



Outdoor News Bulletin

Conservation without Conflict: State and Territorial Agencies Play a Lead Role in Conservation Culture Change

By Leo Miranda-Castro, Executive Director, Conservation Without Conflict | November 2023 | Volume 77, Issue 11

Fish and wildlife management involves the sustainable conservation, protection, and enhancement of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats to benefit the public and the environment. In the US, we operate using the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, a model based on the Public Trust Doctrine in which fish and wildlife belong to the people and are held in trust to be managed by government through sound-science and active management. The North American Model is considered the most successful and sustainable wildlife management approach in the world. As we face unprecedented environmental and socio-economic challenges, we must continue to adapt our conservation culture in a way that focuses on collaboration and innovation at a scale where all species can be efficiently managed and conserved.

States and territorial agencies are well positioned to quickly adapt and implement solutions tailored to the local conditions. Under the principles of federalism and the 10th amendment of the Constitution, States and territories have primary responsibility for managing most of the fish and wildlife within their borders. There are over 12,000 species of greatest conservation need that are under direct State management. A subset of those (approximately 2,750) have additional federal jurisdiction, mostly through the Endangered Species and the Migratory Bird Treaty Acts. State and territorial agencies can effectively deliver locally based expertise, efficient resource allocation, collaboration with stakeholders, tailored conservation strategies, enforcement capabilities, and data collection efforts make them indispensable leaders in conserving threatened, endangered, and at-risk species.

With the support of federal agencies, academia, non-governmental organizations and the public, States and territories will continue to lead and adapt their approaches to



achieve collaborative conservation goals, serve the public interest, and enhance our ability to attract, retain, and motivate the conservation leaders of the future.

As we continue to face unprecedented environmental challenges, recognizing and supporting the vital role of state wildlife agencies is essential for the successful conservation of all species and the preservation of our natural heritage. With appropriate funding, there is both the interest and the ability in state agencies to manage all species for all people. Together, we are changing the fish and wildlife conservation culture, from confrontation first to collaboration, always.

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