations. Strategy leaders can provide information about the statewide habitat conservation priorities in the strategy to land trusts and other organizations that hold conservation easements. Organizations that hold conservation easements can develop a process for prioritizing conservation easement opportunities based on statewide and ecoregional conservation goals. In addition, agencies and

organizations that might fund the purchase of conservation easements (for example, state agencies, several federal incentive programs, and private foundations) can develop a similar process for prioritizing funding for easements based on statewide and ecoregional conservation goals.

Another useful change would be for these funders to cover the administrative costs of preparing an easement, which are very difficult to fund. If conservation easements were tied to statewide conservation goals, the administrative costs would be an important contribution to using easements to implement a strategy. Similarly, funders and easement holders need to give greater consideration to the stewardship costs of conservation easements. Monitoring to ensure compliance and legal costs associated with enforcement and defense of the easement's restrictions are essential to ensure the long-term effectiveness of this conservation tool.

Federal Farm Bill Programs

Some federal conservation incentive programs, in particular Farm Bill programs, provide opportunities at the state level for tailoring programs to address local priorities and issues. Federal agencies that deliver these programs, primarily the state office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, periodically seek input in developing state priorities for these programs. This allows for input from state agencies and other conservation partners about a state's priorities for these programs. Here are several examples of opportunities to adjust federal programs to better meet the statewide conservation goals outlined in a state's strategy.

Shift from Commodity Support to Stewardship Support: Most Farm Bill payments to landowners subsidize eight commodity crops. If these commodities are not significant crops in a state, payments may not be useful for farmers in that state. The discussion is just beginning on how to make production support programs consistent with habitat conservation goals, and shift commodity payments ("brown" payments) to payments that reward conservation and do not increase habitat degradation ("green" payments). Each state will need to decide how it wants to approach this question. The Conservation Security Program <www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp> is a new federal program that rewards landowners for current and planned stewardship of their lands. This program is very popular with landowners in the areas where it is available, and is encouraging some landowners to increase their conservation efforts in order to qualify for the program or to qualify for a higher level of benefits.

Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program <www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov/wrep_index.html>

This program, just now beginning, would provide an enhanced Wetlands Reserve Program targeting high priority areas. The structure would be similar to the federal/state partnership established for state Conservation Reserve Enhancement Programs. The Natural Resource Conservation Service just approved the first state partnership under the Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program in June 2004 for the Lower Missouri River in Nebraska.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program <www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip>

This program could be used more strategically by coordinating with a strategy's habitat conservation priorities. Another option is to focus this program's funding on upland species and

habitats, which have fewer sources of conservation funding than lowland and aquatic species and habitats.

Forest Legacy Program (U.S. Forest Service and states)
[<www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/flp.shtml>](http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/flp.shtml)

The Forest Legacy Program provides federal funding to protect private forest lands from conversion to non-forest uses, through conservation easements and voluntary land acquisition. Across the United States, 44 states are participating in the Forest Legacy Program, although some states are still working on their assessment or have applied for but not received project funding. In the statewide assessment process, some states have identified their entire state as eligible for the Forest Legacy Program, an approach that does not focus on key habitats or areas of high conservation need.

Other states have decided on a very strategic assessment process with a strong emphasis on high priority habitats. Many states have looked to designate Forest Legacy Areas at ecoregional scales, basin levels, or in connection with other ongoing conservation priorities. This program is particularly significant because private forest landowners often have access to very few incentive programs. In 2005, this program has about \$100 million available nationally.

Land Acquisition

Acquisition of lands from willing sellers can be an effective and permanent way to conserve species and habitats while providing benefits to interested landowners. Fee title acquisitions may require significant initial investment, plus there are costs for long-term management and stewardship. It may be possible to achieve conservation goals without acquiring full fee title in many cases. However, in cases involving intensive management or active restoration that may be incompatible with continued economic uses, landowners may prefer to sell their property. In some cases, acquisition may just be the simplest and most effective way to ensure permanent protection of a particular site's ecological values. Because of the costs, and the long-term nature of the financial commitment, land acquisition needs to be used judiciously to ensure that limited conservation funds are invested for the highest conservation priorities.

