

NATIONAL PARKS ON AMERICA'S

250TH

**STRATEGIC
LONG-TERM
INVESTMENTS
IN LANDSCAPES**

**CELEBRATING
THE MAGNUSON-
STEVENS ACT**

**THE ORANGUTAN
IN THE ROOM**



NATURE'S
Chambers

BIPARTISAN EDITORIAL

**AN URGENT BIPARTISAN
STEP TO SECURE AMERICA'S
NATIONAL SECURITY**

ED.4

THE NONPARTISAN MAGAZINE FOR PUBLIC
POLICY IN INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION

**NATURE
CONSERVATION
STRENGTHENS
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LEFT: Sunset over forest and lake in the U.K. Photo credit: by [James](#) @ Adobe Stock.

ON THE COVER: Yosemite National Park, California. Photo credit: by [SGUOPHOTOGRAPHY](#) @ Adobe Stock.

Contents



PAGE
11

FEATURES

11 An Urgent Bipartisan Step to Secure America's National Security

Introducing a bipartisan blueprint, to break Beijing's chokehold on critical minerals and secure America's national security for generations to come.

18 National Parks on America's 250th

How America's best idea has become a force for prosperity and security around the world.

26 Celebrating the Magnuson-Stevens Act

Why it was created, what makes it work, and what's ahead.

29 Strategic Long-Term Investments in Landscapes

To protect U.S. interests in critical regions.

33 Nature Conservation Strengthens U.S. Security

How natural resource crime in Africa is often linked to the narcotics trade, human trafficking, and arms smuggling.

44 The Orangutan in the Room

Why savings forests should unite us all.



DEPARTMENTS

4 From our CEO
Introductory words, from CEO John B. Gantt.

6 U.S. Policy Tracker
Policy developments from the bipartisan caucuses ICCF supports in Washington.

16 Through the Lens
Our best picture, of our seasonal highlight.

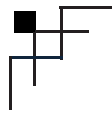
22 Quoted
Our timely quote for the season.

40 Making Conservation Dollars Deliver
A human-centred approach to lasting impact.

50 Having a Global Voice
It has never been more important to have a voice on the global stage.

54 Chile's Conservation and Ocean Caucus
A bridge across the political divide.

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FROM OUR CEO

Conservation is security— and the world is taking notice.



Dear friends,

As we open the fourth edition of *Nature's Chambers*, it is clear that conservation has become far more than an environmental priority. It is now a defining pillar of global stability, economic resilience, and national security. The stories in this issue reflect a world where natural resource governance shapes geopolitical outcomes, and where the protection of ecosystems is inseparable from the protection of people.

Across the United States, policymakers are recognizing this reality. Congress is advancing bipartisan efforts to strengthen critical mineral supply chains, counter illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, and reinforce institutions that safeguard ecosystems at home and abroad. These initiatives respond to real vulnerabilities—vulnerabilities that adversaries exploit and that responsible stewardship can help close.

This edition highlights that shift. From legislation aimed at reducing reliance on foreign-controlled minerals, to the reauthorization of key development and ocean-focused programs, to hearings

examining the security implications of environmental crime, the United States is aligning conservation with strategic interests. These actions reflect a growing consensus: environmental degradation fuels instability, while healthy ecosystems support economic opportunity and global security.

But leadership in conservation is not defined by policy alone. It is defined by people. We honor individuals like Germán Blanco Álvarez, whose years of service in Colombia helped build a legislative culture that treats conservation as a shared responsibility. We recognize the rangers, community leaders, scientists, and public servants who protect landscapes that anchor livelihoods and uphold the rule of law.

We also look globally—to Africa, Latin America, and beyond—where conservation is increasingly understood as a frontline defense against transnational crime, forced migration, and economic fragility. When ecosystems collapse, instability follows. But when conservation is rooted in community benefit, long-term financing, and strong governance,

it becomes a force for peace and prosperity.

This issue also reminds us that conservation is about innovation. From the global spread of national parks to the 50-year legacy of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, we see how forward-thinking policy can transform challenges into opportunities. And we see how bipartisan cooperation—across borders and political divides—remains essential.

As you read this edition, I hope you feel the same sense of urgency and optimism that guides our work. The path ahead is demanding, but full of possibility. Conservation is the work of building a safer, more stable, and more prosperous world. Together—with our partners, policymakers, and global community—we are rising to meet that responsibility.

Best regards,

John B. Gantt
CEO
The ICCF Group



WHERE WE WORK

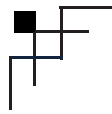


■ Nonpartisan legislative groups supported by the ICCF Group.

The ICCF Group has offices in the United States (ICCF U.S.), Africa, Europe, Asia, and Latin America.

IN PICTURE, TOP TO BOTTOM FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

Hon. Sheldon Whitehouse (U.S.); Hon. Marcela Guerra (Mexico); H.E. Germán Blanco (Colombia); H.E. Nelsinho Trad (Brazil); Hon. Arturo Alegria (Peru); Hon. Barry Gardiner MP (U.K.); Hon. Saramchimeg Batsukh (Mongolia); Hon. Imanga Wamunyima (Zambia); Hon. Budisatrio Djiwandono (Indonesia); Hon. Werani Chilenga (Malawi).



ICCF ON CAPITOL HILL

U.S. Policy Tracker

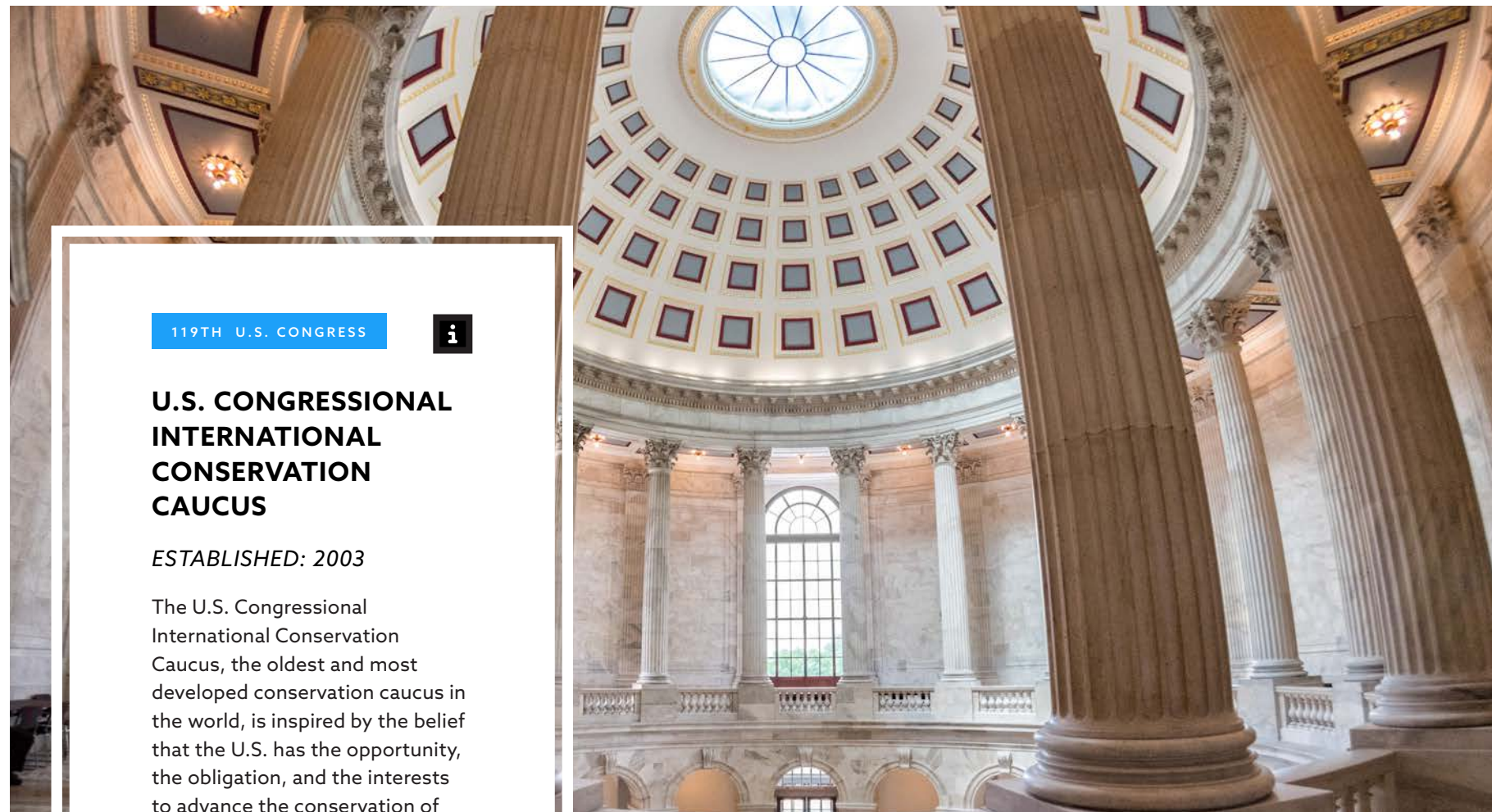
ICCF supports the leadership of the Senate and House International Conservation Caucus (ICC) and Oceans Caucus (OC). Here is what the caucuses have been tracking this quarter.

Overview

The House released Appropriations language for the State and Foreign Operations; Commerce, Justice, Science; Energy and Water Development; and Interior and Environment Appropriations Act, 2026.

- [FY27 State and Foreign Operations](#)
- [FY27 Interior and Environment, and Related Agencies](#)
- [FY27 Energy and Water Development](#)
- [FY27 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies](#)

Natural security seems to be a topic of focus so far this year, particularly in Congress. The links between natural resource management and national, economic, and food security have been well documented, and there have been a number of hearings held around this topic. A House Natural Resources subcommittee hearing titled [U.S. Leadership & National Security in International Conservation](#) was visited by ICC House Co-Chair Rep. Dave Joyce (R-OH), who reiterated the importance of US leadership



119TH U.S. CONGRESS



U.S. CONGRESSIONAL INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION CAUCUS

ESTABLISHED: 2003

The U.S. Congressional International Conservation Caucus, the oldest and most developed conservation caucus in the world, is inspired by the belief that the U.S. has the opportunity, the obligation, and the interests to advance the conservation of natural resources for this and future generations.

Since 2006, ICCF has helped grow the bipartisan U.S. Congressional International Conservation Caucus to include one-third of the U.S. Congress.

CO-CHAIRS, SENATE

- Sen. John Boozman (R-AR)
- Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE)
- Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-NM)
- Sen. Thom Tillis (R-NC)

CO-CHAIRS, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

- Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-TX)
- Rep. Dave Joyce (R-OH)
- Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN)
- Rep. Guv Reschenthaler (R-PA)

on the topic abroad and applauded the efforts of Congress to pass the U.S. Foundation for Natural Security and Counterterrorism (formerly US Foundation for International Conservation Act) while urging its implementation. Similarly, the House Foreign Affairs Committee held a hearing titled [Advancing National Security Through Commercial Diplomacy](#), which featured the Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and Environment, Mr. Jacob Helberg. Multiple Members asked Mr. Helberg about the status of the Foundation and urged the State Department

to prioritize its creation, as the legislation was passed in 2024.

ICCF hosted its annual [Conservation Council Luncheon](#) meeting, where Co-Chairs addressed the conservation stakeholder community and outlined their priorities for the year. Main trends were the implementation of the U.S. Foundation for Natural Security and Counterterrorism, reauthorization of the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Reauthorization Act (TFCCA) of 2026, and addressing illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUUF).

ABOVE: Russell Building, Senate Capitol, in Washington, D.C. Photo credit: by [Andrea Izzotti](#) @ Adobe Stock.



In Washington, D.C., ICCF advances U.S. leadership in international conservation through public and private partnerships and developing the next generation of conservation leaders in the U.S. Congress.

Informing policy

ICCF educates and acts as secretariat to the leadership of the bipartisan U.S. Congressional International Conservation Caucus and Oceans Caucus.

Building political will

We bring together leaders at the highest levels of government, business, and the NGO community, setting the conservation and environmental agenda by coordinating people with scientific expertise, organizations that support and manage programs on the ground, and policymakers who shape legislation.

Championing public-private collaboration

Through ICCF, public- and private-sector organizations collaborate and seek consensus on conservation issues and share their expertise with policymakers, providing sound, market-oriented conservation solutions with the highest standards in accountability, effectiveness, and transparency.

Lastly, the White House released its FY2027 budget request which, like last year, cuts many programs related to domestic and international conservation. It remains to be seen how Congress will interpret this request as the FY2027 appropriations season picks up.

