



**PRESS RELEASE**

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Contacts: Rob Riordan, NatureServe, 703-908-1831 or [rob\\_riordan@natureserve.org](mailto:rob_riordan@natureserve.org)  
Heidi Valetkevitch, 202-205-1089 or [hvaletkevitch@fs.fed.us](mailto:hvaletkevitch@fs.fed.us)

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## **NatureServe to Assist USDA Forest Service Work to Protect National Forests**

*Washington, D.C.* — The U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service and NatureServe, a non-profit conservation group, today signed an agreement to work together to conserve national forests and grasslands.

A Memorandum of Understanding, signed today at the Forest Service's headquarters in Washington, D.C., furthers an ongoing partnership between the two organizations. The Forest Service and NatureServe have a successful 25-year history of working on a broad range of cooperative projects in areas such as species viability assessments, inventory for rare and endangered species, ecosystem classification and mapping, and forest planning.

“The Forest Service relies daily on the scientific data, information management tools, and conservation services provided by NatureServe and its affiliated state natural heritage programs,” said Dale Bosworth, chief of the Forest Service. “Partnerships with organizations such as NatureServe allow the Forest Service to do more of the important conservation work that benefits the public.”

“The Forest Service is responsible for practicing stewardship on some of the most ecologically significant public lands and waters in America,” said Mark Schaefer, NatureServe's president and CEO. “We are proud to support the Forest Service's work to better understand and manage these special places and the species that depend on them.”

NatureServe has developed a nationally consistent vegetation classification that is used by the Forest Service to assist resource management at a number of national forests. The two organizations are currently working to link this classification with the Forest Service's forest inventory and analysis program, which will help to provide better understanding of the changing nature of the nation's forest ecosystems.

The Forest Service has helped support the development of the NatureServe Explorer website ([www.natureserve.org/explorer](http://www.natureserve.org/explorer)), a searchable online database with detailed conservation information on more than 50,000 plants, animals, and ecological communities. The website is a valuable tool for Forest Service staff to manage wildlife resources, and is also widely used by other government agencies, conservationists, and students.

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The **Forest Service** is a federal agency that manages 191 million acres of national forests and grasslands. The lands are habitat for 422 federally listed threatened and endangered species. The Forest Service is also the largest forestry research organization in the world, and provides technical and financial assistance to state and private forestry agencies. Its mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. For more information, visit [www.fs.fed.us](http://www.fs.fed.us).

**NatureServe** is a non-profit conservation group dedicated to providing the scientific information and technology needed to guide effective conservation action. NatureServe represents a network of 76 natural heritage programs and conservation data centers in the United States, Canada, and Latin America that collect and analyze information on plants, animals, and ecosystems. NatureServe is a leading source for detailed scientific information about rare and endangered species and threatened ecosystems. For more information, visit [www.natureserve.org](http://www.natureserve.org).