In many cases, there are also complex social, political, and economic factors to consider before deciding whether acquisition is the best conservation tool. How does the current and future ownership fit into the local pattern of landownership? What are the potential land management or economic impacts for neighboring landowners? Will the proposed new landowner/manager (a public agency or a non-profit such as a land trust) be a good steward of the property? Will they be accepted and trusted by the local community? What are the local economic and social impacts of taking land out of commodity production or moving land from private to public ownership? These issues need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis, with input from the current landowner, potential future landowner, appropriate agencies, and local community members.

Land acquisition could give priority to projects that (1) address the conservation needs of priority habitats and species identified in a strategy; and (2) are consistent with one or more of a set of specific conservation principles that help focus acquisition investments more strategically. Proposed acquisition projects could also be asked to show public support and address the economic and social effects of a proposed acquisition on the local and regional community.

Local Landowner, Watershed, or Conservation Groups

Numerous local landowner groups, watershed councils, and conservation groups provide critical technical assistance, information and training, project management, and coordination for habitat conservation efforts in their community. Additional funding for organizational support of these groups would improve their capacity to effectively support and coordinate habitat conservation efforts on local private lands. The funding could be contingent upon the groups undertaking projects that implement a strategy. One way to involve local groups effectively in implementing a strategy is to reward collaborative efforts that bundle landowners, conservation goals, plans, permits, and/or programs. Such collaborative efforts could be organized by a landowner group, conservation group, or by agency staff, extension agents, or consultants. Collaboration for a watershed or regional conservation effort will achieve conservation goals more effectively than a landowner-by-landowner or issue-by-issue approach.

Recognition Programs

According to a landowner who has been involved in many voluntary habitat conservation efforts, “You can’t thank people enough. Even highly motivated people like to have their efforts recognized.” In addition to existing recognition programs, it is important to develop additional ways to recognize landowners’ and other partners’ contributions to habitat conservation. There are uncounted examples of great projects, dedicated landowners, and innovative partnerships that deserve recognition. There are also many agencies and organizations that could expand their recognition efforts.

Methods of providing recognition are diverse and include profiles or case studies of landowners, projects, partnerships, or programs. These profiles can be published in newsletters, on websites, or in annual reports. These media generally reach peer groups, which can motivate new participants to try a conservation project on their property, or spark an idea for a new innovative partnership. Another effective and multi-purpose way to recognize conservation efforts is to arrange on-site learning opportunities for other landowners and conservation partners. This might include project signage, using projects for demonstration purposes, and invitations for landowners to share their knowledge and experience through site visits or workshops. Other recognition methods include awards, certificates, and plaques. Some certification programs also provide recognition of landowners’ and others’ habitat conservation efforts.

Recognition helps people focus on the positive, which is helpful when many natural resource and other issues are dominated by conflict. Sharing rural habitat success stories with urban audiences can help bridge the gaps, both perceived and real, between diverse citizens. In

addition, some people who read about habitat conservation success stories are potential funders or partners, who might be enthusiastic to support additional projects.

State Wildlife Grants Program; Landowner Incentive Program (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)
<federalaid.fws.gov/swg/swg.html>; <fa.r9.fws.gov/lip/lip.html>

The Landowner Incentive Program is well suited to implementing a strategy. Currently, the program funds projects that enhance, protect, or restore habitats that benefit at-risk species on private lands. State wildlife agencies usually administer this program, therefore coordination with the strategy can be as simple as adding an evaluation criteria that considers how well the location, habitat, and species align with the priorities in a strategy. In the future, the State Wildlife Grants Program and the Landowner Incentive Program may be merged into one program at the federal and/or state level.

For either or both programs there are several ways a state might be more strategic:

- The request for proposals could invite diverse projects that address priority habitats and species.
- Program staff could seek applications from landowners with high priority habitat conservation opportunities and assist these landowners in developing competitive applications.
- Efforts could focus on specific priority habitats and species each year, which would allow more conservation activity to occur at a meaningful scale to benefit species that need connectivity of high quality habitats. In addition, it would allow technical assistance to be targeted to a limited geographic area and/or habitat type each year. Focusing the conservation efforts would also allow a critical mass of landowners in one area to plan and implement projects in parallel and to learn from each other.