On International Conservation

The US Development Finance Corporation was reauthorized and expanded as part of the NDAA FY2026 that passed in December. [Read more.](#)

The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2025 was passed as part of the NDAA FY2026. It will strengthen, support, and authorize funding through fiscal year 2027 for the United States Coast Guard and its critical missions to safeguard the nation's borders, facilitate maritime commerce, ensure maritime safety, and protect the maritime domain. [Read more.](#)

House of Representatives

The House Select Committee on China released a report titled *Predatory Pricing: How the Chinese Communist Party Manipulates Global Mineral Prices to Maintain Its Dominance*, a bipartisan investigation examining how the CCP manipulates the critical minerals markets to further its global authoritarian ambitions. [Read more.](#)

The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight and

Investigations held an oversight hearing titled *America First: U.S. Leadership & National Security in International Conservation*, examining how wildlife trafficking and related environmental crimes threaten U.S. national, resource, and economic security. [Read more.](#)

Representatives Young Kim (R-CA) and Ami Bera (D-CA) introduced the *Developing Overseas Mineral Investments and New Allied Networks for Critical Energies (DOMINANCE) Act*, bipartisan legislation to strengthen U.S. energy security, reduce reliance on the People's Republic of China (PRC), and build resilient critical minerals supply chains with trusted allies and partners around the world. [Read more.](#)

The House Foreign Affairs Africa Subcommittee hosted a hearing titled *Advancing Peace in DRC and Rwanda through President Trump's Washington Accords - Part II*, which highlighted the Accords' efforts to end the decades-long armed conflict in the region, which has resulted in stalled economic growth, enabling hostile actors to exploit the region's vast natural resources and preventing the United States from accessing critical mineral supply chains. [Read more.](#)

The House Foreign Affairs Committee held a hearing titled *Advancing National Security Through Commercial Diplomacy*, which featured the Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and Environment, Mr. Jacob Helberg. Mr. Helberg was asked by numerous Committee Members about the status of

the U.S. Foundation for Natural Security and Counterterrorism due to its role in promoting national security through improved natural resource governance. [Read more.](#)

House Appropriations held an Oversight Field Hearing titled *Accountability and Reform at the United Nations*, which outlined the decision making and impacts around the funding cuts to the UN and withdrawal from a number of organizations. [Read more.](#)

Senate

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a nomination hearing that included the nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, Wesley Brooks. Mr. Brooks' nomination was voted out of committee and awaits a floor vote. [Read more.](#)

The bipartisan legislation, U.S. Legal Gold and Mining Partnership Act, led by Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) passed out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The bill aims to require the Secretary of State to develop a comprehensive strategy to lead partners and allies in combating organized criminal groups profiting from illicit gold mining in the Western Hemisphere. [Read more.](#)

Senator Chris Coons (D-DE), co-chair of the International Conservation Caucus, and Senator John Curtis (R-UT) today introduced the *Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation*

Reauthorization Act of 2026. This legislation reauthorizes the debt-for-nature swap program that allows developing countries that meet certain criteria to be relieved of debt owed to the United States in exchange for protecting and preserving tropical forests and coral reefs. [Read more.](#)

Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and John Curtis (R-UT) welcome the U.S. hosting of a Critical Minerals Ministerial and urge colleagues to back legislation to secure critical minerals supply chains. [Read more.](#)

On Oceans

Representatives Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) and Earl L. "Buddy" Carter (R-GA), co-chairs of the House Oceans Caucus, and Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI) and Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), co-chair of the Senate Ocean Caucus, introduced the bipartisan, bicameral legislation, *ReSCUE Oceans Act* to strengthen marine carbon dioxide removal research and development in the United States. [Read more.](#)

The Bicameral Congressional-Executive Commission on China, led by Senator Dan Sullivan (R-AK) and Representative Chris Smith (R-NJ), held a hearing titled *Dark Nets, Illicit Labor—Confronting China's IUU Fishing and Seafood Supply Chain*. [Read more.](#)

House of Representatives

Representatives Mike Ezell (R-MS), Ed Case (D-HI), Kat Cammack (R-FL), and Jimmy Panetta (D-CA)

introduced the *Marine Aquaculture Research for America Act of 2025* (H.R. 5746) to responsibly scale offshore aquaculture in the United States. Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS) leads the companion Senate bill (S. 2586). [Read more.](#)

Representatives Nanette Barragán (D-CA), Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), and Chellie Pingree (D-ME) introduced the *Marine Energy Technologies Acceleration Act* (H.R. 5692), which would establish a \$1 billion Marine Energy Acceleration Fund to advance

119TH U.S. CONGRESS

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U.S. CONGRESSIONAL OCEANS CAUCUS

ESTABLISHED: 2011

The bipartisan U.S. Congressional Oceans Caucus was established to increase awareness, promote dialogue, and find common ground in responding to issues facing the oceans and coasts. The Oceans Caucus Foundation (OCF) is an independent program within ICCF U.S. that advances U.S. leadership in international ocean conservation by providing a platform to bring marine issues to the attention of government leaders and working with partners to provide educational programming.

OCF supports the leadership of the U.S. Congressional Oceans Caucus, educating members about the importance of oceans issues and solutions that protect oceans resources and the livelihoods that depend upon them.

CO-CHAIRS, SENATE

- Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI)
- Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)

HONORARY CO-CHAIRS, SENATE

- Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-AK)
- Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)

CO-CHAIRS, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

- Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)
- Rep. Buddv Carter (R-GA)

marine energy technologies. [Read more.](#)

The House Natural Resources Committee held a legislative hearing on a number of bills including the Fighting Foreign Illegal Seafood Harvests Act of 2025 (H.R. 3756), or the FISH Act of 2025. [Read more.](#)

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee held a hearing titled Changes in Maritime Technology: Can the Coast Guard Keep Up? to discuss the regulatory framework that is needed to help the US Coast Guard integrate new technologies into their operations. [Read more.](#)

Representatives Mike Ezell (R-MS) and Ed Case (D-HI) co-authored an opinion piece in The Hill titled "Unlocking the potential of aquaculture in American waters," which highlights the potential of aquaculture in U.S. waters. [Read more.](#)

The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held a hearing titled Deep Dive: Examining the Regulatory and Statutory Barriers to Deep Sea Mining. [Read more.](#)

The House Natural Resources Committee advanced the Fighting Foreign Illegal Seafood Harvests (FISH) Act, led by Reps. Dan Crenshaw (R-TX) and Seth Magaziner (D-RI). [Read more.](#)

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RIGHT: Soldier and U.S. flag on sunrise background. Photo credit: by [Adriana](#) @ Adobe Stock.

Senate

The Save Our Seas 2.0 Marine Debris Infrastructure Programs Reauthorization Act led by Senate Oceans Caucus Co-Chairs Dan Sullivan (R-AK) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) unanimously passed the Senate. The bill would reauthorize key Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) marine debris programs to combat the worldwide crisis of trash entering the oceans and the threat of microplastics in the water. House Oceans Caucus Co-Chairs Representatives Buddy Carter (R-Ga) and Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) lead the House version. [Read more.](#)

The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation held a full committee executive session and hearing that discussed legislation including the Integrated Ocean Observation System Reauthorization Act of 2025 (S. 2126) and Digital Coast Act Reauthorization (S. 2245). [Read more.](#)

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing titled Maritime Security in Africa: Assessing Threats to U.S. Commercial Diplomacy and National Security Interests, which included as a witness Dr. Ruth Perry, who is the acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Ocean, Fisheries and Polar Affairs in the Bureau of Oceans and

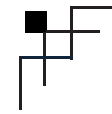
International Environment and Scientific Affairs (OES). [Read more.](#)

A bill by Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and cosponsors Senators Dan Sullivan (R-AK) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) to reauthorize the Digital Coasts Act (S.2245) passed the full Senate. The House version of the bill passed the House Committee on Natural Resources last year (H.R.4256). [Read more.](#)

The bipartisan legislation, Protecting Global Fisheries Act, led by Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA), Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), John Curtis (R-UT), and Rick Scott (R-FL), passed out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The bill aims to combat IUU fishing, which disrupts international trade and undermines maritime security, marine ecosystems and biodiversity, and food and economic security. [Read more.](#)

The Fighting Foreign Illegal Seafood Harvests Act of 2025 (FISH Act), led by Senators Dan Sullivan (R-AK) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), passed the Senate by unanimous consent. [Read more.](#)

The Regional Ocean Partnerships Reauthorization Act of 2026 passed out of the Senate Commerce Committee. [Read more.](#)



CONGRESSIONAL EDITORIAL

An Urgent Bipartisan Step to Secure America's National Security

By *International Conservation Caucus Members Representative Young Kim (R-CA) and Representative Ami Bera (D-CA)*

For too long, the United States has ceded strategic ground to a competitor whose power extends far beyond the conventional battlefield.

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Rep. Young Kim (R) represents California's 40th Congressional District and serves on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. A champion of strong U.S. alliances and economic competitiveness, she has led bipartisan efforts to counter China's influence, secure critical supply chains, and strengthen America's global leadership through practical, results-driven policy.

Rep. Ami Bera (D) represents California's 6th Congressional District and serves as Ranking Member of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific. A physician by training, he brings a pragmatic, bipartisan approach to advancing U.S. national security, strengthening democratic partnerships, and promoting sustainable leadership abroad.





"Our legislation formalizes U.S. leadership in the international Minerals Security Partnership"

Today's global competition with the People's Republic of China (PRC) is defined not just by tanks and missiles, but by the raw materials that power next-generation technologies, energy infrastructure, and our national defense. That is why we introduced the Developing Overseas Mineral Investments and New Allied Networks for Critical Minerals Act, a bipartisan blueprint to break Beijing's chokehold on critical minerals and secure America's national security for generations to come.

The PRC controls roughly 70 percent of global rare earth mining and nearly 90 percent of its processing, a striking

concentration of power that Beijing has already shown a willingness to weaponize for geopolitical leverage. These statistics highlight the foundational components of our national and energy security, underpinning everything from advanced defense systems to clean energy technologies. What they don't capture is the damage that PRC-backed industry is having on the environment in countries like Burma, the Democratic Republic of Congo, or Zambia.

Last year, the tailings dam at a PRC state-owned copper mine in Zambia failed, spilling 50 million liters of acidic wastewater. Evidence of contamination was discovered 60 miles downstream of the spill, and dead fish were found throughout

the river basin, which is home to 60% of the country's population. Beijing's investment in mining is quick and abundant, but it comes at a price.

The DOMINANCE Act confronts this challenge head-on.

By aligning U.S. diplomatic, development, and financing tools with those of trusted

allies, we are building resilient, responsible supply chains for critical minerals and energy that are not dependent on the whims of a rival power. The DOMINANCE Act protects America's industrial base, safeguards our defense capabilities, and ensures that the free world's access to essential resources is never held hostage by our strategic competitors.

Our legislation formalizes U.S. leadership in the international Minerals Security Partnership (MSP)—now called the Forum on Resource Geostrategic Engagement (FORGE)—expanding cooperative mining and processing capacity with friendly nations and building the strategic energy

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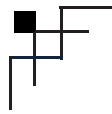
ABOVE: Loader loading semitrailer. Photo credit: by [John](#) @ Adobe Stock.

partnerships necessary to reduce reliance on countries that do not share our values. It also enhances educational and fellowship opportunities to cultivate the next generation of experts in mining, processing, and energy diplomacy. This critical talent will sustain our security in the decades ahead.

This bill is a bipartisan national imperative.

In today's geopolitical landscape, resilient energy and minerals supply chains are a crucial bulwark against hostile countries. Strengthening them through cooperation with allies not only counters coercive influence but affirms America's role as a leader for liberty and

prosperity. By working across the aisle and in partnership with the Administration on the DOMINANCE Act, we have taken a step toward securing our energy future and safeguarding the foundations of American competitiveness. The safety of our nation and the resilience of the free world demand nothing less.



ICCF SPOTLIGHT

ICCF Hosts Conservation Council Luncheon with Co-Chairs of the International Conservation Caucus and the Oceans Caucus

On Wednesday, March 25th, ICCF hosted its annual Conservation Council Luncheon on Capitol Hill.

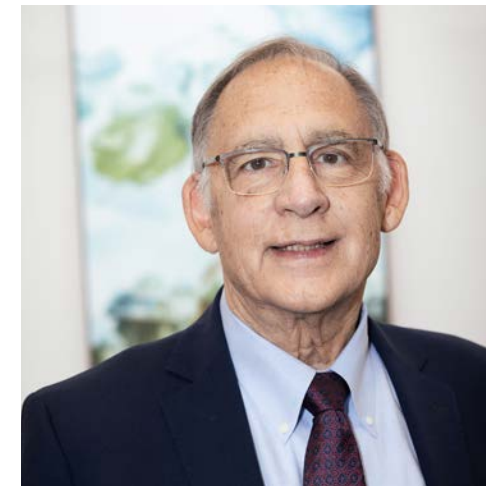


This high-level event was an opportunity for the Congressional leadership that ICCF supports to address our Conservation Council partners in the diplomatic, corporate, philanthropic, and NGO community, highlighting bipartisan priorities for the upcoming year. These priorities will help advance U.S. leadership in international conservation and promote sustainable development, health, peace, and security around the world.

ICCF was joined by many of the Senate ICC co-chairs, including Senators Thom Tillis (R-NC), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), John Boozman (R-AR), Chris Coons (D-DE), and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI). We were also joined by House co-chairs Representatives David Joyce (R-OH), Betty McCollum (D-MN), and Henry Cuellar (D-TX).

Assembled legislators and partners discussed the

pressing need to implement the US Foundation for Natural Security and Counterterrorism, as well as opportunities for bipartisan conservation wins like reauthorizing the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act. In a world of dwindling national budgets, innovative conservation finance mechanisms like these help make the US and its allies more secure by promoting stability and preventing resource conflict in the developing world.



ABOVE: Representative Betty McCollum (D-MN), Co-Chair of the U.S. Congressional International Conservation Caucus.

TOP TO BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT: Senators Chris Coons (D-DE); Martin Heinrich (D-NM); Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI); Thom Tillis (R-NC); John Boozman (R-AR); and Representative Henry Cuellar (D-TX).

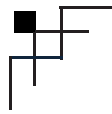
THROUGH THE LENS

**Rep. Dave Joyce
(R-OH) speaks
to attendees
at the ICCF
Conservation
Council Luncheon
on Capitol Hill.**

The annual event is an opportunity for the Congressional leadership that ICCF supports to address our Conservation Council, highlighting bipartisan priorities to advance U.S. leadership in international conservation and promote sustainable development, health, peace, and security around the world.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEBASTIEN LOCHEN





FEATURE

National Parks on America's 250th: How America's Best Idea Has Become a Force for Prosperity and Security Around the World

By Ty Loft, Deputy Director, Africa and Global Partnerships, the ICCF Group



The United States' 250th birthday is an opportunity to reflect on the best ideas America has offered the world.

National parks have often been called "America's Best Idea." They are certainly among America's most popular: since the first national park, Yellowstone, was signed into law by Ulysses S. Grant in 1872, parks have been created in 191

of the world's 193 U.N. member states (all but Nauru and San Marino). No other American-born policy—not mass democracy, federalism, or judicial review—has been so universally adopted abroad.

