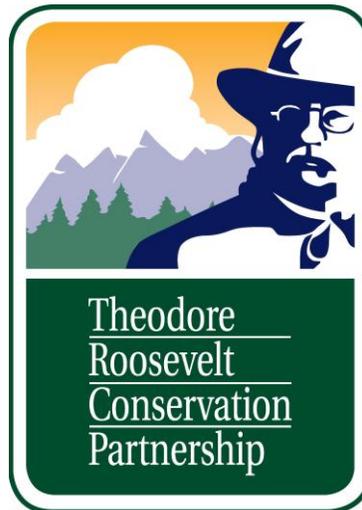


2013 Conservation Policy

Agenda

January 2013



**Theodore Roosevelt
Conservation Partnership**

www.trcp.org

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INTRODUCTION

“It is not what we have that will make us a great nation; it is the way in which we use it.”

Hunting Trips of a Ranchman and The Wilderness Hunter

“Defenders of the short-sighted men who in their greed and selfishness will, if permitted, rob our country of half its charm by their reckless extermination of all useful and beautiful wild things sometimes seek to champion them by saying the ‘the game belongs to the people.’ So it does; and not merely to the people now alive, but to the unborn people. The ‘greatest good for the greatest number’ applies to the number within the womb of time, compared to which those now alive form but an insignificant fraction. ... The movement for the conservation of wild life and the larger movement for the conservation of all our natural resources are essentially democratic in spirit, purpose, and method.”

A Book-Lover’s Holidays in the Open, 1916

“There can be no greater issue than that of conservation in this country.”

Confession of Faith Speech, Progressive National Convention, Chicago, Ill., Aug. 6, 1912

— Theodore Roosevelt

Inspired by the legacy of Theodore Roosevelt, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership is a coalition of organizations and grassroots partners working together to preserve the traditions of hunting and fishing. By building consensus among the TRCP’s individual and organizational partners, we work to advance policy solutions on natural resource management issues of common concern.

Please visit www.trcp.org to learn more about the TRCP’s mission, partners and staff.

We look forward to our continued work with the Obama administration and Congress to expeditiously address problems of great concern to the nation’s sportsmen-conservationists.

While resolving and transcending immediate concerns to America’s natural resources, we must continue to maintain our outdoor heritage as a top priority. The TRCP is ready to seize opportunities and explore new ideas that can benefit fish, wildlife and their habitat and ensure a brighter future for the American outdoor way of life.

ACCESS

One of the most prominent challenges facing sportsmen today is the ability to access quality places to hunt and fish. Promoting access for sportsmen is front and center in TRCP's statement of purpose, and overlaps with most everything that we work to accomplish. Barriers to access take many forms, ranging from the inability to access large parcels of federal land in the Western US because they are landlocked by private property, to the inability to access fisheries resources because boat launch facilities are nonexistent or in disrepair. Loss of habitat is also at its core an access issue; it leads to low fish and wildlife populations and fewer opportunities for people to hunt and fish. The Open Fields access program in the Farm Bill is a signature initiative of the TRCP and we will work to expand it. TRCP will continue to work with our partners to ensure that maintaining access for sportsmen on public and private lands remains a top priority.

CLIMATE

Climate Change

Global climate change threatens to disrupt generations of plant, fish and wildlife evolution and the abundance and well-being of species and their habitats. Gradually increasing worldwide temperatures will result in changes in amounts and patterns of precipitation, frequency and intensity of weather events, distribution and duration of drought, levels of snowpack and when it melts, runoff and flooding patterns and the timing of animal and plant life-cycles. These factors alone and combined can affect plant growth, structure and distribution, as well as species' abilities to reproduce and survive.

Sportsmen have been the first to experience the repercussions of climate change as declining populations of game species result in shortened seasons and fewer hunting permits. If fishing or hunting exists in the lifetime of our children and theirs, it may take on an entirely new face. How we address the challenges of global climate change now will dictate whether future generations will continue to enjoy our time-honored sporting traditions. Government agencies must work to mitigate the effects of such change by protecting crucial habitat and adapting management programs that conserve fish and wildlife populations.