Underutilized Federal Funding to States

Several federal funding sources for habitat conservation have been underused. In total, these programs offer several hundred million dollars nationally. These programs include:

Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program: This National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration program protects lands with significant conservation, recreation, ecological, historical, or aesthetic values, or that are threatened by conversion. In 2004, this program had about \$51 million available nationally. <coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/landconservation.html>

Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants: This U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service program provides funding for acquisition, restoration, and enhancement of wetlands of coastal states. In 2005, this program has about \$13 million available nationally. <www.fws.gov/cep/cwgcover.html>

Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund: This U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service program provides funding for implementation of habitat conservation projects, land acquisition that benefits recovery of species, habitat conservation planning assistance, and habitat

conservation plan land acquisition. In 2005, this program has about \$90 million available nationally. <endangered.fws.gov/grants>

Targeted Watersheds Grant Program: This Environmental Protection Agency program provides grants to encourage community-based protection and restoration of the nation's watersheds. This competitive grant program funds watershed organizations whose restoration plans set clear goals, focusing on water quality monitoring, innovation, and public education. States can forward two applications (the maximum allowed) for national consideration. This program could be used more strategically by the states to address high priorities for habitat conservation. In 2004, this program had about \$15 million available. <www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/initiative>

VI. NEW CONSERVATION TOOLS AND PROGRAMS

For effective implementation of a strategy, the states may need to develop new programs to meet statewide conservation goals while addressing complex local and statewide social and economic issues. Some programs will require additional funding, while others will need additional staff. All new programs will require creativity, partnerships, and a commitment to improving voluntary conservation tools and programs.

Business Opportunities

Healthy ecosystems depend on healthy economies. It is critical for the business community to be involved in habitat conservation, and for agencies to encourage and support involvement from the business community. Many existing businesses in states are interested in becoming more sustainable, which can occur through modifying internal practices or through supporting external efforts. In addition, a growing number of businesses have their purpose grounded in the sustainable use of natural resources. Other business opportunities are waiting for the right combination of economic and ecological gain and a creative risk-taker who believes in a better way of doing business. Nurseries can be started to supply agencies with native seed for restoration, provide job training, and create habitat. Some growers feel the nursery industry is uniquely placed to

Corporate Council for Habitat Conservation
<www.chicagowilderness.org/coalition/ccouncil>

The Chicago Wilderness Coalition provides a model for business involvement in a major regional habitat effort. In 1996, a coalition of diverse organizations launched Chicago Wilderness to restore, protect, and manage the thriving mosaic of natural areas embedded in the nation's third largest metropolitan area. More than 170 organizations now belong to the coalition. Business partners provide habitat or other natural functions on their property, give in-kind contributions to local agencies or organizations, support fundraising efforts, and provide volunteer employees. In addition, a core group of businesses has founded the Chicago Wilderness Corporate Council. By joining the Corporate Council and paying the annual corporate membership fee (\$2,500 to \$10,000), local businesses are making a significant commitment to improving the local environment.

make a major contribution to the restoration of native habitats. Farms can combine conservation easements, multiple cropping systems, and sustainability certifications to increase income. Business partnerships can form to create new, marketable products that facilitate restoration, remove of invasive plants, and provide family wage jobs. These examples illustrate some ways that the business sector can be involved in habitat conservation.

Education and Outreach about the Strategy and Conservation Goals

Successful implementation of a strategy depends on expanded involvement from a wide variety of people, agencies, and groups across the state. Education is an important voluntary tool that can be used to expand the network of organizations and individuals engaged in conservation. It can also be used to communicate the goals, methods, and benefits of habitat conservation to diverse citizens and partners. Education involves a two-way dialogue, listening to input from diverse and underrepresented sources and providing opportunities for meaningful involvement and decision-making. Some important elements of the outreach and education efforts are outlined here:

- Focus on topics people feel most affected by (e.g. adults may care more about clean water and family farms where youth may be more open to biodiversity information).
- Bring education to where people live, work and play.
- Expand education beyond building awareness to changing behavior and learning action skills.
- Coordinate education programs and monitor for effectiveness.
- Target education toward the audiences that are decision leaders at home or in the community.