On the 250th anniversary of the United States, it is worth considering why national parks are so internationally successful. How did a modest idea—that nations should set aside land to preserve wildlife and waterfalls—produce a vast protected area system

creating security and prosperity in virtually every country on Earth? A core reason is the sustained effort of legislators. Since Yellowstone's foundation, generations of policymakers have crafted policies to strengthen the world's national park systems. They have adapted protected areas to changing politics and technology and ensured that park systems are dynamic and aligned with national needs.

Legislative work to build park systems began in the United

States in 1864. That year Abraham Lincoln signed into law an act of Congress granting Yosemite Valley to the State of California, to be held for public use, resort, and recreation. Lincoln's act paved the way toward the creation of the

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Ty Loft is Deputy Director for Africa and Global Partnerships at the ICCF Group, where he works on efforts to build political will for conservation in Africa and to create conservation finance partnerships globally. Ty has worked extensively across Africa, in politics, conservation and ecology. His research on biodiversity has been published in leading academic journals, including Nature. Previously, Ty worked on international policy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). He holds a PhD and MPhil in Geography from Oxford, where he was a Clarendon Scholar, and a BSc, summa cum laude, from Georgetown.

first national park, Yellowstone in 1872. A generation later, Theodore Roosevelt constructed the first organized protected area system, comprising hundreds of national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and monuments. Then,

during the Great Depression, Franklin Roosevelt assembled the country's parks into an engine of economic prosperity. Through the Civilian Conservation Corps, Congress put 3 million people to work in America's parks, building

infrastructure and restoring degraded landscapes.

In building America's park system, the U.S. Congress, Presidency, and National Park Service modeled how to conserve nature while creating opportunities for people. The success of parks in the U.S. inspired governments abroad to establish their own conservation systems. Today, 162 years later, there are between 4,000 and 5,000 national parks, which anchor a global protected area system conserving 18% of the world's lands and 10% of the ocean. These conservation areas do not just conserve wildlife; they protect water sources for major cities, uphold the world's \$12 trillion tourism industry, and replenish the soils, nutrients, and pollinators that underpin food systems.

Over the past half century, policymakers have realized that protected areas can also bolster security. Many national parks conserve vast, remote landscapes, including in security hotspots such as the Sahel and Central Africa. (There are at least 25 parks larger than New Jersey.) Where governance is absent, these rugged, sparsely populated landscapes become sources of instability, serving as havens for extremists, criminal networks, and militant groups. Bad actors fund their illegal activities by exploiting

"Today, the world's protected area system conserves landscapes and seas six times the size of the United States."

natural resources, from minerals to timber and ivory. The same is true of ungoverned oceans, where fleets of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing boats drain ocean resources while smuggling narcotics, arms, and people.

One result is migration.

Livelihoods become impossible where militants terrorize communities and ecosystems are depleted by overuse. So people set out for developed countries, overwhelming immigration systems. Another outcome is unfair competition. Legitimate businesses, including companies bound by U.S. laws, cannot compete against rivals operating in ungoverned spaces and willing to despoil ecosystems and exploit communities.

In these remote and insecure territories, well-run protected areas become bastions of stability, economic resilience, and rule of law. Stable parks attract investment and create

jobs through tourism. Park authorities are often strengthened via public-private partnerships with NGOs, becoming islands of excellence in low-capacity governments. Their well-trained ranger forces keep bad actors away from the wildlife within parks and the communities around them.

Across much of Africa, well-governed parks such as Chinko in Central African Republic, Gorongosa in Mozambique, and Zakouma in Chad have stabilized territories once ravaged by war. In some cases, protected areas are now the largest employer and taxpayer in their province. In the Peruvian Amazon, meanwhile, authorities in Bahuaja Sonene National Park and Tambopata National Reserve are combating criminal networks engaged in illegal mining, coca cultivation, and drug smuggling.

Increasing awareness of how parks impact security and prosperity has inspired U.S. lawmakers to design policies that support other countries' conservation systems. An early example was the Tropical Forest Conservation Act (1998), which enables developing countries to reduce their U.S. debt by conserving their tropical forests. Congress built on TFCA's success by passing the Congo Basin Forest Partnership Act (2004), which supported Gabon's nascent system of 13 national parks. Policymakers recognized

that supporting Gabon's new park system would help it to become an island of stability in an insecure region. Today, Gabon is Central Africa's only country with a high human development index.

Inspired by these legislative successes, members of Congress established an International Conservation Caucus in 2006 to create an enduring platform for bipartisan legislation on conservation abroad. The caucus has passed major legislation under every administration since its establishment, from Bush to Trump. Examples include the END Wildlife Trafficking Act (2015), which launched a whole-of-government strategy to combat wildlife trafficking as organized crime; the DELTA Act (2018), which directed the State Department to work alongside partner countries to conserve the rivers sustaining the Okavango Delta; and the expansion of the Tropical Forest Conservation Act to include support for coral reefs (2019).

Each of these laws recognizes that U.S. innovations around national parks should be shared with the world, just as the original idea of the national park has been. Each policy passed by caucus members strengthens U.S. partnerships abroad, enhancing prosperity and security for our partners and ourselves. The U.S. caucus model has also inspired 20+ other parliaments on five continents to create their own conservation caucuses, establishing a global network of legislators committed to continuously improving America's Best Idea.

The 250th anniversary of the United States provides a chance to reinvigorate U.S. leadership in international conservation and ensure that national parks are adapted to the 21st century.

One way to do so is to fortify park systems using other innovative American policy ideas, such as public-private partnerships. At a time of strained budgets globally and cuts to foreign aid, there is a need to leverage U.S. investments into parks to ensure that taxpayers enjoy a high return on their investments.

Congress has done just that by creating and appropriating funding for the U.S. Foundation for Natural Security and Counterterrorism, which is being stood up this year. This charitable nonprofit will directly support U.S. security and economic competitiveness by investing in the long-term management of strategic protected areas in developing countries. To maximize value for taxpayers, the foundation will leverage each \$1 of public funding spent with \$2 of private funding. On America's 250th anniversary, this new U.S. Foundation is another example of how the U.S. Congress and Presidency are spearheading innovation in global conservation. By funding parks that conserve the planet's most irreplaceable and pivotal ecosystems, the foundation will

strengthen security and prosperity for decades to come.

When Congress and Abraham Lincoln set aside the Yosemite Valley for the American people in the midst of the Civil War, they made a wager on a more peaceful and prosperous future. They also launched a chain reaction leading to one of America's most revolutionary and enduring ideas—an idea championed and improved upon by successive Congresses and Presidencies and adopted by the people of virtually every country on Earth. Today, the world's protected area system conserves landscapes and seas six times the size of the United States. It is an immense physical testament to American leadership in the world. As the United States of America turns 250 this year, we, the American people, have a chance to reflect on the contribution of parks to U.S. security and prosperity.

We have a chance to renew a centuries-long commitment to realizing the promise of America's Best Idea.

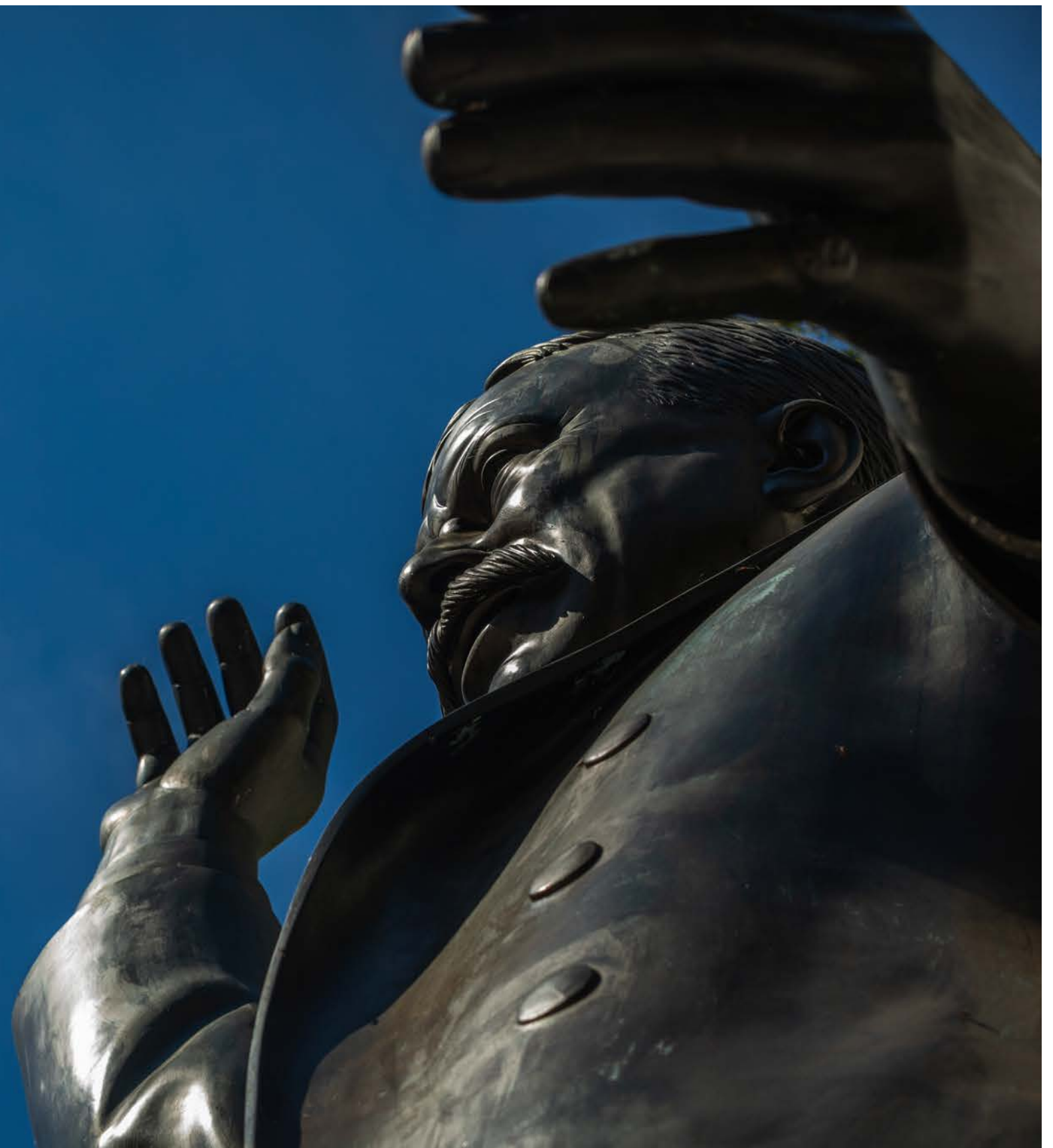
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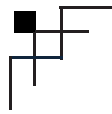
"The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value."

-- U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt

Did you know?

Theodore Roosevelt delivered this insight in 1907 during his Seventh Annual Message to Congress, a sweeping address in which he urged the nation to confront the rapid depletion of forests, minerals, and wildlife. At the time, America was undergoing explosive industrial growth, and Roosevelt—already known as the “Conservation President”—used the moment to argue that natural resources were not limitless and must be managed for the long-term public good. His call for stewardship helped lay the foundation for modern conservation policy, including the creation of national forests, wildlife refuges, and protections that continue to shape U.S. environmental leadership today.





A TRIBUTE FROM
THE ICCF GROUP

Germán Blanco Álvarez: Honoring 14 Years of Leadership on Conservation and the Oceans

The ICCF Group wishes to extend a special tribute to Germán Blanco Álvarez in recognition of his 14 years of commitment, leadership, and trust in our global initiative.

Senator Blanco's trajectory as Co-Chair of the Colombian Conservation Caucus and Founder of the Colombian Oceans Caucus has left a profound mark on the development of a strong legislative agenda for sustainable development.

Over more than a decade, Germán Blanco has been far more than an ally: He has been an ambassador

of the ICCF Group in Colombia and around the world, both a witness to and a driving force behind its growth and consolidation as a global platform for parliamentary collaboration on conservation. His leadership has transcended borders, accompanying inaugural events and strengthening caucuses across Latin America—including in Peru, Mexico, Ecuador, Chile, and Brazil—as well as in other international settings, such as the establishment of the caucus in France.

His role as Co-Chair has been instrumental at pivotal moments for Colombia's environmental agenda. Under his leadership, the Conservation Caucus helped advance key discussions and supported the ratification of major international agreements, including the Paris Agreement, the Escazú Agreement, the Minamata Convention, and the Kigali Amendment. These milestones reflect a vision aligned with the world's most pressing challenges in biodiversity and environmental governance.

At the national level, his impact has also been significant. Germán Blanco supported and championed key legislative initiatives such as the regulation of plastics in San Andrés, legislation on single-use plastics, and provisions within the National Police Code, where

meaningful progress was made in addressing illegal mining. More recently, he has played a key role in promoting initiatives focused on sustainable production, including sustainable livestock practices, as well as advancing the park rangers bill, which is now on the verge of becoming law.

The impact of his leadership extends beyond legislative outcomes. Since he began supporting and leading the Caucus in 2014, his work has helped strengthen a network that has reached nearly 100 parliamentarians in Colombia, the region, and globally. His ability to convene, his strategic vision, and his unwavering commitment have been essential in positioning conservation as a priority within the legislative agenda.

A psychologist and lawyer by training, with over 30 years of experience in public service, Germán Blanco has shown that politics can be guided by principles, technical expertise, shared responsibility, and a deep vocation for service. His legacy stands as a powerful example of how parliamentary leadership can effectively contribute to the protection of natural capital and the well-being of present and future generations.



This tribute is also a message of gratitude.

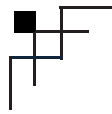
We thank Germán Blanco for his dedication, for his trust in ICCF, and for the indelible mark he leaves as a leading figure of environmental and sustainability-driven parliamentary leadership. We wish him fair winds and following seas in the new paths he embarks upon, with the certainty

that he will always remain one of our founding Co-Chairs.

