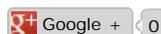


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National wildlife conservation network proposed

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by - [Cordova Times Staff](#)

Wildlife biologists and policy experts concerned over habitat loss, climate change and major reductions in funding are proposing formation of a state-based national conservation support network to deal with these issues.

"We surveyed wildlife managers from every state and territory to assess the state of the wildlife conservation system," said Brad Griffith, the leader of the USGS Alaska Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Alaska's Institute of Arctic Biology.

"We kept hearing 'we don't have the maps we need' and 'we don't have current tools'. It was clear after listening to all these folks that better coordination of resources and planning among states, across regions and nationwide could make our conservation efforts more effective and efficient."

Griffith is one of several authors of a proposal published in the November issue of the journal *BioScience* that would bring state, federal, nongovernmental and private initiatives together in this effort.

The five goals of the proposed network are establishing a common habitat classification map, identifying at-risk species not currently managed federally, coordinating planning opportunities, disseminating planning information and documenting the potential uses of new conservation data tools.

"Individual state wildlife action plans provide a strong foundation for biodiversity conservation, but a state-by-state approach does not protect ecosystems and habitats that extend across state borders and occur at regional and national scales," said Griffith.

"This approach also does not enable states to address species that are declining throughout a multistate range, but are not yet endangered or threatened."

The authors suggested that a program to support state wildlife agencies be independent, rather than housed within a federal agency because of the potential for relatively frequent administrative changes in focus and support for conservation philosophies and actions.

Griffith said the network could work to identify large-scale conservation challenges and facilitate their resolution.

The network could integrate local and regional efforts, enhance large-scale conservation, and advance collaborative conservation among states and their partners, he said. It would make the most efficient use of limited conservation funds, maintain ecological integrity and ecosystem services and reduce the need for more stringent environmental protections, he said.

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