Some audiences might include;

Federal and State Agencies and Staff: Provide information about the strategy and opportunities for coordination. Help diverse agencies and staff understand statewide and ecoregional habitat conservation goals and incorporate them into programs, policies, and priorities.

Rural Communities: Implementation of a strategy may occur primarily in rural areas, where habitats are less impacted than in urban areas. Help rural landowners, organizations, and communities understand statewide habitat conservation goals, with a focus on local ecoregions, habitats, and species. Assist rural landowners by providing information on the habitats and key species that occur in rural landscapes and actions that can be taken to benefit them. Provide information about what programs, tools, and other support are available.

Urban Communities: Funding (tax revenue) and decision-making (voting) related to a strategy often originate in urban communities. Help urban residents, organizations, and communities understand statewide habitat conservation goals, with a focus on local ecoregions, habitats, and species. Help urban residents to recognize habitats within urban landscapes and to understand the diversity of species that use these habitats. Provide urban residents with opportunities to get involved in local habitat conservation activities, to help them understand and commit to statewide habitat conservation. Provide opportunities for urban residents to learn about unfamiliar ecoregions, habitats, and species in rural and remote parts of the state. Provide

information about the significant contributions that rural landowners are making to habitat conservation, and the connections that everyone has to agricultural and forest landowners who grow the food we all eat and the other products we all use. Introduce urban residents to diverse products from rural landowners who use certification or marketing programs that support sustainable or habitat-friendly practices.

Young People: Schools, youth groups, and individual young people can get involved in service learning, working side by side with landowners, agency staff, and others to help implement local conservation projects consistent with state strategies. Education programs for youth should be sequenced and targeted to move the next generation from knowledge to awareness to active participants in conservation. The goal of youth education is to create the informed and engaged decisionmakers of today and tomorrow.

Flexible Incentives Account

A flexible incentives account can be a fund designed to provide flexibility in funding innovative projects that implement statewide, regional, or local conservation plans. States could set it up, fund it, and use it to strategically implement state conservation goals. The account can be designed to receive public or private funds. A flexible incentives account is a potentially strong tool for states to use as strategies are worked into the priorities of other agencies and partners. The account could be used to target efforts to a specific high priority habitat. For example, the flexible incentives account could be used for short grass prairie restoration for five years. It could be targeted to meet identified gaps in conservation activity. In either case it is a tool that is flexible and rapid enough to strategically meet conservation goals. Theoretically, the account would not be needed over the long term if most agencies and conservation partners use a strategy to determine priorities.

*Oregon's Flexible Incentives Account Legislation Language
Conservation Incentives for Private Landowners (HB 3564), ORS 541.415. 2001.*

SECTION 13. (1) There is created a Flexible Incentives Account in the State Treasury, separate and distinct from the General Fund. Interest earned by the account shall be credited to the account. The moneys in the account are continuously appropriated to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board for the purposes specified in this section.

(2) The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board shall use the account to assist landowners in the implementation of strategies intended to protect and restore native species of fish, wildlife and plants and to maintain long-term ecological health, diversity and productivity in a manner consistent with statewide, regional or local conservation plans. The board shall seek to fund those strategies that offer the greatest public benefit at the lowest cost.

(3) The account shall consist of moneys appropriated to it by the Legislative Assembly and moneys provided to the board by federal, state, regional or local governments for the purposes specified in this section. The board may accept private moneys in the form of gifts, grants and bequests for deposit into the account.”