We also extend this recognition to all the members of Congress who, throughout these years, have supported and strengthened the work of the Conservation Caucus. Although many of them are now concluding their terms in the Congress of the Republic of Colombia, we are confident they will continue contributing from

other roles in both the public and private sectors. To all of them, our sincere and lasting gratitude.

The path traveled shows that the convergence of political leadership, international cooperation, and environmental commitment is not only possible—it is essential. The story of Germán Blanco Álvarez is, without a doubt, a fundamental part of that journey.



PARTNER EDITORIAL

50 Years of Innovation and Leadership: Celebrating the Magnuson-Stevens Act

By Eugenio Piñeiro Soler,
NOAA Fisheries Assistant Administrator

In 1976, I was an undergraduate student in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, far from the waters of Puerto Rico where I was raised.

Despite my physical distance from the ocean, it was always top of mind. I had dreams of going to law school and eventually merging that expertise with my first love: fishing. Even then, I understood the critical need for innovative legislation to protect our marine resources. When the



Magnuson-Stevens Act, or MSA, was signed into law 50 years ago on April 13, 1976, it was nothing short of visionary. And it remains so today.

Led by the late U.S. Senators Warren Magnuson (D-WA) and Ted Stevens (R-AK) in the Senate and Representatives Gerry Studds (D-MA) and Don Young (R-AK) in the House, Congress outlined a road map to expel foreign fleets from our waters and rebuild the fish stocks that were collapsing around the country. The Act extended U.S. jurisdiction from just 12 nautical miles to 200 nautical miles, and established our regional fishery management council system with representatives from each coastal state and a cross-section of fishery

stakeholders.

I had the distinct pleasure of serving as a member, chair, and vice chair of the Caribbean Council for many years. In fact, it is the job title that I most cherish. I also had the good fortune of meeting Senator Stevens on a number of occasions, and something he told me has always stuck with me: "We don't only manage fish. We manage people." This is why the councils and the commitment of its members are so important.

Through our eight regional fishery management councils, we have a transparent and public process of science, management, innovation, and collaboration with the fishing industry. This unique system

gives councils the ability to incorporate local input into management strategies appropriate for each region's unique fisheries, challenges, and opportunities. And our 10 National Standards ensure that we prevent overfishing, use the best available science, and support our coastal communities.

Under the MSA, we have successfully rebuilt 52 stocks since 2000, including iconic species like Atlantic sea scallops, North Atlantic swordfish, and Pacific bluefin tuna. These stocks were once on the brink of collapse, but thanks to the work of our fishery management councils, scientists, and especially our fishermen, they are now sustainably harvested. This system has led the United States to become a global leader in responsibly managed fisheries, sustainable seafood, and world-class



PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

About NOAA Fisheries

U.S. fisheries are among the world's largest and most sustainable. Seafood harvested from federally-managed U.S. fisheries is inherently sustainable as a result of the U.S. fishery management process. Using the Magnuson-Stevens Act as the guide, NOAA Fisheries assesses and predicts the status of fish stocks, sets catch limits, ensures compliance with fisheries regulations, and reduces bycatch. Eight fishery management councils are key regional partners in U.S. fishery management.

NOAA Fisheries, also known as the National Marine Fisheries Service, is an office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration within the Department of Commerce. Five regional offices, six science centers, and more than 20 laboratories around the United States and U.S. territories, make it possible for NOAA Fisheries to work with partners across the nation.

fisheries.noaa.gov

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Eugenio Piñeiro Soler oversees NOAA Fisheries, the federal agency responsible for managing U.S. marine fisheries and conserving protected marine species. He works with NOAA's partners, industries, and constituencies to promote the economic benefits of U.S. fisheries and ensure smart management of the nation's fisheries and trust resources.

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ABOVE: Marlin in the Pacific Ocean. Photocredit: by [reisegraf](https://www.adobe.com/stock) @ Adobe Stock.



"We don't only manage fish. We manage people."

recreational fisheries.

U.S. fisheries are also a powerful economic driver, providing revenue, jobs, food, and recreation for millions of Americans. Our most recent data shows that commercial fishing, seafood, and recreational fishing collectively generated \$319 billion in sales and supported 2.1 million jobs. By ensuring the long-term health of these resources through the MSA, we aren't just protecting fish—we are safeguarding the livelihoods of millions of Americans and our nation's food security.

Although we have made significant progress since 1976, we know much more can be done to support and grow the American seafood industry and our saltwater

recreational fisheries. On the science side, we are working to modernize our data collection systems through the use of advanced technologies, like eDNA, uncrewed systems, and electronic monitoring. We're also making advances with next-generation modeling platforms that will allow us to keep pace with the science by providing robust management advice.

The communities that rely most on our fisheries are informing our policies. In some cases, fishermen have advocated for an increase in the complexity of our management to ensure access to the resource at times and in ways that are most economically effective. Other

aspects of our system may need to be simplified, which is a major focus of the Executive Order on Restoring American Seafood

Competitiveness.

Over the last 50 years, I have achieved my dreams because I had a clear vision for my future. For U.S. fisheries, the Magnuson-Stevens Act provides that same clear vision. We've seen incredible change, and the future will no doubt bring even more. But as we strive to strike that perfect balance between harvesting for today and conserving for tomorrow, the MSA will continue to serve as our compass. By adhering to the vision laid out all those years ago, we can ensure that American fisheries management remains the gold standard for the world.

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ABOVE: U.S. Senators Ted Stevens (R-AK) and Warren Magnuson (D-WA), 1973.



PARTNER
EDITORIAL

Strategic Long-Term Investments in Landscapes to Protect U.S. Interests in Critical Regions

By *Duko Hopman*, Executive Director, The Rob Walton Foundation, and *Sebastian Tröeng*, Chief Executive Officer, Conservation International

There's a basic principle in finance: to make something last, invest in it.

That's true for bridges, roads, and energy systems, and equally true for natural infrastructure, the living foundation that underpins economic activity and security in many parts of the world. Yet most conservation is still funded through fragmented and temporary support. As a result, landscapes that anchor local economies, water systems, and food production remain vulnerable to breakdown. A more effective approach is emerging: treating conservation not as a project or grant-funded activity, but as a long-term investment that sustains economic interests.

This matters for the United States.

In strategically important regions, environmental decline is not only a local problem. It can fuel food insecurity,

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Photo credit: by Jonathan Irish, for Conservation International.





PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

About The Rob Walton Foundation

The Rob Walton Foundation is dedicated to preserving global biodiversity by supporting large-scale conservation initiatives and collaborative partnerships, primarily in Africa. With a focus on long-term, high-impact strategies, we work with governments, NGOs, and communities to safeguard critical ecosystems that support nature and sustain livelihood opportunities and security for people.

robwaltonfoundation.org

displacement, and instability that ultimately demand far more costly international responses. Supporting more durable conservation finance in these regions is not simply environmental policy; it is a practical way to advance U.S. economic and security interests.

An example of this is the Keystone Protected Areas Finance Initiative, which brings

together philanthropic, public, and private capital to build sustained financing models for 162 of Africa's most important landscapes. These landscapes support forests and grasslands, water systems, agriculture, and local economies for millions of people. Well-managed systems act as anchors of rule of law, economic resilience, and community stability. Conversely, under-governed landscapes increasingly

serve as safe havens for armed groups, disrupt access to strategic resources, and contribute to forced migration.

The aim is straightforward:

Move natural landscapes from chronic underfunding toward investment models that attract

and sustain private capital over time. With funding from the Rob Walton Foundation, Conservation International plays a central role as a finance partner and convener, working with protected area operators, governments, and other partners to identify revenue streams, reduce upfront risk, and remove barriers that have kept private capital on the sidelines. This is not about replacing investment capital with philanthropy; it's about using philanthropic capital strategically to unlock markets that otherwise would not develop.

About Conservation International

Conservation International protects nature for the benefit of humanity. Through science, policy, fieldwork and finance, we spotlight and secure the most important places in nature for the climate, for biodiversity and for people. With offices in 30 countries and projects in more than 100 countries, Conservation International partners with governments, companies, civil society, Indigenous peoples and local communities to help people and nature thrive together.

conservation.org

Photo credit: by Charlie Shoemaker, for Conservation International.

"As possibly the largest nature finance effort in Africa, the Keystone Protected Areas Finance Initiative reflects a shift toward funding models for critical landscapes that are built to last."

The division of roles is straightforward.

The Rob Walton Foundation provides baseline funding to help get investment opportunities off the ground and absorb initial risks. Conservation International works with partners to structure deals, build the financial architecture around them, and connect those opportunities to investors. The result is a model designed to bring greater structure, transparency, and discipline to conservation finance. For host countries and communities, that can mean more reliable funding for protected areas, stronger stewardship of natural resources, and more resilient local economies. For investors, it can mean access to opportunities that are better structured, more transparent, and less risky. For the United States, it offers a way to support stability

in a strategically important region while encouraging private-sector engagement instead of solely relying on public spending.

As possibly the largest nature finance effort in Africa, the Keystone Protected Areas Finance Initiative reflects a shift toward funding models for critical landscapes that are built to last. This does not chase quick wins. The goal is steady progress, moving from short-term funding cycles to sustained strategies that can support both people and the natural resources they depend on.

No single model will work everywhere, and there is still much to learn. But that is precisely why efforts like this one matter. They test whether conservation can be financed in ways that are more accountable, more stable, and more diversified. If done right,

this approach can deliver better outcomes at lower long-term cost, advancing U.S. interests while helping secure the stability of regions that matter to global security.

Finance teaches a simple lesson: Durability follows discipline.

The natural systems that shape economic life and security in Africa are not peripheral assets; they are essential infrastructure. Like bridges, roads, and energy systems, if we want them to last, we must invest in them.

Duko Hopman is Executive Director of the Rob Walton Foundation, where he works with governments and partners to advance large-scale conservation efforts, primarily in Africa. Previously a Partner at McKinsey & Company, where he founded the firm's global nature conservation practice, he has helped shape large-scale conservation strategies and financing models across the globe.

Sebastian Trøeng is a global conservation and nonprofit executive with more than 30 years of experience advancing nature conservation and sustainable development across Latin America, Asia-Pacific, Africa, Europe, and North America. He spent nearly two decades at Conservation International, most recently as Executive Vice President for Conservation Partnership and Chief People Officer.



PARTNER EDITORIAL

Nature Conservation in Africa Strengthens U.S. Security

By Jamie McCallum, UK and EU Director, and Lilian Spijkerman, Chief Development Officer, Peace Parks Foundation

Widespread research shows that transnational crime syndicates conducting natural resource crime in Africa are often linked to the narcotics trade, human trafficking, and arms smuggling.

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ABOVE: Limpopo National Park. Photo credit: Peace Parks Foundation.

These activities pose national security risks to the United States and its interests globally. Investigations and prosecutions over the past decade, carried out by the Department of Justice, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, reinforce this “product” convergence and global reach.

From wildlife poaching to terrorism

These criminal activities also feed money laundering, corruption, and even terrorism. In 2024, Simon E.V., or “Navara,” was sentenced to 27 years in prison for his role in leading a rhino crime syndicate.

The Mozambican court found him guilty of crimes including money laundering and financing terrorism. Just as blood diamonds once fueled conflict, illegal timber trafficking, often controlled by Asian organized crime groups, is now generating millions of dollars a month for extremist groups.

Undermining the global financial system

Nearly US\$150 billion flows annually through illicit money-laundering channels, including the “flying money” system from East Asia. These networks facilitate the illegal wildlife and timber trade alongside other forms of organized crime. Their reach spans supply, transit, and demand countries,

undermining financial systems, enabling corruption and espionage, reducing the efficacy of sanctions, and increasing institutional risk across borders.

Two paths: fragility or resilience

These threats flourish where the rule of law is weak, security vacuums exist, and poverty is entrenched, deepening a cycle in which constrained livelihoods increase pressure on natural resources, eroding ecosystems and economic opportunity. This perpetuates conflict over access to resources and benefit sharing, leading to human-wildlife conflict and person-to-person conflict. When resource governance is



based on exclusion and coercion, conflict risks rise and can become embedded, reinforcing wider patterns of poverty, insecurity, and instability. In this environment organized criminal networks or malign state actors can take hold.

It is possible to reverse this cycle by enabling transparent and prudent management of natural resources. By investing in healthy ecosystems and diversified livelihoods, we can create the foundation for resilience, prosperity, nutrition, and long-term wellbeing. The resulting environmental stability supports broader income opportunities, including tourism. When rooted

in a shared vision with local communities, this approach can and has transformed former poachers into rhino guardians, or advocates for conservation, inspiring future generations to protect their natural resources.

A cause for optimism

By supporting trusted nature conservation partners in origin countries, the United States is already contributing to peace, stability, and its own national interests. Peace Parks Foundation is one such partner. It works across ten countries in southern Africa, partnering with governments to manage and restore large, cross-border landscapes. For nearly 30

years, this work has helped rebuild wildlife populations, support local livelihoods, and reduce pressure on land and resources – contributing to greater stability in border areas and remote regions where economic opportunity and security are closely linked. By 2050, Peace Parks aims to secure just under 380,000 square miles of functional transboundary landscapes – about the size of Texas and California combined.

Across these landscapes, hundreds of thousands of people live in and around protected areas, often relying directly on land and natural resources for their livelihoods. Where opportunities are limited and pressures on land are high, the risk of conflict, resource depletion, and instability increases. By

ABOVE: Ranger Patrol, Limpopo National Park. Photo credit: Peace Parks Foundation.

