Western Governors’
Species Conservation and ESA Initiative Webinar Series
Jan. 27, 2017 • 9-10:30 a.m. MST

Collaborative Species Conservation in the Southeast

MODERATOR
Cynthia Dohner

PANELISTS
Nick Wiley
Gordon Myers
Jimmy Bullock

Dr. Salem Saloom
Todd Ewing
Mike Harris
AT-RISK SPECIES CONSERVATION IN THE Southeast
Salem G. Saloom, MD
WGA Webinar January 27, 2017
Fish and Wildlife Partners Pilot Program
“An Old Blueprint for 21st Century Conservation”
by Brian Seasholes

6 realities

1) 60% US is privately owned
2) Hands-on management
3) Conservation is long term
4) Adaptive management
5) Private landowners are longest termed conservationists
6) Private landowners prefer incentives and cooperation
Private Landowner Concerns

- Strong stewardship ethic
- Concerned about risk to property values and livelihood associated with protecting endangered species
- Compensation for conservation of species
- Prefer own authority in management and decisions
- Hands-on management ≠ command and control conservation
Rx Fire

- Least expensive
- Promote more Rx fire on private lands
- Benefit to society
- Reduce liability
Funding

- Win-Win approach
- Think tank/conversations
- Societal benefits realized
  - Clean air
  - Clean water
  - Wildlife habitat
  - Recreation
  - O2
  - Jobs
  - Less regulation
“The relationship of people to the land, and the relationship of people to each other. This relationship has everything to do with restoration”

Aldo Leopold
Forest Landowners and USFWS: Partners in Species Conservation
National Alliance of Forest Owners (NAFO)

- Formed to advance national policies that promote the economic and environmental benefits of privately-owned forests

- Large forest owners including TIMOs, REITs and families

- Change in ownership objectives from vertically integrated companies has brought change in forest management
Catalyst for initiative is USFWS obligation to evaluate listing petitions for 450+ species, many of which are dependent on open canopy or riparian habitats

“Private landowners are wonderful stewards of the Southeast’s grand diversity of fish, wildlife and plants. Our goal is to work closely with them ….to proactively conserve as many at-risk species as possible through voluntary and innovative measures. Together we can ..... help keep farms, forests and other lands working for both people and wildlife.”

- Cindy Dohner
Working forests help conserve at-risk and listed species, particularly those species found in early succession, open canopy or riparian and aquatic habitats

- NAFO members will work proactively to conserve at risk and listed species found in working forest landscapes
- Working forests can help conserve at-risk and listed species
- Third party certification is a viable tool for demonstrating certainty of management practices
- NAFO initiative becomes a collaborative model for forest landowners and the USFWS to build trust and be true partners
NAFO Brings To the Table.....

- 50MM+ acres of member company forests
  - NAFO member lands 3rd party certified
  - Forestry, wildlife and natural resource management expertise

- NCASI
  - Strong forest research credentials and expertise
  - Ability to aggregate landowner specific data

- Connections to broader forestry community with strong linkages to Forest Landowners Association, American Forest Foundation and state forestry associations

- Ability and willingness to advocate for collaborative approach to conservation on private lands
Forest Certification Provides Certainty

- SFI, ATFS, FSC are credible third party certified forest management certification systems
- Continual improvement a core tenet and improved on the ground forest management practices a reality
- BMPs for water quality, landscape management emphasis and proactive management for at-risk species integral
- Extension to other stakeholders (SFI)
  - Logger training
  - Fiber sourcing extends BMP compliance and knowledge of at risk species to other tens of thousands of other private landowners
- Third party audit provides independent verification
Initiative Has Roots in Region 4

- A proven history of trust and engagement with private landowners
- The willingness to try innovative paths to species conservation
Defining Success

- USFWS policy and action recognizes active forest management benefits for at-risk and listed species
- Forest sector and USFWS become advocates for forest management helping conserve at-risk species
- Listing decisions recognize forest management benefits
  - USFWS decides not to list species
  - Forestry not considered a threat if species listed
  - USFWS adopts special rules promoting forest management
- Strong alignment with *Strategic Habitat Conservation* vision
  - Ecologically meaningful landscape focus
  - Cooperative conservation with willing partners
  - Adaptive management framework
  - Science based foundation
- A new path forward of trust and engagement
Growing Stakeholder Interest

American Forest Foundation
We grow stewardship every day.

