



Outdoor News Bulletin

Leo Miranda-Castro: Envisioning Conservation without Conflict for a Sustainable Future

By Leo Miranda-Castro | July 2023 | Volume 77, Issue 7

Leopoldo “Leo” Miranda-Castro was introduced as the new Executive Director for the Conservation without Conflict coalition in the February issue of the Outdoor News Bulletin. We’ve asked Leo to provide a more detailed biography and to provide more information about what the coalition is working on.

Leo is the President/CEO of [Leo Miranda LLC](#), an organization dedicated to innovative conservation and policy solutions. Before that, he served as the Southeast Regional Director of the Department of the Interior’s [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) from 2018 to 2022 (retired in December 2022). In this role, he managed a budget of over \$400M and oversaw approximately 1,300 federal employees responsible for conserving fish, wildlife, and plant resources, along with their habitats, within 10 southeastern states, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Leo’s journey with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began in his native Puerto Rico, where he worked as a Private Lands biologist. He later became the national coordinator for the private lands program and served as the Program Supervisor of the Service’s Chesapeake Bay Field Office in Annapolis, Maryland. Subsequently, he was appointed as the Assistant Regional Director of the Southeast Region’s Ecological Services Program. Leo strongly advocates for public-private conservation partnerships and highlights the successes achieved in the shade-grown coffee industry, sustainable timber production, and the protection of buffer zones around military bases. These examples demonstrate how government organizations and private landowners can collaborate to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes for both people and wildlife.

During weekends, you’ll often find Leo in a tree stand or by a river, enjoying hunting or fishing with his son, Pablo. Leo believes that these outdoor recreational activities, especially hunting, have played a significant role in fostering their shared love for



nature and commitment to conservation.

As a career Senior Executive Service member, Leo held the highest career-level position in the federal government. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Marine Biology from the University of Puerto Rico and a Master of Science degree in Zoology from North Carolina State University. Leo, his wife Jessica, their son Pablo, and their beloved four-legged family members reside in west-central Georgia.

Currently, Leo also serves as the Executive Director of the [Conservation without Conflict Coalition](#). The Conservation without Conflict coalition focuses on collaborative and voluntary conservation efforts. The shared passion of its [members](#) lies in the protection of fish, wildlife, and plants while ensuring the sustainability of working lands. By uniting private and public entities, the coalition facilitates regular communication to enhance and refine conservation and collaboration skills. Additionally, they actively strive to advance their unique approach while promoting societal awareness of the importance of implementing Conservation without Conflict. Guided by their established [Operating Principles](#), the coalition operates with a firm sense of purpose.

Central to their conservation approach is a belief in collaboration and incentives that acknowledge the significant conservation benefits provided by landowners. The coalition firmly asserts that partnerships based on mutual gain among all involved parties are more effective in achieving meaningful conservation on a large scale. This approach is deemed to be more sustainable than relying solely on regulatory methods that can often lead to unnecessary disputes.

Emphasizing the sharing of successes and best practices, the coalition continually seeks innovative approaches and incentives while effectively communicating their accomplishments. Their primary objective is the conservation of at-risk species and the recovery of endangered and threatened species. To achieve this, they actively promote and encourage the utilization of existing conservation tools and the development of new ones. Recognizing the paramount importance of outreach and communication, the coalition dedicates significant efforts toward these areas, considering them essential to their overall success.



Grounded in sound scientific principles, the coalition employs proactive and collaborative conservation strategies to recover federally listed species and safeguard at-risk fish, wildlife, and plants. By doing so, they aim to reduce the need for Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections. However, the coalition acknowledges that certain species may still require ESA listing. In such cases, they creatively leverage the flexibility offered by the ESA to devise collaborative incentives that provide regulatory predictability and assurances for private landowners, corporations, and other conservation initiatives.

Collectively, the coalition diligently collaborates to ensure the continued productivity and harmony of forests, farms, ranches, and defense installations, benefiting both people and wildlife while serving the nation's interests. They firmly believe that Conservation without Conflict represents the key to effective and sustainable natural resource conservation in America. In pursuit of this vision, they explore collaborative conservation successes, identify crucial elements, and provide a framework that encourages government entities, landowners, industry, and society at large to work together toward common conservation goals.

Prospective members are encouraged to [join the coalition](#) and contribute to the conservation of natural resources for future generations. Together, they can forge a brighter future, driven by a genuine desire to make a positive difference in conservation of natural resources.

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