“ Nearly US\$150 billion flows annually through illicit money-laundering channels (....) These networks facilitate the illegal wildlife and timber trade alongside other forms of organized crime. ”

Jamie McCallum is Director for UK and EU at Peace Parks Foundation. He is a transboundary conservation professional and nature risk/security expert with over 25 years of experience in the field. With Peace Parks, Jamie raised funds from the Postcode Lottery for a Wide Area Surveillance System (WASS) in Kruger National Park and is Chair of the Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA). He previously worked at International Management Group (IMG) and ran a management consultancy in the events/media sector for international clients.

Lilian Spijkerman is Peace Parks Chief Development Officer with over 25 years of experience in institution building, fundraising and strategy development bridging the worlds of people and nature. Since joining Peace Parks Foundation in 2022, Lilian has focused on scaling the organisation's impact by connecting tangible conservation outcomes achieved at the frontlines of conservation with global impact funders and strategic partners.



" By aligning conservation with local economic opportunity and land-use planning, this approach helps reduce those pressures while supporting more stable, long-term development.

aligning conservation with local economic opportunity and land-use planning, this approach helps reduce those pressures while supporting more stable, long-term development.

In it for the long haul

Working at landscape scale demands long-term commitment and an approach grounded in a deep understanding of what motivates and moves people. Both people and nature possess remarkable adaptive capacity that can be mobilized, but reaching true tipping points takes time. Peace Parks' long-term park agreements of over 20 years enable it to withstand political instability, drought, unrest, and other external shocks that might arise on that journey.

Long-term governance

Long-term success depends on stable, inclusive governance.

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Peace Parks' co-management model implemented in Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe brings governments, communities, and the private sector together to manage protected areas through independent structures. These provide continuity, financial oversight, and shared decision-making – reducing reliance on short-term projects and strengthening local capacity over time.

Reaching people

Peace Parks supports more than 2,000 jobs across southern Africa and reaches hundreds of thousands of people through its community programs. This creates a direct stake in the long-term success of these landscapes. Where communities benefit from conservation-linked livelihoods and services, pressure on land decreases, and the space for criminal activity narrows. This in turn means that peace and stability – both local and regional – can be maintained at a fraction of the cost of more resource-intensive interventions.

Strengthening the rule of law and capacity across landscapes

Peace Parks' Combatting Wildlife Crime Program operates not as a short-term poaching response, but as an institution-building, rule-of-law program embedded in conservation landscapes. It is helping shift enforcement from isolated, reactive interventions towards a coordinated, intelligence-led system capable of disrupting organized crime at multiple points along the illegal supply chain, in line with the mandate of U.S. Executive Order 13773.

By professionalizing ranger and environmental-police forces, deploying advanced surveillance and detection technologies, and supporting forensics, investigations, and prosecutions, Peace Parks has materially reduced poaching pressure and constrained the operating space of syndicated criminal networks who target hardwood timber, rhino, elephant, and lion.

LEFT: Conservation Agriculture, Limpopo National Park. Photo credit: Peace Parks Foundation.

Intelligence sharing fusion centers enable cross-sectoral collaboration, financial investigations, and targeted enforcement, effectively reducing South Africa's role as a wildlife crime transit hub. With U.S. government support, including through the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, Peace Parks contributes to disrupting transnational syndicates and strengthening the capacity of law enforcement and judicial institutions.

Cross-border efforts to combat rhino poaching cannot succeed without parity in capacity on both sides of a border. Collaboration emerges naturally when all parties can act and respond equally effectively. Where capacity is absent on one side, cooperation

"Within less than six years, the incursion rate dropped by 94%."

is simply not feasible. For this reason, prioritizing support for less well-resourced partners is essential in enabling meaningful cross-border action. Peace Parks has invested over US\$75 million on both sides of the South Africa-Mozambique border in law enforcement capability, alongside a comprehensive community

development approach. As a result, these transboundary conservation borders are amongst the most secure in Africa, while still allowing for the natural movement of wildlife - essential for ecosystem functioning.

The impact is real

In 2018, rhino poaching was rampant in Kruger National Park. A total of 644 poaching incursions originating from Mozambique were recorded, and the park was losing more than one rhino per day. However, the impact of prudent investment into cross-border collaboration proved remarkable. Improved technology, data sharing, a more strategic approach, and increased capacity on the Mozambican side led to control of the situation as well as the spontaneous formation of ranger WhatsApp groups and

monthly cross-border meetings. **Within less than six years, the incursion rate dropped by 94% - from 644 incursions in 2018 to just 36 in 2023 (Fig 1).** These results are supported by counter-trafficking work at airports. For example, Maputo International Airport was once a trafficking hotspot, and it is now of "least concern" thanks to provision and support for a K9 unit.

These impacts are tangible and measurable. However, the value of cross-border collaboration - which brings nations together and defuses situations that could easily escalate without deep, trust-based relationships - is far harder to quantify. While it may not be easily expressed in numbers, this outcome is no less real or significant.

These gains reflect not only improved detection and response, but the progressive strengthening of enforcement, investigative, and justice institutions that increase risk and reduce impunity for transnational criminal groups, while systematically unpicking illegal financial flows.

High impact, lower cost

Funded primarily through environmental budgets, these joint security systems now deliver wider public benefits - contributing to stability, safety, and state presence in remote border areas. Conservation investments can simultaneously strengthen ecological resilience, community confidence, and national sovereignty, reinforcing peace

rather than competing with it. And they are cost-effective; for every U.S. public dollar, Peace Parks Foundation brings two dollars in private philanthropy - providing value for both the U.S taxpayer and philanthropists.

Just the start

By reducing wildlife crime, strengthening governance, and supporting stable livelihoods, this approach contributes to regional stability and helps limit the ability of criminal networks to operate in remote border areas. These systems strengthen state presence, improve safety, and support economic opportunity, often at a lower cost than more resource-intensive interventions.

PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

About Peace Parks Foundation

Founded by President Nelson Mandela, Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands and Dr Anton Rupert in 1997, Peace Parks Foundation works at two scales: co-managing individual protected areas with governments and communities, and helping link these into larger, cross-border conservation systems known as transboundary landscapes. The protected areas are the building blocks - the landscapes are the vision.

Through integrated co-management agreements measured in decades rather than years, Peace Parks supports the restoration and professional management of protected areas while helping unlock the ecological functionality of larger landscapes. This approach combines conservation at scale with community development, law enforcement support, land-use planning and governance systems designed to strengthen ecological resilience, economic opportunity and regional stability.

Peace Parks' work is grounded in long-term partnerships, shared governance and adaptive learning across some of southern Africa's most complex and globally significant landscapes.

peaceparks.org

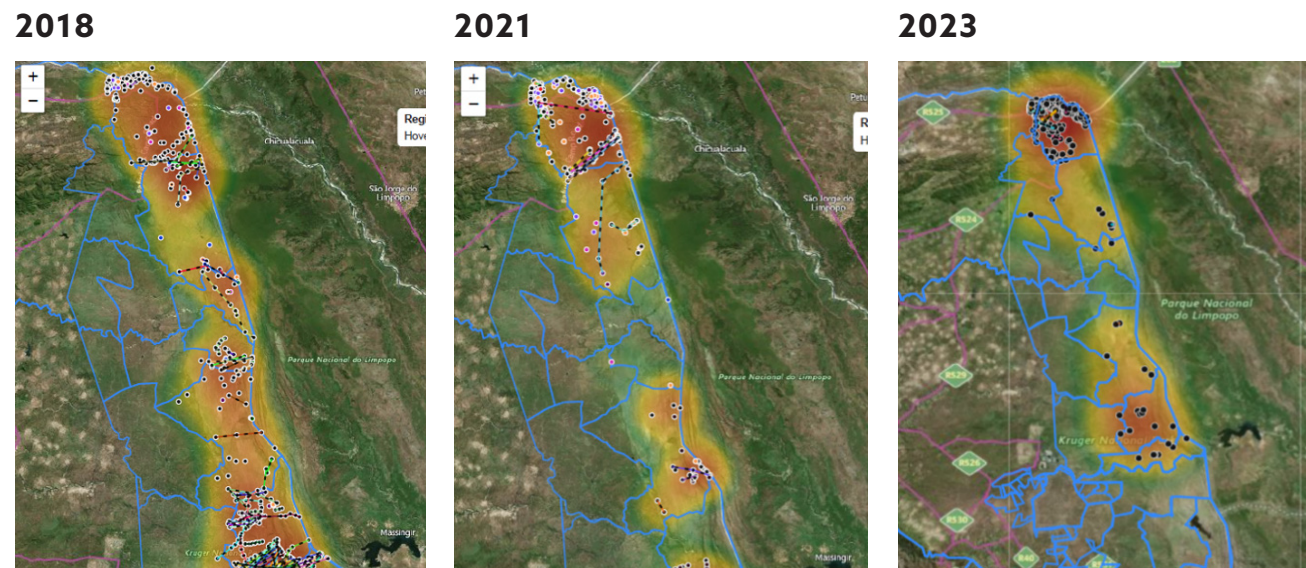
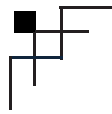


Figure 1: Since 2018, counter-poaching efforts have dramatically reduced illegal incursions along the South Africa-Mozambique border. The incursion rate dropped by 94% - from 644 incursions in 2018 to just 36 in 2023.



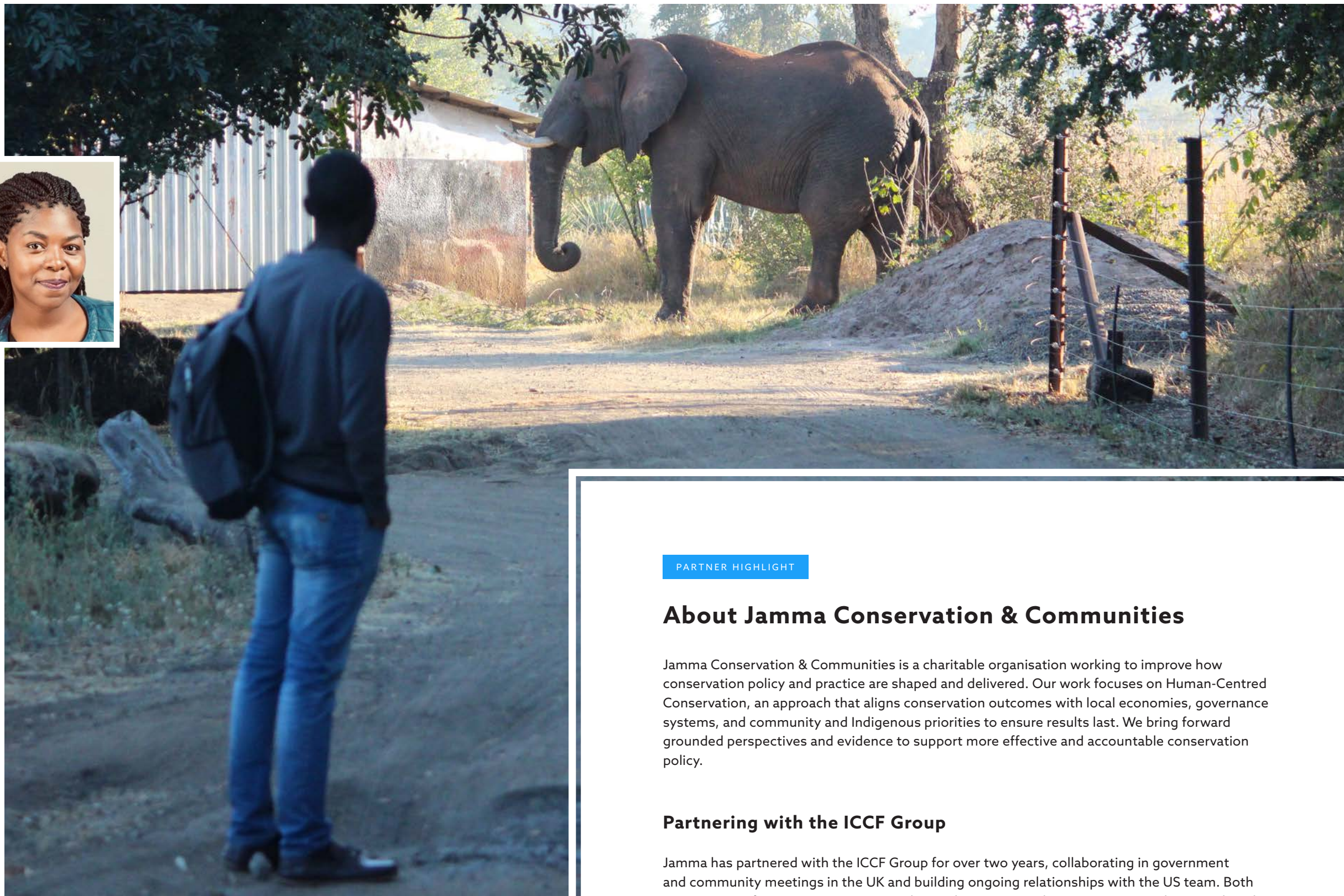
PARTNER
EDITORIAL

Making Conservation Dollars Deliver: A Human-Centred Approach to Lasting Impact

By Lessah Mandoloma,
Jamma Conservation & Communities

The United States has long been a global leader in funding international conservation, investing significant resources each year to protect biodiversity, combat wildlife trafficking, and support sustainable ecosystems.

These investments reflect a strong commitment to safeguarding the natural world while promoting global stability and prosperity. But a persistent challenge remains: too many conservation efforts struggle to deliver lasting results once external funding ends.



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ABOVE: Running into elephants on the way to work in rural Zambia is a common occurrence, especially in the dry season. Photo credit: Holly Pennington.

PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

About Jamma Conservation & Communities

Jamma Conservation & Communities is a charitable organisation working to improve how conservation policy and practice are shaped and delivered. Our work focuses on Human-Centred Conservation, an approach that aligns conservation outcomes with local economies, governance systems, and community and Indigenous priorities to ensure results last. We bring forward grounded perspectives and evidence to support more effective and accountable conservation policy.