Local Partnerships

Local partnerships involving diverse interests have evolved in many parts of the country. Partnerships can form as proactive efforts to address natural resources, in response to a specific conflict, or around a shared interest in a habitat or other conservation issue. Community-level partnerships include diverse public and private interests and strive to address the ecological, economic, and social issues that cross ownerships in a local area. Smaller partnerships may focus on a specific project or habitat. Many communities and organizations are discovering that diverse

partnerships can strengthen communities and help address complex local natural resource issues. It is critical for strategy leaders, along with other agencies, to participate in and support local partnerships that address complex social and economic issues while conserving habitat. Here are some examples:

Applegate Partnership

www.grayback.com/applegate-valley/ap/partnership.htm

In 1992, an environmentalist and a logger in southwest Oregon initiated an experiment in collaborative management with community members, federal agencies, timber interests, local businesses, and environmentalists. The Partnership supports management of all land in the watershed in a manner that sustains natural resources and that contributes to economic and community stability. Leadership is shared, decisions are made by consensus, and participation is high. The Partnership has focused on two challenging forest issues: overcrowded forests that are vulnerable to insects and fire, and high unemployment of timber workers due to logging injunctions and mill closures. The Partnership has a long list of accomplishments to be proud of, but most people emphasize a new sense of hope and community.

Payments for Ecosystem Services

Ecosystems provide services such as providing clean water and food, regulating floods and disease, supporting soil production, or providing cultural or recreational services. There is currently no program that provides payments to landowners who provide ecosystem services. This type of incentive program could assist landowners in maintaining an economically viable operation while providing resources needed for habitat conservation. Examples might include growing native plants or seeds commercially for restoration, protecting high-quality intact habitat, or allowing floodwaters to inundate fields. For example, a city owns and manages a canal that delivers municipal water supply from 20 miles away. In 1996, the canal flooded a residential area. Subsequently, the city has made an arrangement with a farmer just upstream to allow his fields to flood instead of the residential area. In the event of a flood, the city will compensate the landowner for lost income in the flooded field, rather than risk flooding the residential area.

Managing Land for Multiple Values

Every landowner has some opportunity to use their property for habitat conservation, whether conservation is combined with agricultural or timber production, or is the primary land use. Each property has a unique combination of production capabilities, habitats, and other natural features, allowing different possibilities. Strategy leaders can encourage and support innovative approaches to land management that allow landowners to meet multiple economic and ecological goals.

Peck Road Water Conservation Park, California
<www.amigosdelosrios.org>

This park was once a gravel quarry within a stretch of the Rio Hondo River. A partnership of non-profits and agencies are working together to expand the values of the site to recharge rainfall into the groundwater table, provide habitat for endangered bird species, filter stormwater runoff, and create regional opportunities for biking, hiking, fishing, and enjoying the outdoors in the midst of a metropolis. The park has received investments from state and local government, non-profit groups, and community organizations.

One-Stop Shopping: Several Delivery Options

One-stop shopping would simplify landowner access to conservation programs. Currently, some landowners are unaware of programs, some are confused and frustrated by the alphabet soup of programs and agencies, and others are unwilling to participate in government programs. No single agency or organization that landowners frequently encounter is likely to be conversant in the diverse programs that are available. A landowner could read summaries of all available programs, but this would generally be less effective than receiving assistance from a person who is knowledgeable about diverse programs, local ecological conditions, and local economic and social issues.

Ideally, there would be a statewide system offering one-stop shopping for all conservation programs, or all programs could be consolidated into one mega-program. In reality, the diversity of programs, agencies, and organizations makes these approaches difficult to impossible. More realistically, funding could be used for agency staff, extension agents, local organizations, and/or consultants to serve as liaisons between programs and landowners, providing technical and administrative assistance as needed. This more realistic one-stop shopping system would be significantly improved by coordinating between programs, identifying common goals, reducing redundancy, and addressing situations where programs work at cross purposes.

The one-stop shopping liaisons would need to have diverse technical, social, and coordination skills plus local knowledge and good connections with the diverse agencies and organizations offering conservation programs. The one-stop shopping liaisons would use a strategy and the statewide and ecoregional habitat conservation goals to identify high priority projects and landowners. The liaisons could approach key landowners and work with them to bundle different incentive programs as needed to address the landowners' specific habitat, economic,

and other circumstances. Interested landowners could fill out one simple pre-screening application that the liaisons would use to evaluate habitat conservation opportunities and determine programs the landowner could use. The liaisons would continue to assist some landowners in the application and implementation phases of conservation projects, while other landowners might be referred directly to other agencies offering specific programs.