Action Items

- Urge the Obama administration and Congress to increase the annual appropriation to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the State Wildlife Grants Program to fund the full implementation of congressionally mandated State Wildlife Action Plans that address the challenge of climate change.

- Advocate for a new Natural Resources Adaptation Fund to include substantial dedicated funding for state and tribal fish and wildlife agencies and federal environmental and land-management agencies to help fish and wildlife adapt to climate change.
- Advocate for new dedicated funding for state and tribal fish and wildlife agencies through the existing Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Account of the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act, the Coastal Management Act of 1972, state and tribal wildlife grants and the Land and Water Conservation Fund of 1965.

CONSERVATION FUNDING

Conservation Funding

Conservation funding is perhaps the single most critical issue facing sportsmen today. Federal involvement, support and funding will be needed if we hope to properly conserve, restore and manage America's natural resources. This conservation tradition is vital if we want to maintain healthy populations of wildlife and fish.

Activity related to hunting and fishing produces significant economic impact; in fact the sporting community is part of an outdoor recreation, natural resource conservation and historic preservation sector that generates more than \$ 1 trillion for the U.S. economy every year. This sector also produces \$107 billion in tax revenue annually and supports 9.4 million jobs. Sound conservation practices clearly produce substantial economic benefits. As we face an uncertain budgetary future, we must leverage the combined weight of the outdoor community (especially hunters and anglers) to ensure continued funding for conservation. Towards this end TRCP will continue to take a leadership role in the America's Voice for Conservation, Recreation, and Preservation coalition, which has grown to over 1200 member organizations.

Action Items

- Conservation funding must be considered a high priority in the federal budget, and funding levels must be set at the highest levels possible. Validation of the outdoor industry's role as an engine of economic improvement will play a major role in this objective. The TRCP and partner organizations must continue to show that funding for conservation issues is not an expenditure, but rather as an investment in the U.S. economy and in the future of our outdoor traditions and our natural resources.
- The TRCP must work with other organizations, agencies and lawmakers to develop new incentives to conserve our precious natural resources and wildlife habitat. We also must work to sustain and expand public access for hunting and fishing.

RESPONSIBLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

Making Energy Development Responsible

Domestic energy development has become one of the most controversial subjects facing land managers today. With the new push to harness the sun, wind and other forms of renewable energy, the necessity of balancing production of domestic energy with the needs of fish and wildlife – and continuing to support traditional sporting activities – will be even more critical.

Sustaining fish, wildlife and sporting resources during energy development activities poses a great challenge. The first step toward its resolution is revision of the current paradigm that prioritizes energy development over all other values and uses and recommitment to a true multiple-use approach to managing lands and resources. We will work toward true multiple-use, sustained-yield policy for public lands and advise state and private managers how to balance development of energy resources with other values and resources, particularly fish, wildlife and hunting and angling.

Action Items

- Restore balance in the management of public lands and resources through implementation of true multiple-use, sustained yield practices as mandated by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and the Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act.
- Advocate for legislative action ensuring the sustainability of abundant and diverse fish and wildlife populations and recreational opportunities.
- Demonstrate proper, balanced energy development on lands important to fish, wildlife and sportsmen through coordination and collaboration with TRCP partners.
- Formulate a strategy to continue to influence policy that will guide renewable energy development, particularly solar and wind energy, on public lands.
- Ensure federal and state management strategies and planning for sage grouse and other prairie grouse adequately conserve the birds and their habitats in order to avoid listing under the Endangered Species Act.
- Ensure adequate funding for the management of fish and wildlife by providing necessary resources for fish and wildlife biologists and habitat management. Require mitigation funds from those uses that adversely impact fish and wildlife.
- Ensure mitigation and monitoring are effective in reducing or avoiding impacts to fish, wildlife and sporting resources and are based on current science or knowledge
- Work to ensure that federal policy surrounding fracking adequately considers fish and wildlife habitat values.

