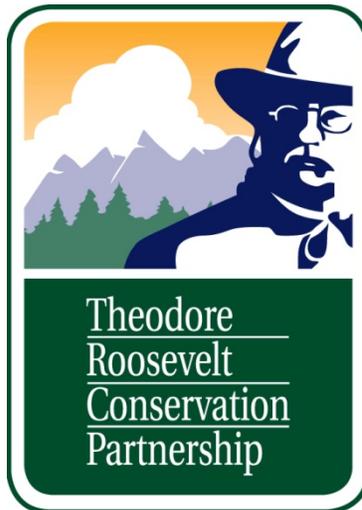


2014 Conservation Policy

Agenda



Theodore Roosevelt
Conservation Partnership

www.trcp.org

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Access	4
Climate	4
Conservation Funding	5
Responsible Energy Development	6
Watersheds	7
Bristol Bay, Alaska	
Chesapeake Bay	
Marine Fisheries	8
Private Lands	10
Agriculture	
Wetlands and Clean Water Protections	
Public Lands	11
Backcountry Lands Conservation	
Forest Service Planning Regulations	
Water	12

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 (TRCP) 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.

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 the TRCP's statement of purpose and overlaps with almost 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 U.S. 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 TRCP will continue to work with our partners to ensure that promoting access for sportsmen on public and private lands remains a top priority.

Action Items

- Promote passage of the Hunt Unrestricted on National Treasures (“HUNT”) Act and Making Public Lands Public Act.
- Ensure full funding of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Improvement Program (“Open Fields”) and pursue non-federal funds to expand the program at the state level.
- Advocate for full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and other important federal access and easement programs that benefit sportsmen's access.

CLIMATE

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 are resulting 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 among 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.
- Support prudent administrative actions that reduce the threat of climate change and support fish and wildlife adaptation.

CONSERVATION FUNDING

Especially in today's tough federal budget environment, conservation funding is an issue that impacts all aspects of conservation. It affects nearly every campaign on which we embark, every habitat type that we work to sustain, and every hunting and fishing opportunity that we fight to pass on to future generations. Without sufficient funding, agencies lose the capacity to make well-informed land and wildlife management decisions, the effectiveness of conservation programs is diminished thereby yielding fewer acres of habitat on the ground, and recreational public and private lands users like hunters and anglers will continue to suffer lost sporting opportunities. In the past, when the economy was thriving and concerns about the debt and deficit were not at the top of Congress' agenda, strategic advocacy based on the merits of our flagship conservation programs yielded funding increases and new programs to tackle challenges as they arose. Today, with Budget Control Act caps and sequestration as the law of the land, the overall federal pie will grow in a predictably limited fashion over the next 10 years, putting pressure on discretionary spending across the board and especially in the areas about which sportsmen care the most, which have been targeted for disproportionate cuts by Congress on many occasions.

The TRCP will work with our partners to ensure that sportsmen-conservationists have a seat at the table when funding decisions are made and that we are able to advocate for healthy funding levels in those areas of the budget.

Action Items

- Continue to play a leadership role in the America's Voice for Conservation, Recreation and Preservation coalition to provide an overarching organizing infrastructure for the conservation, recreation and preservation communities.
- Engage in the budget and appropriations process to advocate for the highest possible funding levels for TRCP priority programs.
- Advocate for a replacement to the across-the-board cuts known as sequestration, and promote the largest possible budget allocation for conservation in any broad budget deal.

RESPONSIBLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

Increased energy development such as oil, gas, solar, wind and geothermal is threatening public-lands hunting and fishing opportunities across the country. Many of the locations pressured for energy development also hold some of the nation's best hunting and fishing opportunities. Poorly planned and hastily developed energy projects can dramatically affect fish and wildlife populations and, in turn, sportsmen and the economy.

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 on Bureau of Land Management lands. There must be a recommitment to a true multiple-use approach to managing lands and resources. The TRCP will work with our partners to ensure energy development is balanced with the needs of fish and wildlife. Changes in land management agency policy can yield better pre-development planning that identifies wildlife habitat areas too special to develop and that are balanced with designated energy development zones. This will result in a "net gain" of both crucial fish and wildlife habitats and public recreational opportunity.

Action Items

- Advocate for Department of the Interior lease reform implementation and master lease planning that incorporates planning components for fish and wildlife and mitigation at broad landscape scales.
- Advocate for implementation of DOI landscape-scale mitigation policy.
- Ensure mitigation and monitoring are science-based, adequately funded, effective in avoiding or reducing impacts to fish, wildlife and sporting resources and based on current science or knowledge.

- Advocate for legislative action ensuring the sustainability of abundant and diverse fish and wildlife populations and recreational opportunities. Advocate for federal public land managers to establish clear habitat objectives tied directly to population objectives that are coordinated with state wildlife agencies.
- Advocate for conserving big game migration corridors and stop-over areas as special habitats.
- Demonstrate proper, balanced energy development on lands important to fish, wildlife and sportsmen through coordination and collaboration with TRCP partners and the High Lonesome Ranch Energy Demonstration Project.
- Formulate a strategy to include fish and wildlife conservation in 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 that adequately conserve the birds and their habitats, enable continued hunting of the species and avoid its listing under the Endangered Species Act.
- Ensure that outdoor recreation-based economic information is addressed in energy development issues and integrated into land-use planning decisions;

WATERSHEDS

Bristol Bay, Alaska

Alaska's Bristol Bay is a place of internationally recognized importance for fish, wildlife and sportsmen. The watershed'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. Abundant 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 and hunting 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 region's fisheries and wildlife.