Partnering with the ICCF Group

Jamma has partnered with the ICCF Group for over two years, collaborating in government and community meetings in the UK and building ongoing relationships with the US team. Both organisations focus on conservation policy and practice, working across national, regional, and international levels to advance effective conservation approaches

jammaconservationandcommunities.com

"Too many conservation efforts struggle to deliver lasting results once external funding ends ... This is not a failure of intent or funding. It is a failure of design."

Across many regions, particularly in Africa, conservation projects achieve short-term gains during funding cycles but falter over time. Protected areas come under renewed pressure, human-wildlife conflict resurges, and local support weakens when conservation does not align with everyday realities. This is not a failure of intent or funding. It is a failure of design.

Too often, conservation efforts are delivered as an external intervention, with limited integration of local economic systems, governance structures, and community priorities. When conservation is seen as restricting local economies rather than supporting them, it is difficult to sustain. Without strong local ownership, clear incentives, and accountable institutions, even well-funded efforts do not last.

If U.S. conservation investments are to deliver durable outcomes, the approach needs to change.

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Lessah Mandoloma is a conservation scientist specialising in people-nature interactions and the design of effective, context-specific solutions that balance biodiversity conservation with human wellbeing. She serves as an in-house consultant for Jamma Conservation and Communities, where she also coordinates the Human-Centred Conservation programme. Lessah holds a PhD in Biology from the University of Oxford. Her interdisciplinary research focused on developing a framework for integrating biodiversity conservation and agriculture within shared landscapes, using Malawi as a case study. Her work draws on ecological modelling, social science methods, and participatory approaches to address complex conservation challenges in human-dominated landscapes.

Conservation must align ecological goals with systems that shape how people live, work, and make decisions.

Human-Centred Conservation (HCC) offers that approach. It starts with a simple premise: conservation succeeds when it works for people as well as nature. It aligns biodiversity goals with local economies, strengthens governance and accountability, and creates incentives that endure beyond project timelines. It is not an abstract framework; it is an operational approach designed to make conservation investments work in practice.

This matters directly for U.S. policy priorities.

First, HCC improves return on U.S. taxpayer dollars. Conservation initiatives that fail after funding ends represent not only ecological

loss but also wasted investment. By embedding conservation within local economies and governance systems, HCC reduces the risk of project failure and helps ensure that results continue long after funding cycles end.

Second, HCC strengthens accountability and measurable impact. Traditional conservation metrics often focus on ecological indicators alone, overlooking the governance and incentive systems that determine whether gains last. HCC integrates social and ecological outcomes, improving transparency and providing a more complete picture of whether investments are working.

Third, HCC aligns conservation with economic growth. Conservation is more durable when it supports, rather than competes with, local economies. By creating clear incentives and economic value, HCC builds long-term support for stewardship.

"Human-Centred Conservation aligns biodiversity goals with local economies, strengthens governance and accountability, and creates incentives that endure beyond project timelines."

Fourth, HCC supports stability and stronger institutions abroad. Conservation does not operate in isolation. Where governance is weak and incentives are misaligned, pressures on wildlife increase. By strengthening local institutions and decision-making, HCC reinforces the conditions needed for long-term stewardship.

Finally, HCC reflects the kind of leadership the United States has long demonstrated in conservation: practical, accountable, and grounded in systems that work overtime.

Evidence from across conservation landscapes underscores the importance of this shift. We have already seen what this looks like in practice. In Namibia's Nyae Nyae Conservancy, where communities manage wildlife and benefit directly from its use, conservation is closely tied to local economic value and governance. As incentives aligned, wildlife populations recovered, with elephants increasing from around 50 in the 1980s to more than 1,500 today.

This is not an isolated case. Across Botswana, community-

based natural resource management programmes have demonstrated that when local institutions are strengthened, and economic incentives are aligned with conservation goals, both biodiversity outcomes and community benefits can be sustained at scale.

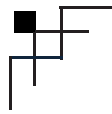
These examples highlight a broader pattern. Where communities bear the costs of living alongside wildlife, through crop losses, livestock predation, or restricted access to resources, conservation measures implemented without alignment to local economies are difficult to sustain. However, when interventions incorporate local priorities, provide tangible benefits, and strengthen local governance structures, outcomes improve significantly. Communities become active stewards rather than passive recipients, and conservation gains are more likely to endure. These examples point to a clear conclusion: conservation outcomes depend as much on people, governance, and incentives as on ecology.

If the goal is to ensure that U.S. taxpayer dollars deliver lasting

conservation outcomes, then policy must reflect that reality. Congress has an opportunity to lead by prioritising effectiveness, accountability, and durability in the delivery of conservation investments. This means supporting approaches that align ecological goals with local economies, strengthen governance systems, and integrate measurable social and ecological outcomes.

Human-Centred Conservation provides a clear path forward. It builds on what has already been shown to work and applies it more systematically and transparently. It does not require new commitments, but a smarter way of delivering on existing ones. If the United States wants its conservation investments to deliver enduring results, the approach must evolve.

Conservation works best when it works with people, not around them. That is how conservation delivers, not just today, but over the long term.



PARTNER
EDITORIAL

The Orangutan in the Room: Why Saving Forests Should Unite Us All

By Ben Callison, Chief
Executive Officer, and Ashely
Rhinehart, Director of Policy
and Government Affairs,
Borneo Orangutan Survival
(BOS) UK and USA

**There are few issues left
in modern politics that
can still claim genuine
bipartisan appeal. Clean
water, national security,
economic resilience.**



Perhaps. But tucked
quietly among them
is something both
simpler and more
profound: forests.

Not as abstractions, not as talking
points, but as living systems
whose fate is tied to ours.

Nowhere is this more urgent than
on the island of Borneo, where the
fate of the rainforest and the fate
of the orangutan have become
inseparable. And if we are honest,
so too has the fate of our global
economy.

Let's begin with a simple truth:
deforestation is the single greatest
threat to orangutans. Strip away
the jargon, the geopolitics, the
competing narratives. What

*"More
than
30% of
Borneo's
forests
have been
lost in just
the past 40
years."*

remains is stark. Without forests,
orangutans cannot survive. They
are, quite literally, creatures of the
trees.

The Disappearing Forest

Borneo was once a vast,
uninterrupted expanse of tropical
rainforest and one of the most
biodiverse places on Earth. Today,
that continuity is mournfully
broken. More than 30% of Borneo's
forests have been lost in just
the past 40 years, fragmenting
habitats and pushing wildlife into
ever-smaller pockets of survival.

Ben Callison is CEO of Borneo Orangutan Survival (BOS) UK and USA. He previously served as President of the Humane Society Wildlife Land Trust in the US and Director of the Cleveland Amory Black Beauty Ranch, a large animal sanctuary with close to 1,000 animals and over 40 species.

Ashley Rhinehart is the Director of Policy and Government Affairs for BOS UK and USA. Previously, she was a Senior Manager at Humane World For Animals and a political campaign manager.

RIGHT: Baby orangutans stay with their mothers till they're 7 to 8 years old - the longest period of child dependency known outside of human-animals. Photo credit: Aaron Gekoski.



"In recent decades, tens of thousands of orangutans have been lost, driven largely by habitat destruction."

This is industrial, rapid, and deeply connected to global markets.

Unsustainable palm oil is the most visible driver and also the most misunderstood. This humble vegetable oil is in everything from biscuits to biofuels, cosmetics to cleaning products. Its efficiency makes it attractive; its environmental cost makes it devastating when not grown sustainably. Between 2005 and 2015, unsustainable oil palm cultivation accounted for roughly half of all deforestation in Borneo.

But palm oil is only part of the story. Coal mining, logging (often illegal), and large-scale agricultural expansion all contribute to forest loss. In recent years, new pressures have emerged: food security programmes, bioenergy crops, and infrastructure projects. In 2025 alone, Indonesia saw a sharp surge in forest loss, driven in part by policies prioritising domestic production and energy independence.

This is where the conversation often becomes politically charged. Is deforestation a failure of regulation? A consequence of economic development? A symptom of global demand? The honest answer is: all of the above.

The Economics Behind the Axe

Deforestation in Borneo is driven by incentives: clearing forest is often more profitable, in the short term, than protecting it. Palm oil yields more oil per hectare than any other crop. Timber markets reward extraction. Minerals and coal fuel economies. For developing regions, these industries offer jobs, infrastructure, and revenue.

Forests are not just local assets. They are global infrastructure. They store carbon, regulate weather systems, and sustain biodiversity on a planetary scale. When they disappear, the costs are not confined to Borneo; they ripple outward. And nowhere is that ripple more visible than in the fate of the orangutan.

A Species Under Siege

Orangutans are often called the "gardeners of the forest." They disperse seeds, shape ecosystems, and help maintain the very habitat they depend on. Lose them, and the forest itself begins to unravel. Yet their numbers have plummeted.

In recent decades, tens of thousands of orangutans have been lost, driven largely by habitat destruction. Their homes cleared, they are forced into human settlements, where conflict is almost inevitable. Some are killed. Others are captured. This brings us to a quieter, but equally troubling, consequence of deforestation: wildlife trafficking.

As forests shrink, orangutans become easier targets. Conservation groups estimate that 200-500 orangutans enter the illegal pet trade each year for use as status symbols, entertainment, tourism, and worse, while broader illegal trade activities involving orangutans exceed 1,000 incidents annually. Mothers are often brutally killed so their infants can be taken and sold as pets until they grow so large that they become dangerous and are then disposed of. Additionally, it is thought that as many as four out of five animals captured and transported through illegal trade will die either in transit or within a year of captivity.

This is not a separate issue. It is a downstream effect of habitat loss. Reduce deforestation, and you reduce trafficking. Protect forests, and you protect the species within them. It is that simple... and that complicated.

A Path Forward That Everyone Can Support

If the causes of deforestation are complex, the solutions must be equally multi-layered. But here is where something remarkable happens: the path forward aligns with values across the political spectrum.

- 1. Policy That Works With, Not Against, Reality:** Effective policy does not mean halting development; it means shaping it. Governments can enforce moratoriums on clearing primary forests, strengthen land-use planning, and close loopholes that allow illegal logging to flourish. Indonesia has already experimented with such measures, including temporary bans on new palm oil concessions.

But policy must also recognise economic needs. Supporting sustainable agriculture, improving yields on existing farmland, and incentivising restoration can reduce pressure to clear new forest. This is not anti-growth. It is smarter growth.

- 2. Funding Conservation as Infrastructure:** Conservation is often framed as charity. It should be seen as investment. Protecting forests delivers measurable returns: carbon storage, flood prevention, biodiversity, and long-term economic stability. Funding conservation organisations, protected areas, and

community-led forest management is not a cost. It is a hedge against far greater losses.

Reforestation, too, plays a critical role. Restoring degraded land can reconnect fragmented habitats, allowing wildlife populations to recover

"200-500 orangutans enter the illegal pet trade each year."

and ecosystems to rebuild. And importantly, these efforts create jobs, which are often in rural areas where economic alternatives are limited.

- 3. Private Sector Responsibility—and Opportunity:** Perhaps the most powerful lever lies in the private sector. Companies that rely on palm oil, timber, or agricultural commodities have enormous influence over supply chains. By committing to deforestation-free sourcing, they can shift entire industries.

We have already seen progress. Major brands and traders have adopted sustainability pledges, driven by consumer demand

and investor pressure. But gaps remain, particularly in enforcement and transparency. The opportunity is clear: align profitability with sustainability.

Why This Should Unite Us

At first glance, deforestation might seem like an issue for scientists, activists, or policymakers in distant capitals. It is not. For conservatives, it speaks to stewardship, economic efficiency, and the dangers of unmanaged exploitation. For progressives, it reflects biodiversity protection and the need for systemic change. For everyone, it is a reminder that some challenges transcend ideology. Forests do not

vote. Orangutans do not lobby. But the consequences of losing them will be felt across every constituency.

Hope In Action

The statistics are sobering. The trends, in many places, are still moving in the wrong direction. But there is another side to this story. Across Borneo, organisations are working tirelessly, in conditions most would avoid for even a day, to change the trajectory. Among them is Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation, the largest orangutan conservation organisation in the world. Many people first discover BOS Foundation through the



wonderfully bingeable Orangutan Jungle School. The stars of the show are undeniably adorable, but the real story runs far deeper.

Since its founding 35 years ago, BOS Foundation has rescued more than 5,000 orangutans and currently cares for over 340 at its two rescue centres. The goal

is always to return as many as possible to the wild—and nearly 1,000 have already been released. Yet there is a harder truth as well: around 130 orangutans can never

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ABOVE: Barry Gardiner, MP, Co-Chair of the APPG for International Conservation in the UK Parliament, frees an orangutan onto one of BOS Foundation's Pre-Release Islands. Photo credit: Indrayana.

be freed due to disease or disability. They will need lifelong sanctuary care, and many still wait in metal enclosures for permanent island homes. Every pound spent building those sanctuaries must be balanced against the urgent need to protect the forests to ensure the survival of the species as a whole.

To reverse population decline, ecosystem conservation and community development also sit at the heart of BOS Foundation's work. In partnership with local communities and the Indonesian

"As many as four out of five animals captured and transported through illegal trade will die either in transit or within a year of captivity"

government, they help manage more than 1.1 million acres of protected orangutan habitat across Borneo. Two of these landscapes are home to an estimated 2,700 wild orangutans. The other three

are helping create new, self-sustaining populations through the release of rehabilitated animals.

This is where policy meets practice, and where global concern becomes local action. It is also something increasingly rare in modern debate: proof that solutions exist. In the end, saving the orangutan is not just about saving a species. It's about deciding what kind of future we are willing to build—and

what we are willing to lose if we do nothing at all.

PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

About Borneo Orangutan Survival

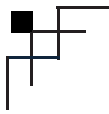
BOS Foundation is the world's largest orangutan conservation organisation with two rescue centres in Indonesia. Their vision is to create a world where all wild, rehabilitated, and unreleasable Bornean orangutans live in sustainably managed forests or sanctuaries. They also work to protect and restore increasingly more habitat so the species can thrive.