WATERSHEDS

Bristol Bay, Alaska

Alaska's Bristol Bay is a place of internationally recognized importance for fish, wildlife and sportsmen. The area's lakes and streams host trophy rainbow trout and all five species of Pacific salmon, including the largest run of sockeye salmon in the world. Moose, caribou and brown and black bear also populate the Bristol Bay region. Commercial fishing in the area generates \$450 million and recreational fishing generates \$160 million to the Alaska economy every year. In fact, the Bristol Bay commercial fishery is the most valuable in the world, providing 30 percent of all Alaskan salmon harvest and 52 percent of all private sector jobs in the region.

A proposal to develop a massive gold, copper and molybdenum mine in the headwaters of the Kvichak and Nushagak rivers threatens this important resource area and the recreational and commercial fishing opportunities it provides. The proposed Pebble Mine Complex would cover 54.5 square miles and could produce as much as 10 billion tons of mine waste that would have to be treated and stored in perpetuity.

The Pebble Mine would cause unacceptable adverse effects to the Bristol Bay area's fisheries.

Action Item

- Work to stop the development of this mine by strongly urging the EPA, under its authority granted by section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act, to prohibit the Kvichak and Nushagak river drainages from being used as disposal sites for dredge or fill material from mining activity.

Chesapeake Bay

The Chesapeake Bay provides highly productive spawning habitat for 70 to 80 percent of all Atlantic striped bass and is a critical migratory stopover for more than 1 million waterfowl, one third of the wintering waterfowl in the Atlantic flyway. Home to 4.5 million hunters and anglers, the Bay region is rich in opportunities for sportsmen, but a variety of challenges threaten to degrade the Chesapeake's bounty of fish and wildlife. Development, habitat loss, invasive species and water pollution have led to reductions in some fish and wildlife numbers, such as brook trout in the Chesapeake's tributaries, and could cause further declines in the future. Chesapeake Bay is unique in that it can serve as a pilot project on how to best address non-point source pollution in other large watersheds with similar issues.

Action Items

- Ensure the reduction of pollution from agricultural development and restoration of fish and wildlife habitat in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- Pursue legislation that will improve recreational access and focus restoration efforts on habitat for fish and wildlife.

MARINE FISHERIES

Recreational Marine Fisheries Conservation

Deeply engrained in America's cultural heritage, recreational fishing is a tradition passed down through generations. Not only one of the most popular outdoor recreational activities in the country, it is also a significant contributor to local economies and conservation efforts nationwide. Recreational saltwater fishing drives an enormous economic engine, and contributions of the approximately 8.9 million saltwater anglers to the national, regional and local economies cannot be denied. According to participation studies done by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the American Sportfishing Association, saltwater anglers contribute over \$32 billion in economic activity annually, support nearly 250,000 jobs, and pay more than \$4.2 billion in state and federal taxes.

Today, a smarter approach to marine fisheries management – one that accurately and appropriately factors in impacts of recreational fishing – is critical. Recreational anglers have embraced the necessary measures to sustain diverse and abundant fish populations. We stand ready to work with the Department of Commerce to find and implement those measures that solve the various problems confronting our marine fisheries management system.

Action Items

- Enhance the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). The purpose of the registry is to obtain better data about who is fishing and what is being caught so that policymakers can increase their understanding of saltwater fishing's relationship to fisheries conservation.
- The MRIP must address the timeliness of data collection and analysis for managing marine recreational fishing. The analysis of recreational fishing data often takes place after the fishing season has ended. Fishery managers need the tools and opportunity to make in-season adjustments necessary to help recreational anglers stay within their annual catch limits.
- Accelerate restoration efforts in the Gulf of Mexico. Implement policies and direct funding to target conservation of marine fisheries affected by the Deep Water Horizon oil spill, and incorporate the needs and input from recreational anglers when doing so.
- Maintain abundant fisheries populations and recreational use opportunities with a strong and effective Magnuson-Stevens Act.
- Support recreational angling access to America's waters. A long-standing policy of the federal government allows public access to public lands and waters for recreational

purposes consistent with sound conservation. This policy is reflected in the principles of our wildlife refuges, national forests, national parks and wilderness areas and should be promoted throughout the country. Traditional fisheries management practices align with these principles in that recreational anglers are subject to the regulation of season, number and size limits to ensure conservation of fish populations.