Protecting America’s Private Forest Landowners
We Believe We Can Work Together

• Trust and strong open lines of communication key to success

• NAFO actively engaged with other USFWS Regions

• Louisiana black bear, northern long-eared bat and Pacific fisher demonstrate conclusively that innovative ways to encourage forest landowner support for conserving species can be successful

• Open dialogue before listing decisions written is constructive (Species Status Assessment)

• Initiative a blueprint to trust and meaningful conservation that includes working forests as part of the conservation solution
Conserving **Southeastern At-Risk Species**

The SEAFWA Wildlife Diversity Committee SEARS Program
SEAFWA WDC Action Plan

1. Develop and implement an information sharing network.
2. Establish the framework of criteria to prioritize species.
3. Develop a regional research and survey process.
4. Conduct regional conservation activities.
5. Speak with one voice.
Species Prioritization

• Cat G – Immediately ready for action (conservation actions, status assessments, etc.)

• Cat N – Needs more information (distribution, threats, etc.)

• Cat U - The "unknowns." Species with major information gaps on their distribution and status.

• Cat L – Listing is likely warranted
Data Sharing and Communication

• Most SEAFWA states have signed formal data sharing agreements with the USFWS.
• States are participating in SSA process.
• States writing up status assessments for species where federal listing is not thought to be warranted.

New River Crayfish
Regional Coordinated Research Actions

• Regional C-SWG Grants
  – Regional association applies for and manages grant

• Developing Regional Conservation Needs approach, similar to NEAFWA
  – Each state contribute funds
  – Used to fund regional survey and conservation needs
  – Currently funding three survey projects
Successes
The good, the bad, and the ugly (or lessons learned)

- This effort had greatly increased the working relationship between the SEAFWA states
- This efforts has increased coordination between the states and the FWS
- Make sure you have a good idea of what you want before you commit funding
- Some states do not have the capacity to assist with these efforts
- Coordination is difficult dealing with species that cross multiple states, multiple FWS regions and regional wildlife associations
Questions?
Conservation of At-Risk Species in the Southeast: Using the Flexibility of the Endangered Species Act

Mike Harris, At-Risk Species Coordinator
Southeast Region
January 27, 2017
Collaboration

- Providing data on petitioned species (status, distribution, biology, threats)
- Participating in species status assessments
- Identifying and implementing conservation actions for at-risk species.
At-Risk Species Finder
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

There are currently 497 Species in the Database:

- 15 Petitioned Species
- 28 Species have had their Petition Withdrawn
- 20 Candidate Species
- 329 Species currently have a Substantial 90-day Finding
- 26 Species currently have a Not Substantial 90-day Finding
- 22 Species currently have a Not Warranted 12-month Finding
- 5 Species are currently Proposed for Listing as Threatened
- 5 Species are currently Proposed for Listing as Endangered
- 12 Species have had their Final Listing as Threatened
- 32 Species have had their Final Listing as Endangered

https://www.fws.gov/southeast/candidateconservation/finder2/#/
Voluntary Conservation Tools

- Working Lands for Wildlife
- Partners for Fish & Wildlife
- State Wildlife Agencies
- CCAs and CCAAs
Pre-Listing Conservation: DoD Gopher Tortoise Credit Strategy

Creates system to allow military installations to invest in conservation of gopher tortoise habitat and populations outside of installations

Credits created through these investments can be used to offset impacts that occur on installations in future if Gopher tortoise is listed

Strategy to be finalized this quarter
4 (d) Rule Examples

Northern Long-eared bat

Black Pinesnake

Elfin Woods Warbler
Forestry Pilot Projects

- Develop forest management adaptations to increase the contributions of working forest lands as gopher tortoise habitat
- Assess Water Quality Best Management Practices for aquatic species
- Monitor and report these efforts under forest certification (SFI)
American Forest Foundation

- Technical assistance
- Financial incentives
- Regulatory predictability?
Successes- 95 Species

26 Species Not-Warranted 12-month findings

43 Species Withdrawn from Petition

26 Species not-substantial 90-day findings
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Southeast Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Executive Director, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Gordon Myers
Executive Director, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

Jimmy Bullock
Senior Vice President, Forest Sustainability, Resource Management Service, LLC

Dr. Salem Saloom
Alabama landowner

Todd Ewing
Supervisor, Aquatic Wildlife Diversity Program, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and Vice-chair Wildlife Diversity Committee, Southeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Mike Harris
At-Risk Species Coordinator, Southeast Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Learn more about the Species Conservation and ESA Initiative at westgov.org/initiatives/esa-initiative