Action Item

- In coordination with TRCP partners, stop the development of Pebble 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 creation of a large "dead zone" in the Bay and reductions in some fish and wildlife populations, such as brook trout in the Chesapeake's tributaries, and could cause further declines in the future. The Chesapeake Bay is unique in that it can serve as a model for how to best address non-point source pollution in other large watersheds with similar issues.

Action Items

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

MARINE FISHERIES

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 more than 14 million saltwater anglers to the national, regional and local economies cannot be denied. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, anglers contribute more than \$34 billion in economic activity annually, support nearly 360,000 jobs, and pay more than \$8.8 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, Congress and other sportfishing organizations to find and implement those measures that solve the various problems confronting our marine fisheries management system.

The TRCP will continue working aggressively throughout 2014 to engage the recreational fishing community and state and federal fisheries managers to implement projects to help the Gulf of Mexico's fisheries recover from the 2010 oil spill and enhance and sustain Gulf fisheries well into the future. The TRCP will work with our sportfishing partners to establish a vision for how recreational fishing can be managed better under a reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

Action Items

- Gain support for recommended changes to the Magnuson-Stevens Act through active public, media and policy and lawmaker engagement along with TRCP sportfishing partners.
- Enhance the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Marine Recreational Information Program and work with fishery managers and partners to develop and disseminate other tools to make in-season adjustments as necessary to help recreational anglers stay within their annual catch limits.
- Accelerate restoration efforts in the Gulf of Mexico based on the recommendations made in the *TRCP Gulf of Mexico Recreational Fisheries: Recommendations for Restoration, Recovery and Sustainability*. Implement policies and direct funding to target conservation of marine fisheries affected by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, and incorporate the needs and input from recreational anglers when doing so.
- 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. 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 important to bolstering wildlife populations, protecting water supplies 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. When those prices fall, another incentive to convert may also drive agricultural decision making. 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.

Action Items

- Advocate for the immediate and final passage of a full, five-year Farm Bill.
- Advocate for conservation programs that protect critical grassland, prairie and wetland habitat. Work to ensure that these programs are sufficiently funded, have predictable enrollment policies and target areas that will provide the most habitat value per dollar spent by the federal government.
- Advocate for the re-linking of producer eligibility for crop insurance payment support to responsible conservation practices.
- Advocate authorization and implementation of the Sodsaver program to reduce federal incentives for breaking natural grassland habitat for new cropland.
- Advocate the bolstering of 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, anglers and other recreationalists on private agricultural lands.
- Seek opportunities to engage in the debate over reform of the Renewable Fuel Standard.

Wetlands and Clean Water Protections

Two Supreme Court decisions (*SWANCC*, 2001, and *Rapanos*, 2006) have weakened the federal protections for our nation's 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 countless 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 Item

- Support a robust and inclusive rulemaking that restores Clean Water Act protections to as many waters important to sportsmen as possible, especially wetlands and headwater streams.

PUBLIC LANDS

Backcountry Lands Conservation

Intact and undeveloped Bureau of Land Management administered public lands are a foundation of the Western hunting and angling tradition. These backcountry lands offer key habitat for numerous fish and wildlife, including mule deer, elk, bighorn sheep, upland game birds and wild trout. Yet for too long, the public debate over federal lands management has been framed as a choice between two opposites: high-intensity development or complete preservation. Millions of acres of public lands are not appropriate for either, yet a successful administrative approach to conserve tracts of intact and undeveloped BLM administered habitat – an approach 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 serves 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.

Promoted through select local land-use planning efforts across the West, sportsmen are proposing “backcountry conservation areas” that would maintain existing access to public lands, prioritize the restoration of fish and wildlife habitats, maintain traditional uses of the land and conserve intact and undeveloped lands with priority habitat.

Action Items

- Ensure that BLM state offices, district offices and field offices work cooperatively with Western sportsmen and other stakeholders through resource management

planning processes to administratively conserve tracts of intact and undeveloped lands with priority fish and wildlife habitat as backcountry conservation areas.

- Ensure that the BLM national office provides guidance to state BLM offices, instructing those offices to work with local stakeholders, including the sporting community, to consider and implement the backcountry conservation area designation through resource management plans.

Forest Service Planning Regulations

In April 2012, the U.S. Forest Service completed a new national forest planning rule that will guide the future makeup of 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. The rule must be implemented in a way that maximizes the conservation of this vast, irreplaceable resource.

The Forest Service has initiated processes to revise eight "early adopter" forest plans under the new planning rule. These revision processes will be the first to take place under the new rule, and they will serve as models for subsequent forest planning across the entire national forest system for the next 20 to 30 years.

Action Item

- Advocate for the development of 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 sustain 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.

WATER

Water quantity is one of the most important issues facing the conservation community and the country. In the decades ahead, water scarcity will grow as an issue as the country feels the impacts from a changing climate and ever-expanding demands for water. Unless the conservation community can engage in 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 United States, especially in the West, is state-based, a major federal role exists in water management and conservation.

Action Items

- Engage sportsmen and -women in decisions about water resources management.
- Strengthen existing federal funding for water conservation programs within the Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Natural Resources Conservation Service and other federal agencies.
- Identify and create new sources of funding for water conservation work while supporting current programs.
- Enhance conservation, in-stream 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.