PRIVATE LANDS

Agriculture

Ensuring that habitat conservation remains economically viable for America's agricultural producers is of the utmost importance to bolstering wildlife populations, and preserving our sporting heritage. High commodity prices coupled with damaging changes to federal agriculture policy have created unprecedented economic incentive for producers to bring ecologically sensitive lands into production. Sound federal agriculture policy, delivered primarily through the Farm Bill, must create sufficient opportunity for producers to make conservation an important and lasting part of their land management plans.

A number of important Farm Bill conservation programs and programs that support recreational access on private lands expired with zero baseline funding at the end of September 2012. Though these programs may or may not be reauthorized in the next Farm Bill, the outcomes that they sought to achieve are still valid and must be replicated through federal agriculture policy.

Action Items

- Advocate for conservation programs that protect critical grassland, prairie and wetland habitat. Work to ensure that these programs are sufficiently funded, that they have predictable enrollment policies, and that they target areas that will provide the most habitat value per dollar spent by the federal government.
- Work to ensure that producer eligibility for crop insurance payment support is linked to responsible conservation practices.
- Ensure authorization and implementation of the Sodsaver program to reduce federal incentives for breaking natural grassland habitat for new cropland.
- Work to bolster working lands programs that encourage farmers, ranchers and other agricultural producers to conserve and enhance native prairies.
- Advocate for programs that promote public access to hunters, fisherman and other recreationalists on private agricultural lands.
- Examine opportunities to engage in the debate over reform of the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS).

Tax Incentives for Conservation Easements

Conservation easements provide landowners a means to receive fair compensation for development rights without having to sell their farms and ranches. Easements also are valued by the sportsmen's community because many easements encourage or allow access for hunters and anglers. Congress has allowed critical tax incentives for conservation easements lapse, making them a less attractive option for landowners looking to sell development rights.

Action Item

- Advocate for sensible tax incentives for conservation easement donations via recommendations in the fiscal year 2013-2014 budget proposal.

Wetlands and Clean Water Protections

Recent Supreme Court decisions (*SWANCC*, 2001; *Rapanos*, 2006) have weakened the federal protections for our nation's wetlands and waters as provided by the Clean Water Act. These decisions removed protections for isolated wetlands and intermittent and ephemeral streams. The EPA estimates that approximately 20 million acres of wetlands and streams no longer are protected as a result of these Supreme Court decisions.

Wetlands and streams have a tremendous impact on the lives of all Americans and offer numerous societal benefits. In addition to providing essential habitat to numerous plant, fish and wildlife species that benefit sportsmen, wetlands also perform critical flood control functions, recharge groundwater, filter pollutants from drinking water sources and help control erosion.

Action Items

- Support a robust and inclusive clean water guidance and rulemaking to restore Clean Water Act protections permanently.
- Advocate for a legislative fix that clarifies Clean Water Act jurisdiction and that provide the greatest amount of protections for our nation's wetlands, rivers, lakes and streams.

PUBLIC LANDS

Backcountry Lands Conservation

Intact backcountry areas offer key habitat for numerous fish and wildlife species, including those enjoyed by the public such as wild trout and salmon, upland game birds, mule deer, elk, pronghorn and wild sheep. Yet for too long, the debate over public lands management has

been framed as a choice between two opposites: high-intensity development or complete preservation. Millions of acres of public land are not appropriate for either, yet a successful administrative approach to conserve Bureau of Land Management administered backcountry habitat – that enjoys widespread support from both the sportsmen’s community and citizenry at large – does not exist. Consequently, the current system of land management leaves valuable fish and wildlife habitat vulnerable to poorly planned development and is serving as a source of public frustration.

