



Outdoor News Bulletin

Understanding Landowners' Concerns About Endangered Species on Their Land

By Leo Miranda-Castro, Executive Director, Conservation without Conflict Coalition | April 2024 | Volume 78, Issue 4

Earlier this year, [Conservation without Conflict](#) had its 2024 Summit in Arlington, VA. One of the Keynote speakers was Leslie Allison, Executive Director of the [Western Landowners Alliance](#). Her presentation was not only beautiful, but it was impactful. Leslie presented a topic that we do not often talk about in the conservation community. In her presentation titled: “Advancing policies and practices that sustain working lands, connected landscapes and native species,” she highlighted the need to fully incorporate humans and their land use methods into conservation and conservation planning. Her presentation inspired me to write this, capturing her main messages and hopefully inspiring others to act.

When landowners discover endangered species on their property, their initial reaction might be worried or fearful. This reaction is not because they do not care about their land or the animals living there. In fact, many landowners deeply value the natural habitats and wildlife that share their space. However, the presence of endangered species can introduce a set of regulations that may restrict how they can use their land. This concern highlights a significant issue that, if not addressed, will continue to be a topic of discussion for years to come. It is crucial to shift our conservation efforts toward working lands and emphasize the symbiotic relationship humans have with their environment.

Private landowners are stewards of their land, taking care of wildlife and the natural ecosystems. Their efforts in maintaining the land demonstrate a commitment to conservation. However, when endangered species are found, it becomes a complex situation. The introduction of strict, one-size-fits-all regulations can make landowners and managers wary of the consequences, such as limitations on land use or potential legal challenges. This complexity is where the conversation begins, aiming to find a balance between conservation and land use.



The future of conservation lies in focusing more attention on the people as part of the landscape. We must focus on those working lands used for farming, ranching, forestry, agriculture, recreation, energy production, and even national defense. These lands play a crucial role in maintaining functional and healthy ecosystems at larger scales. By integrating conservation efforts with human stewardship on these lands, we can create long-lasting collaborative conservation models that benefit both the environment and the people living in it. The aim is to ensure that these working lands continue to support biodiversity while meeting the people's needs.

A key part of addressing the concerns of landowners involves education and information. It is important to understand that we are part of a living community that depends on us, and we depend on it. This mutual dependence has evolved over time, with humans and the environment influencing each other. Humans are part of the environment and recognizing our place within this living community can change how we view conservation, seeing it not as a barrier or restriction but to live in harmony with our habitats and ecosystems.

The roles that farming, ranching, forestry, agriculture, recreation, energy, and national defense, among many others, play in our lives are intertwined with the environment. These sectors not only depend on healthy ecosystems but also have the potential to contribute to conservation. By acknowledging this interdependence, we have and can develop new practices and policies that protect listed and at-risk species while supporting human activities.

It is essential to recognize that our livelihoods and the health of wild working lands are interconnected. This understanding can lead to more effective conservation strategies that accommodate human needs and protect the environment. Landowners play a vital role in this equation. They manage large areas of land that serve as habitats for listed and at-risk species. By working together with conservation agencies, non-governmental groups, and industry partners, landowners can help ensure that these species thrive while still being able to use their land effectively.

One of the significant challenges in this conversation is the issue of overregulation. While regulations are necessary to protect species and their habitats, they can sometimes be too restrictive, hindering the ability of landowners to manage their properties or even implementing proactive conservation action for those same species.



This challenge requires a delicate balance. We need regulations to ensure the protection of species at risk, but these regulations should also allow for vast flexibility and innovation in land management.

Finding solutions that respect both the needs of the environment and the rights of landowners is crucial. This might include developing conservation agreements that offer incentives for landowners to participate in species protection efforts. Another approach could be creating more collaborative and transparent decision-making processes, where landowners have a meaningful say in the regulations that affect their land and their way of living.

As we move forward, addressing the concerns of landowners about at-risk and listed species on their land requires a multi-faceted approach. It involves improving and focusing collaborative conservation efforts toward working lands; educating and informing ourselves about our interconnectedness with the environment and the ecosystems we depend on; recognizing the mutual dependence of people and land; and finding the right balance in regulations.

By focusing on these areas, we can work toward a future where collaborative conservation, land use, and land stewardship go hand in hand. This future would not only ensure the protection of listed and at-risk species but also respect the needs and rights of landowners. Achieving this balance is essential for the long-term success of conservation without conflict efforts and the long-term conservation of our natural environment.

The worries and fears of landowners regarding protected species on their property are understandable. However, through education, collaboration, mutual trust, and innovative approaches to conservation, we can address these concerns. By working together, we can create a world where human activities and conservation efforts support each other, ensuring the health and vitality of nature for generations to come.

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