There are various models for how to design and deliver one-stop shopping, described below. Some of the models could be combined to create a more effective program. In selecting a preferred model, several issues are important. Landowners need to trust the person and organization they are receiving information from. Some landowners trust government agencies, but others may prefer to work only with an extension agent, conservation district staff, agricultural or timber organization, or landowner group. Another issue is the need for agencies and organizations to support the new one-stop shopping system. One-stop shopping will shift the first contact for many landowners away from the agency offering the program to the one-stop shopping liaison. Some agencies will be grateful for the assistance and will contribute staff, funding, or other support, while others may perceive that they are giving up some control over their programs. Regardless of how one-stop shopping is delivered, additional funding will be needed to provide services beyond those that are currently available. Most importantly, one-stop shopping needs a personal contact point for landowners to access all of a state's information.

New Nonprofit: A new nonprofit organization could be developed to provide one-stop shopping across the state. This might help address the problem of some landowners not trusting government agencies or conservation groups. However, some people would not trust a new organization.

Existing Organizations: Existing agencies or organizations could provide one-stop shopping, such as government agencies, watershed councils, land trusts, soil and water conservation districts, extension offices, irrigation districts, or other landowner groups. An existing agency or organization, however, might not provide adequate access to other programs. Local preferences, the distribution of offices, or other factors might require that one-stop shopping be offered from different agencies and organizations in different parts of the state. Statewide coordination would be needed to ensure that services are available throughout the state and are meeting conservation goals. Another option would be to house one-stop shopping liaisons in extension offices and/or soil and water conservation district offices, since these organizations are widely used and trusted by many landowners.

Private Sector: One-stop shopping could be designed so that local groups or consultants provide these services and receive funding to cover their costs, through a combination of existing program funding and additional one-stop shopping funding. Working through existing groups and consultants would provide economic support to local communities. An example of the private sector delivering incentive programs is Ducks Unlimited. This organization, which is dedicated to protecting and restoring wetlands and wetland wildlife, establishes relationships with landowners who might use the Wetlands Reserve Program on their property. Ducks Unlimited provides technical assistance throughout the planning, application, and implementation process. They provide some of the design and restoration services, which are

paid for by the Wetlands Reserve Program. This approach could be taken by other organizations and expanded to deliver multiple programs.

State Fish and Wildlife Agency: One-stop shopping could be provided by agency staff located throughout the state. Another option would be to place agency staff in other state and federal agency offices in the state, to help coordinate statewide and ecoregional conservation goals with other agencies' conservation programs.

Multiple Agencies: A habitat team, representing various state and federal agencies and other conservation partners, could visit landowners on their property to offer advice and gain local knowledge about habitat conservation opportunities. The team's visit could be coordinated with a group of neighboring landowners who share similar habitats and other circumstances. The team's visit would allow the agencies to assess the property, the landowner's interests, and make recommendations about programs and other assistance. This approach would require a coordinator to identify landowners, arrange site visits, synthesize the recommendations, and provide technical assistance for the landowner(s) to implement projects.

Statewide Habitat Conservation Banking

Traditionally, natural resource banks have focused on mitigating for loss of wetlands (mitigation banking) or of individual listed species (conservation banking). The concept can be expanded and used to protect high priority habitats and proactively and permanently restored in large, contiguous blocks. Conservation banks place a dollar value on habitat, through credits that are purchased using mitigation fees and/or voluntary investments, thus bringing a market approach to conservation. The number of credits available in a conservation bank is based on acreage, habitat quality, and restoration activities undertaken. Credit prices are based on supply and demand, therefore profitable conservation banks will attract additional banks into the market, and competition will lower the price of the credits.

Mitigation for habitat impacts can be required on transportation projects, development in wetlands, hydroelectric projects, and wind farms. Mitigation can also be required by local agencies for new habitat impacts from developers or for past and ongoing impacts from rate payers or users. Habitat mitigation has often been done on-site, but the conservation benefits have been limited due to nearby non-habitat land uses. Conservation banks, which can be owned by a private entity, a public agency, or a non-profit, are more strategic and voluntary. In addition, they allow funds to be pooled to gain more conservation benefits per dollar invested.