Westerners – particularly sportsmen – want the highest-quality public lands conserved and they also want their traditional way of life maintained. Instead of looking for another unpopular top down mandate from Washington, sportsmen are taking the lead in shaping a conservation solution from the bottom up that safeguards intact fish and wildlife habitat in a way that works for communities and the Western way of life.

Promoted through select local land-use planning efforts across the West, sportsmen are proposing Backcountry Conservation Areas that would protect existing access to public lands; enable managers to improve and restore habitat and combat noxious weeds; safeguard traditional uses of the land; and conserve special places with premium fish and wildlife habitat.

Action Items

- The BLM should work cooperatively with Western sportsmen and other stakeholders through land use planning processes to administratively conserve high value backcountry fish and wildlife habitat as Backcountry Conservation Areas.
- The U.S. Department of the Interior should provide guidance to state BLM offices, instructing those offices to work with the sporting community to advance and implement the locally driven Backcountry Conservation Area designation.

Forest Service Planning Regulations

In April 2012, the U.S. Forest Service completed a new national forest planning rule that will guide individual management plans for 155 national forests and 20 national grasslands in 42 states. This rule will have a major impact on the management of vital fish and wildlife habitat, watershed conservation, vegetation management, and recreation on 193 million acres of the nation’s most valuable public lands. It is imperative that the rule be implemented in a way that maximizes conservation of this vast, irreplaceable resource.

The Forest Service has identified eight national forests that will be the first to revise their land management plans under the new rule. These initial management plans will serve as models for subsequent forest planning over the next 20 years. The Forest Service will also develop a set of “directives” that will be used to develop a new forest planning manual and handbook to provide specific direction for the creation of individual forest plans. The proposed directives will be open to public comment and will be influenced by a federal advisory committee made up of individuals representing a diverse range of interests.

Action Item

- Ensure development of a new national forest planning manual and handbook that directs individual forest plans to provide for high quality hunting and fishing, maintain access to public lands, sustain fish and wildlife populations, and safeguard and restore key fish and wildlife habitat.
- Develop eight early adopter forest plans that successfully implement the new national forest planning rule in a way that conserves high value fish and wildlife habitat and hunting and fishing opportunities. Such plans should uphold the traditions of hunting and fishing and include sound monitoring programs, maintain and restore wildlife connectivity and key habitats, utilize the best available science, conserve watersheds, and demonstrate a multiple-use model that upholds conservation values.

Mining

Fish and wildlife on America's public lands are struggling to cope with the effects of under-regulated hard-rock mining. The General Mining Law of 1872, which governs hard-rock mining (gold, copper, silver, etc.) on America's public lands, was signed into law more than a century ago. This antiquated law is in need of reform

Action Item

- Successfully implement the revised federal hard rock mineral development policies to better address conservation of fish and wildlife in important and crucial wildlife habitats.

WATER

Water quantity is one of the most important issues facing the conservation community and the country. In the decades ahead, water scarcity will only grow as an issue as the country feels the impacts from a changing climate and ever-expanding demands for water, and unless the conservation community can engage in the water allocation and water conservation policies and processes, fish and wildlife will be among the first casualties of such scarcity. While much of water management in the US, especially in the West, is state-based, there is a major federal role in water management and conservation.

Action Items

- Strengthen existing federal funding for water conservation programs within the Bureau of Reclamation, Corps of Engineers and NRCS;
- Identify and create new sources of funding for water conservation work;

- Enhance conservation, instream flows, and public access through the hydropower licensing and relicensing processes.
- Promote non-structural flood control alternatives and improve post-flood response, especially in headwater streams;
- Engage in key regional issues (e.g. Everglades, Central Valley, Colorado River) to support ecological restoration and healthy fisheries and wetlands;
- Oppose ill-conceived new water development schemes.