Partnering with ICCF-UK

BOS UK joined with ICCF UK to provide a briefing to Parliament in 2025 regarding the status of orangutans and their habitats. This led to organising a site visit to Borneo, Indonesia for six British members of Parliament to witness first-hand the plight of orangutans and the vital work of BOS Foundation.

bos-uk.org

bos-usa.org



PARTNER EDITORIAL

Having a global voice

By Craig Hoover, Executive Vice President, Association of Zoos and Aquariums

It has never been more important to have a voice on the global stage.

When international bodies make decisions that influence day-to-day operations and long-range planning, having a seat at the table isn't an option, it's an imperative.

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) has 254 accredited facilities across

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Craig Hoover currently serves as Executive Vice President of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. As Executive Vice President, Craig is a part of the senior executive team that manages the Association, which accredits and represents over 250 zoological institutions in the United States and twelve other countries. Craig joined AZA in July 2019, bringing with him more than 25 years of international wildlife conservation experience.



12 countries, and represents the gold standard for zoos, aquariums, and science centers.

Late last year, I had the opportunity to lead AZA's delegation to Samarkand, Uzbekistan, to participate in the 20th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP20) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). CITES is an international treaty that assures that international wildlife trade is conducted legally and sustainably. This was the first time in its 50-year history that the meetings were held in Central Asia. A record 157 Parties (country members) attended COP20 and more than 350 decisions were approved, including changes to the protected status of wildlife species, how the treaty is implemented, and future CITES work.

While only country members (Parties) are able to vote, observer organizations like AZA actively participate, contributing expertise that influences outcomes.

AZA participates in CITES meetings because zoos and aquariums are impacted by the treaty and its implementation, and because we bring expertise to bear in CITES decisions and processes.

We bring our knowledge in the conservation of wildlife to decision-making regarding species protections.

At COP20, the CITES Parties added a host of species to CITES' Appendix I, banning them from commercial trade, including two species of African vultures, devil rays, manta rays, oceanic white-tip sharks, okapi, whale sharks, and Galápagos land and marine iguanas. The COP also added several species, including two African hornbill genera, and tope and smoothhound sharks, to CITES' Appendix II. This appendix lists species that may become at risk of extinction unless trade is strictly regulated. Showcasing progress of conservation efforts,

several species, such as the bontebok and Guadalupe fur seal, were either delisted or downlisted from Appendix I to Appendix II.

Some decisions made at COP20 related directly to species that are the beneficiaries of AZA's flagship conservation program, AZA SAFE: Saving Animals From Extinction, and the collaborative conservation efforts of AZA-accredited members. A proposal removing giraffe populations in eight southern African countries from Appendix II was rejected. A proposal allowing trade in Namibian elephant ivory was rejected. Proposals allowing limited commercial trade in horns of Namibian black and white rhino were rejected. Five South America songbirds were approved for listing in the Appendices, with *Sporophila maximiliani* added to Appendix I and four other *Sporophila* species added to Appendix II.

The Parties also stiffened rules governing the trade in some increasingly popular exotic pets, including two gecko species from

"AZA participates in CITES meetings because zoos and aquariums are impacted by the treaty and its implementation."

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LEFT: Okapi. Photo credit: by [Brookfield Zoo Chicago](#).



Australia, two sloth species from Central and South America, and a monkey from Central Africa, which is important to the AZA community because of the role AZA and its members play in the care and veterinary treatment of live wildlife confiscated from illegal wildlife trade. AZA established the Wildlife Confiscations Network in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to support law enforcement with the triage, care, and placement of live

wildlife seized from the illegal trade—ensuring that animals are transferred to vetted, qualified facilities equipped to meet their needs. By actively participating in CITES meetings, including through presentations at side events, AZA can share this expertise and ensure that wildlife law enforcement officials around the world have access to and are able to distinguish those facilities with the expertise to care for the victims of illegal wildlife trade.

Access to animals is critical for zoos and aquariums, and AZA participation informs and shapes decisions that have meaningful, real-world implications for the AZA community and our continuing ability to move animals across international borders. At COP20, AZA interventions directly influenced outcomes on three issues of importance to zoos and aquariums. AZA 1) identified a critical oversight regarding a proposed definition of

"Access to animals is critical for zoos and aquariums, and AZA participation informs and shapes decisions that have meaningful, real-world implications for the AZA community and our continuing ability to move animals across international borders."

coral substrate that would have substantially complicated live coral shipments; 2) underscored the need for transparent, affordable access to the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Live Animal Regulations required for CITES compliance; and, 3) successfully defended the carefully negotiated definition of purpose of transaction code "z" (zoo) against

proposals to reopen and relitigate its applications.

COP20 was a success for species protection, international collaboration, and in terms of our priorities for AZA-accredited aquariums, zoos, and science centers. AZA will continue playing a role in this international forum, bringing our expertise to decision-

makers and protecting our interests and those of the species in our care.

CITES is most effective when it is collaborative and inclusive. We invite you to join us in the effort to ensure that trade is legal and sustainable, advancing our shared goal of conservation of wildlife and wild places.

PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

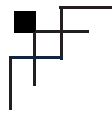
About

Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos, aquariums, and science centers in the areas of conservation, animal wellbeing, education, science, and recreation.

AZA is setting the global gold standard, accrediting 254 of the top zoos, aquariums, and related facilities in 12 countries. Look for the AZA accreditation logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting a facility dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you, and a better future for all living things. AZA-accredited aquariums and zoos are leaders in conservation, protecting wildlife and wild places around the globe.

aza.org

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ABOVE: Giraffe. Photo credit: by [Audubon Zoo](#).



MEMBER EDITORIAL

Chile's Conservation and Ocean Caucus: A Bridge Across the Political Divide

By Senator Ricardo A. Lagos (ret.), Founder of the Conservation and Oceans Caucus of Chile



In January of this year, Chile's National Congress took a meaningful step forward for both conservation and democracy: the formal establishment of the Chilean Conservation and Ocean Caucus.

Senators and representatives from across the political spectrum joined together under a common vision - to confront shared environmental challenges with shared purpose. It was a moment that reflected both the urgency of our times and the possibility of a different kind of politics.

This is not a minor institutional gesture. We are living through one of the most delicate moments in the history of biodiversity protection. Scientific consensus is clear, and the window for meaningful action is narrowing. And yet, paradoxically, the political polarization that afflicts democracies around the world, Chile included, has made it increasingly difficult to walk a common path toward objectives that should, in principle, unite us all.

"We are living through one of the most delicate moments in the history of biodiversity protection."



The caucus was born precisely to address this contradiction. Environmental protection and economic development are too often framed as opposing forces. For a developing nation like Chile, this tension is real and permanent. This is, in large measure, a false dilemma. The question is not whether to protect nature or to grow; it is how to build the institutional framework and the political trust necessary to do both. A bipartisan caucus, by definition, forces that conversation across ideological lines.

Chile has demonstrated that this balance is possible.

Today, 50% of our Exclusive Economic Zone is under some level of protection, placing us among the pioneering nations in marine conservation; however, economic growth has not been negatively affected. That achievement did not happen by accident. It required legislation, institutions, and above all, political will that transcended ideological boundaries, as well as a substantive level of compromise. The caucus is the natural extension of that tradition, and a platform to deepen it.

The potential support of the ICCF Group is fundamental to this effort. Sound public policy must be grounded in science. Legislators need access to rigorous, updated, and independent information to make decisions that will impact generations to come. Too often, political debates about the

"Democracy's legitimacy rests on its ability to deliver results - in the economy, in social welfare, in security, and equally in the stewardship of nature."

environment are shaped more by ideology than by evidence. The ICCF Group's capacity to provide that knowledge and to connect us with sister caucuses in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Suriname, and the United States, transforms our national initiative into something larger: a regional network of political actors committed to evidence-based conservation.

We are under no illusion that a caucus alone will resolve the environmental crisis we face. Declaring marine protected areas is not enough. They must be implemented, administered, and adequately funded. They require new scientific knowledge, sustained economic resources, and effective governance structures. The gap between declaration and implementation is where conservation efforts so often fall short. These are the concrete challenges where international cooperation, technical expertise, and sustained political coordination can make a genuine and lasting difference.

Chile faces many environmental challenges, and the caucus is well

positioned to play a significant role in addressing several of them. One of the most pressing - and one that enjoys broad cross-party support - is the successful implementation of the treaty on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, widely known as the BBNJ Agreement. This treaty, which establishes a framework for the conservation, sustainable use, and equitable sharing of benefits derived from marine resources, not only from a conservation standpoint, but as a foundation for international stability. By creating a governance structure for the high seas, the BBNJ Agreement generates the conditions of predictability and cooperation necessary for the sustainable use of marine resources. In this regard, the inputs, comparative experience, and dialogue among legislators from different countries that the ICCF can facilitate may prove decisive.

On the subject of the BBNJ Agreement, and in my capacity as Senator for the Valparaiso Region, I cannot let this opportunity pass



without sharing that Chile has put forward the city of Valparaiso as the host of the BBNJ Secretariat. It is my sincere hope that this bid becomes a reality, and that we can count on the support of a broad majority of nations. Hosting the Secretariat would not be a recognition of Chile's long-standing commitment to ocean conservation; it would place our country at the very heart of the global governance architecture for the high seas.

Chile also has something to offer in return.

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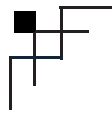
ABOVE, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Sen. Ricardo Lagos, Environment Minister Maisa Rojas, Chile, and Jaime Cavelier, Ph.D., the ICCF Group.

Our experience in building environmental institutions, crafting marine protection legislation, and navigating the tensions between conservation and development is a resource that other nations can learn from. The caucus, with the support of the ICCF Group, is a space not only to receive knowledge, but also to share it. Regional cooperation works best when it flows in both directions.

Democracy's legitimacy rests on its ability to deliver results - in the economy, in social welfare, in security, and equally in the stewardship of nature. Citizens expect their representatives to act

not only on immediate concerns, but on the long-term challenges that will define the quality of life of future generations. The Conservation and Ocean Caucus of Chile's Congress is a wager on that capacity. It is a wager on science, on dialogue, and on the possibility that political differences need not prevent us from protecting what belongs to all of us.

This is how progress is made.



THE ICCF GROUP SPOTLIGHT

UK-Indonesia Parliamentary Dialogue: Conservation and Sustainable Land Use

ICCF Indonesia, as Secretariat of the Conservation Caucus (Kaukus Konservasi) in the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI), supported a parliamentary hearing between the DPR RI Conservation Caucus and the United Kingdom's All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on International Conservation, for which ICCF UK serves as secretariat in the UK Parliament.

The session was chaired by Hon. G. Budisatrio Djiwandono (Gerindra - East Kalimantan), who serves as Vice Chair of Commission I DPR RI and Co-Chair of Kaukus Konservasi, and brought together members of the Conservation Caucus alongside UK parliamentarians who had just returned from a week-long fact-finding mission to Central Kalimantan with the Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation (BOSF).



The hearing built on momentum from the APPG's mission to Indonesia (26 March – 4 April 2026), during which UK MPs visited Sebangau National Park, indigenous communities, orangutan pre-release islands, and the Nyaru Menteng rescue centre. The session aimed to translate the delegation's field experience into a focused policy dialogue on conservation financing, peatland protection, land use, and inter-parliamentary cooperation.

Land Use: The Cross-Cutting Theme

Land use emerged as the dominant issue of the hearing, raised from both sides and threaded through nearly every exchange.

Barry Gardiner MP (Labour - Brent West), Chair of the APPG, built on this by introducing the UK's forthcoming national land use framework, a strategic planning tool integrating nature-based solutions, development,

and agriculture. He asked the Indonesian side directly about the competing tensions between international commitments and local land provision.

Blake Stephenson MP (Conservative - Mid Bedfordshire) drew a direct parallel between his constituency, 85 percent agricultural land with significant lowland peat, and Indonesia's challenge of balancing food security with conservation. He noted that young people in

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LEFT: Hon. G. Budisatrio Djiwandono. **ABOVE:** Hon. Prof. Rokhmin Dahuri (left) and Hon. Siti Hediati Soeharto (right).



his constituency consistently identify the environment as their top priority and expressed a personal commitment to peatland restoration and securing a new national forest for Bedfordshire.

Hon. Prof. Rokhmin Dahuri (PDI-P - West Java VIII) responded with a substantive legislative point: Indonesia's Spatial Planning Law (UU 26/2007) originally required at least 50 percent protected area coverage per island, but this provision was abolished under the Omnibus Law. He stated his personal commitment to restoring it, citing rapidly declining forest coverage in Sumatra. Hon. Dahuri also framed the Indonesian approach to conservation, citing the IUCN definition from 1992 as "the optimal harmonious composition between economic growth and environmental

protection," explicitly distinguishing it from a no-take zone or preservationist approach.

The Chair reinforced this, noting that 60 percent of Indonesia's population lives in Java and that previous laws requiring at least 30 percent forest coverage per area need to be re-examined and enforced. He spoke candidly about the pressures of mining and plantation expansion in East Kalimantan, describing them as giving him "nightmares" while acknowledging their economic importance.

Hon. Yan Permenas Mandenas (Gerindra - Papua) offered a contrasting perspective from Eastern Indonesia, noting that Papua holds approximately 6.3 million hectares of largely intact peatland — around 28 percent

of Indonesia's total. In Papua, he argued, any conservation framework must ensure indigenous communities share in the benefits, whether through carbon payments, ecotourism, or other opportunities.

Conservation Finance and Ecotourism

The hearing's most developed policy exchange focused on how to finance conservation sustainably.

Hon. G. Budisatrio Djwandono made a significant intervention on institutional design, arguing that Indonesia needs new governance mechanisms, transparent entities that can receive private and philanthropic funding for conservation. He stated openly: "I have no problem with NGOs

such as BOSF. The more of them doing work here in the regions, the better."