Voluntary investments, from the public or private sector, can significantly enhance the ability of conservation banks to meet key habitat conservation needs. Agencies, organizations, or individuals who are interested in investing in habitat conservation, but do not have access to other high priority conservation opportunities, could contribute to the funding for conservation banks. Another source of funding is from power utilities for carbon sequestration to mitigate for releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. All of these investments increase the ability of the conservation banking system to purchase or manage larger blocks of habitat.

A statewide conservation banking system would provide a critical tool for implementing a strategy and for achieving statewide habitat conservation goals. Working at the state level allows the banking system to receive mitigation fees or voluntary investments from parts of the state where habitat impacts occur and to develop conservation banks in areas with the highest priority conservation needs. For example, habitat impacts (and mitigation fees) occur disproportionately in urban areas, but the highest conservation priorities tend to be in rural areas. The statewide conservation banking system could be designed to allow off-site (away from the impact) and out-of-kind (different habitat type) investments. Some investments could be closer to on-site (same or nearby watershed) or in-kind (same habitat type) by implementing some conservation banking within ecoregions or watersheds. The statewide conservation banking system would need to balance the benefits of conserving the highest priority habitats (regardless of location and type impacted) with the benefits of replacing impacted habitat with the same habitat and in close proximity.

Statewide planning, coordination, and management are needed for an effective statewide conservation banking system. Significant coordination is needed between agencies that set conservation goals, potential and actual conservation bank owners and managers, and agencies or organizations that contribute mitigation fees or voluntary funds to the conservation bank fund. One or more agencies would need to take responsibility for coordination, program management, habitat management, measuring performance, monitoring, reporting, and fiscal management.

Support for Local Governments

In some states, local governments play a role in assessing and protecting habitats in their jurisdiction. Some local governments are also interested in additional protection and restoration of natural areas to meet community needs for recreation and quality of life. It is important for strategy leaders to coordinate with local governments and provide information about local high priority conservation opportunities. In addition, the Department can provide other incentives to encourage local governments to conserve local habitats. For example, leaders can provide technical assistance about conservation tools available for public or private land, and develop a program to provide match funding to local governments that undertake projects to protect high priority local habitats.

Georgia Greenspace Program, Georgia
<www.ganet.org/dnr/greenspace>

The Program established a Community Greenspace Trust Fund to assist local government implement their local greenspace strategies. Funds are appropriated from the State to local government to preserve at least 20% of their land and water. States could expand on this program by linking it explicitly to the habitat goals in a strategy.

Tracking of Programs and Participation

A comprehensive system for tracking all habitat conservation actions, programs and projects in the state would allow agencies, organizations, and others to understand the level and pattern of participation in habitat conservation activities around the state. It is important for the state and conservation partners to quantify the use and geographic distribution of each habitat conservation program. This will allow agencies and conservation partners to target funding to unmet conservation priorities and to understand patterns of use or non-use of specific programs.

The statewide database needs to be spatially-explicit so the information can be mapped and manipulated using a geographic information system. The database and mapping tool need to be accessible online, with a capability for easily adding new information. The availability and purpose of the database need to be communicated to federal, state, and local agencies and to private organizations.

To maximize use of the system, landowner reporting should be required whenever possible, through administration of each program. Small incentives could be provided to encourage others to use the system, such as a water bottle with habitat logo, a habitat poster, or a set of thank-you cards that groups can use. The information could also be used for an annual, state-wide report of all habitat conservation activities. The report could include maps showing projects by program, habitat type, and other variables. The report could include an appendix listing all landowners and project coordinators. Information from the database could also be used to assist in landowner recognition efforts. For example, a watershed council could search on all projects done in the watershed and thank people for their efforts, even if the project was not a project with watershed council involvement.

The system might track the following information: ecological goal and objective in relation to the strategy, location, project coordinator, landowner, watershed, ecoregion, project title, funding sources and amounts, date of grant award, date of project implementation, match and estimated in-kind contributions, partner organizations, habitats and species present and benefiting, number of acres or trees or culverts affected, map with scale and north arrow, and past and future phases of the project. In addition, the reporting form should include opportunities for people to comment on successes and lessons learned. The system could be designed to display only non-identifying information for those landowners preferring anonymity, but the database would track all information that agencies can provide.

Some recipients of public funds are required to fill out a project reporting form that could form the basis for what is needed for the statewide tracking system proposed here. The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board provides restoration grants to landowners. Their reporting form provides a good example of what states might build a tracking system from www.oregon.gov/OWEB/MONITOR/OWRI.shtml.

VII. CONCLUSION

In order to effectively implement conservation strategies, states and their partners may need to adapt, expand, and create a range of voluntary conservation tools and programs. Changing conditions require adaptable programs. States and their partners might develop new legislation or administrative rules. Several states have passed conservation incentives legislation. Legislation can authorize specific conservation programs, create new funding sources, or comprehensively organize voluntary conservation tools within the state. Legislative action might also occur at the federal level to adapt existing programs so that they are able to meet states' conservation goals. Legislation can also provide a signal of clear commitment from government to provide effective programs to assist private landowners in voluntary conservation of public assets.

Throughout many of the examples of voluntary conservation programs presented here, there are strong elements of local involvement and flexibility. This places responsibility on strategy partners to design creative ways to use existing programs, but with the framework provided by the state wildlife strategies, there is a tremendous window of opportunity to strategically target a broad range of tools toward meeting state's collective conservation goals. New programs may not be required to implement conservation strategies. Partners will want to sit down together to create innovative ways of using existing tools to address statewide conservation priorities.

Once a program is developed and funded, a coordinated group can more effectively deliver tools. Leadership may come from a state fish and wildlife agency, a coalition of partners, or individuals housed within cooperative extension or non-profit offices. Agencies may need to consolidate most landowner assistance programs to ensure efficient and effective program delivery and administration. Partners will need to evaluate their statewide capability to deliver landowner assistance and develop connections with local communities. Agency field staff can be used to provide direct technical support to landowners including pre-project assessment, design, assistance with grants, permits, implementation and effectiveness monitoring. The local technical assistance staff need a working knowledge of their ecoregion and its habitats and species. Equally important, they also need knowledge of local social and economic issues and circumstances, and effective skills at engaging diverse people and groups. The local staff also need a working knowledge of other agencies' conservation programs and tools, to effectively help landowners in identifying the best assistance programs. State-wide one-stop shops could also include providing direct restoration services for landowners with high priority habitats, with agency staff, extension agents, non-profits, or consultants doing the actual work. This one-stop shop would allow the agency to have direct access to habitats of high conservation need and to determine the specific restoration methods used. As important as it is to have an organization responsible for delivery, a coalition of partners can be used to conduct a lot of the work, engage landowners, and broaden the scope of partners involved in conservation program delivery.

Voluntary conservation tools and programs are a relatively new and growing set of conservation actions. Conservation partners can openly explore new combinations of tools and new tools altogether to maximize their benefits for conservation. Tools available to landowners comfortable working with government and those distrustful of government will increase participation. Tools strategically targeted at priority conservation areas and designed to meet the goals outlined in the state strategy will increase effectiveness.

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE OUTLINE

[Designed as a backbone for including voluntary programs in state strategies]

[SOME PARTS OF THIS MAY FIT BEST IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF A STATE'S STRATEGY-IMPLEMENTATION, CONSERVATION ACTIONS, ETC.]

I. Introduction

Why private lands matter?
Why voluntary tools?

Many habitats and species rely on private lands, and voluntary tools are the best way to encourage landowners and the public to effectively manage their lands to meet statewide conservation goals.

II. Elements of an Effective Voluntary Conservation Program

Ten Elements: Objectives, Challenges, and Opportunities

III. Types of Voluntary Conservation Tools

Descriptions of Voluntary Conservation Tools

Existing State Conservation Programs

Existing Federal Conservation Programs

Other Conservation Programs

IV. Improving Existing Conservation Tools and Programs

V. New Conservation Tools and Programs