He referenced his mandate from the President of the Republic of Indonesia to develop a multi-stakeholder approach spanning Way Kambas National Park, broader protected-area governance, and ecotourism, and noted that revision of carbon market legislation is a starting point for creating these mechanisms.

Barry Gardiner MP pushed specifically on ecotourism models, asking about the choice between high-end, low-volume tourism and mass-market approaches. The Chair endorsed a hybrid model, combining premium ecotourism with differential pricing for domestic and international visitors, while firmly rejecting mass tourism as the primary approach, citing pressures seen in destinations like the Galápagos. Indonesia, he noted, is studying models from Africa and Costa Rica, but the key condition remains: any model must solve the livelihood problems of local communities.

Barry Gardiner also singled out BOSF's community engagement model as one of the most impressive things the delegation witnessed in Borneo, highlighting that local communities are the ones doing the work, blocking canals, rewetting peat, creating rural employment, and framing BOSF's approach as "not just about orangutans, not just about people, but about economic and social regeneration."

Blue Carbon and Mangroves

Hon. Prof. Rokhmin Dahuri introduced blue carbon as a major dimension of Indonesia's conservation potential, noting that 70 percent of Indonesian territory is marine and that mangrove carbon sequestration capacity is four times that of terrestrial forests. He cited the Presidential commitment at COP28 to replant 600,000 hectares of mangroves and reported that 50,000 hectares of abandoned fishing ponds have already been earmarked for mangrove restoration. He called directly on the UK to support Indonesia with financing and technology transfer for carbon trading.

The Chair reinforced this by referencing the DPR RI Conservation Caucus (formerly the Oceans Caucus), supported by ICCF, and Indonesia's 3 million acres of mangrove as an untapped conservation and economic asset.

Soil Health and Agricultural Sustainability

Hon. Ravindra Airlangga (Golkar - West Java V), raised soil health as a critical issue, referencing Law 41/2009 on protected agricultural lands and asking the UK delegation directly about soil degradation strategies.

Barry Gardiner MP responded with visible passion, calling soil health "the button closest to my heart" and citing estimates that some UK

agricultural soils may have only 30 years of productive life remaining. He committed to sharing UK select committee inquiry reports on soil health with the Indonesian side and emphasised the link between nitrogen overuse, river eutrophication, and long-term soil degradation.

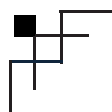
Rt. Hon. Graham Stuart MP (Conservative - Beverly and Holderness) recommended that Indonesia participate in the UNCCD Desertification COP, next held in Mongolia in August 2026, which he described as covering land degradation and soil health at scale.

Looking Ahead

The hearing marked the first formal parliamentary exchange between the DPR RI Conservation Caucus and the UK APPG on International Conservation. What distinguished it from a standard courtesy call was the specificity of the discussion: concrete policy questions on ecotourism models, carbon market legislation, spatial planning reform, and soil health - grounded in the UK delegation's week-long field experience with BOSF in Kalimantan.

In closing, the Chair expressed openness to continued engagement with the UK APPG, facilitated by ICCF, and signalled interest in replicating conservation financing models from other jurisdictions while developing approaches suited to Indonesia's specific regulatory and community context.

Above: Rt. Hon. Graham Stuart MP.



THANK YOU

Our Global Network

The ICCF Group thanks these stakeholders for collaborating with us on briefings, engagements, and other events to raise awareness about conservation solutions to protect our natural resources.

United Kingdom

- African Wildlife Foundation
- Birdlife International
- Blue Marine Foundation
- British & Irish Association of Zoos & Aquariums
- Chester Zoo
- Coalition for Global Prosperity
- Conflict & Environment Observatory
- Conservative Environment Network
- Embassy of Colombia
- Embassy of Mexico
- Embassy of Peru
- Embassy of the United States
- Environmental Justice Foundation
- Flora & Fauna International
- Global Canopy
- Global Fishing Watch
- Green Alliance
- HALO Trust
- High Commission of Canada
- High Commission of Kenya
- High Commission of Namibia
- High Commission of New Zealand
- High Commission of Rwanda
- Kew Gardens
- Labour Climate & Environment Forum
- Marine Conservation Society
- Mars International
- National Oceanography Centre

- Natural History Museum
- NGO Forests Coalition
- Open Seas
- Peers 4 Planet
- Pew Trusts
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Samoan Conservation Society
- The Commonwealth Secretariat
- Tony Blair Institute for Global Change
- UK Friends of Ukraine
- UK Overseas Territories Association
- Uplift UK
- Wildlife Justice Commission
- WWF-UK
- Zoological Society of London

Africa

- ADPP (Ajuda e Desenvolvimento Para o Povo)
- African Parks
- African Parks Network
- African Wildlife Foundation
- Angola Ministry of Environment
- Angola Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Caritas Czech Republic
- Caritas Zambia
- Catholic Relief Services
- Conservation Alliance of Kenya
- Conservation International
- Endangered Wildlife Trust
- European Union
- FBS (Fundação Bornito de Sousa)
- Friends of Conservation
- Fundação Kissama
- GIZ
- International Crane Foundation (ICF)

- International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- IUCN - Conservation Areas & Species Diversity Programme
- KAZA
- Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association
- Kenya Wildlife Trust
- Lilongwe Wildlife Trust
- Masai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association
- National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)
- National Geographic Society
- One Acre Fund
- Parque Nacional do Iona (Iona National Park)
- PROSPERO
- SADC
- SADC PF
- The Halo Trust
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- TRAFFIC
- UNEP
- United Nations Development Programme
- University Of Zambia
- UNODC - Container Control Programme & Wildlife and Forest Crime Programme
- USAID
- VALAR Frontier Solutions
- Wild Bird Trust
- Wildlife Crime Prevention
- World Bank Group
- World Wildlife Fund (WWF)
- Zambia Department of Parks and

- Wildlife
- Zambia Environment Management Agency
- Zambia Fisheries Department

Asia

- Amata
- Ber-Ikan
- Coral Triangle Center
- EDF
- Embassy of Mongolia
- GEF
- International Pole and Line Foundation (IPLNF)
- KI (Conservation International in Indonesia)
- Masyarakat dan Perikanan Indonesia (MDPI)
- Resonance // Tuna Consortium
- Rio Tinto
- Starling Resources
- Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP)
- The Asia Foundation
- UNDP
- UNEP
- Walton Family Foundation
- WCS
- WRI
- YKAN (TNC in Indonesia)

Peru

- Autoridad Nacional del Agua (ANA)
- Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI)
- Ministerio de Agricultura
- Ministerio de Comercio Exterior y Turismo
- Ministerio de Cultura
- Ministerio de Economía y Finanzas
- Ministerio de Producción
- Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores

- Ministerio del Ambiente
- Ministerio del Interior
- OCEANA
- Policía Nacional del Perú
- ProAmazonia
- PROFONANPE
- Re:wild Perú
- Servicio Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas por el Estado (SERNANP)
- Servicio Nacional Forestal y Fauna Silvestre (SERFOR)
- SPDA
- WWF

Colombia

- Agencia Italiana para la Cooperación para el Desarrollo (AICS)
- Asociación de Corporaciones Autónomas Regionales de Colombia (ASOCARS)
- Audubon Colombia
- Autoridad Nacional de Acuicultura y Pesca (AUNAP)
- CAF
- Comisión Colombiana del Océano
- Conservación Internacional
- Corporación para el Desarrollo Sostenible de la Amazonia (Corpoamazonia)
- Corporación para el Desarrollo Sostenible del Archipiélago de San Andrés, Providencia y Santa Catalina, CORALINA
- Corporación para el Desarrollo Sostenible del Chocó (CODECHOCO)
- COSUDE - Agencia Suiza para el Desarrollo y la Cooperación
- Departamento Nacional de Planeación
- Dirección General Marítima (DIMAR)
- FAO Colombia
- Fedepalma
- Fondo Acción
- Fontur

- Fundación Natura
- Fundación para el Desarrollo Sostenible
- Global Green Growth Institute
- Instituto Amazónico de Investigaciones Científicas (SINCHI)
- Instituto de Hidrología, Meteorología y Estudios Ambientales (IDEAM)
- Instituto de Investigación de Recursos Biológicos Alexander von Humboldt
- Instituto de Investigaciones Ambientales del Pacífico (IIAP)
- Instituto de Investigaciones Marinas y Costeras (INVEMAR)
- Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible
- Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores
- Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo
- Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura
- Parques Nacionales Naturales de Colombia
- Patrimonio Natural
- PNUD
- Procolombia
- Rainforest Alliance Colombia
- Red Pacto Global Colombia
- UNEP Colombia
- Unión Europea
- USAID
- Vicepresidencia de la República
- WCS Colombia
- WWF

Brazil

- Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (OTCA)
- Banco Santander
- Brazilian Ministry of Environment
- Climate Policy Initiative
- Coalizão Brasil Clima Floresta

- Agricultura
- Coca Cola Brasil
- Confederação Nacional de Agricultura (CNA)
- Embassies of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela
- Embassy of Norway in Brazil
- Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária (EMBRAPA)
- European Union Embassy in Brazil
- Federal University of Rio de Janeiro
- Fundo Brasileiro para a Biodiversidade (FUNBIO)
- Instituto de Pesquisa Amazonica (IPAM)
- Natura & Co.
- Rainforest Trust
- Re:wild Brasil
- SOS Pantanal
- US Embassy in Brazil
- WWF Brasil

Mexico

- AMEBIN - Mexican Alliance for Business and Nature
- Costa Salvaje
- Environmental Defense Fund
- Global Ghost Gear Initiative
- Keystone Species Alliance
- Ocean Conservancy
- Reforestamos México
- Wildlands Network
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity
- Ministry of the Environment
- WWF Mexico
- Mexican Fund for the Conservation of Nature
- WRI Mexico
- National Institute for Ecology and

- Climate Change
- UNEP Mexico
- AMERE - Mexican Alliance for the Restoration of Ecosystems
- GYBN - Global Youth Biodiversity Network

Caribbean

- Advocacy Grenada Inc.
- Antigua and Barbuda Department of Environment
- Antigua and Barbuda Ministry of Health, Wellness and Environment
- Barbuda Council
- Caribbean Cooperative MRV HUB (measurement, reporting, & verification)
- CANARI - Caribbean Natural Resource Institute
- Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Project (CLME+)
- Caribbean Regional Climate Centre
- Caribbean Water & Sewage Association Inc (CAWASA)
- Department of Forestry (St. Lucia)
- Dive Grenada
- Dominica Forestry Division
- Dominica Ministry of Environment, Rural Modernization and Kalinago Upliftment
- Embassy of Mexico in Saint Lucia
- GIS Grenada
- Grenada Fisheries Division
- Grenada Ministry of Agriculture
- Grenada Ministry of Climate Resilience, the Environment & Renewable Energy
- Grenada Ministry of Economic Development, Planning, Tourism, ICT, Creative Economy, Culture, Agriculture and Lands, Fisheries and Cooperatives
- Grenada Ministry of Health
- Grenada National Ocean and Coastal

- Governance Committee
- Grenada Sustainable Development Committee/ National Climate Change Committee
- Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)
- Kelley Drye & Warren LLP
- Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission
- Parastatal Monitoring Department (PMD) - Office of the Prime Minister (St. Lucia)
- Soloricon Ltd.
- St. Lucia Department of Physical Planning
- St. Lucia Forestry Department
- St. Lucia Hotel and Tourism Authority (SLHTA)
- St. Lucia Ministry of Tourism
- St. Lucia National Conservation Fund (SLUNCA)
- St. Lucia National Trust (SLNT)
- The George Family
- The St. Lucia Archaeological and Historical Society
- The Stimson Center
- Water and Sewage Company (WASCO)

Paraguay

- Agencia Financiera de Desarrollo (AFD)
- Asociación Agropecuaria de Agua Dulce (APAD) - Chaco
- Asociación de Productores Agropecuarios para un Chaco Sustentable (APACS) - Chaco
- Asociación de Productores de Margariño - Chaco
- Cámara Paraguaya de Procesadores de Oleaginosas y Cereales (Capro)
- Centro Educativo y de Rehabilitación AMAME - Chaco
- Comité de Productores 12 de

- Noviembre - Chaco
- Comunidad indígena Ache - Naranjal
- Comunidad indígena Campo Loa - Chaco
- Comunidad Indígena Macharety - Chaco
- Comunidad Indígena Ñu Guazú - Chaco
- Comunidad Indígena Pycasu - Chaco
- Comunidad Indígena Siracua - Chaco
- Comunidad indígena Viju - Tavaí
- Comunidad Indígena Ytu - Abai
- Cooperativa de Producción Agropecuaria Naranjal Ltda. (COPRONAR) - Naranjal.
- Cooperativa Neuland - Chaco
- Cooperativa Pindó - San Cristobal
- Dirección de Extensión Agraria (DEAg) - Tavaí
- Fraternidad El Camino - Misión Santa Rita - Naranjal
- Gobernación de Alto Paraná - BAAPA
- Gobernación de Boquerón - Chaco
- Gobernación de Caazapá - BAAPA
- Gobernación de Itapúa - BAAPA
- Instituto Paraguayo del Indígena (INDI)
- Mesa de Finanzas Sostenibles (MFS)
- Mesa de Carne Sostenible (MCS)
- Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería (MAG)
- Ministerio del Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible (MADES)
- Municipalidad de Abai - BAAPA
- Municipalidad de Bahía Negra - Chaco
- Municipalidad de Caazapá - BAAPA
- Municipalidad de Filadelfia
- Municipalidad de Fuerte Olimpo
- Municipalidad de Loma Plata
- Municipalidad de Mariscal José Félix Estigarribia
- Municipalidad de Naranjal
- Municipalidad de San Cristóbal
- Municipalidad de Tavaí
- Organización FortaleSer
- Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD)
- World Wildlife Fund (WWF)
- Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Paraguay

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