

Northeast Natural Heritage Conference

April 20, 2009
Gettysburg, PA

Welcome, Bienvenue, and Bienvenidos to the NatureServe's Northeast Natural Heritage Conference.

It has been several years since we last gathered in Quebec City. It is wonderful to see so many old friends, and new faces which I hope will become future friends. We all know how tough it is to get travel authorization these days. But I am thrilled to report that 11 Eastern members of NatureServe are represented at this conference. Thanks so much for joining us, and everybody give yourselves a **BIG ROUND OF APPLAUSE** for making this wonderful event possible!

I also want to express my heartfelt thanks to our hosts, the three organizations that comprise the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program:

- The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
- The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

In addition to putting in hours of effort to help organize and run the conference, especially in putting together a fantastic set of field trips, they are all sponsors of the conference. Thanks for making this conference possible.

Earth Day on Wednesday

This year is especially auspicious because Earth Day is Wednesday.

Thank You!

Special thanks to our sponsors:

- Syngenta
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Western Pennsylvania Conservancy – Reception Wed night

- National Park Service – symposium on monitoring forest ecological integrity
- Bureau of Land Management
- Federal Highway Administration
- The Nature Conservancy
- Virginia Division of Conservation and Recreation
- SSI Consulting
- Unanet
- Keller Benefit Services

Highlights from the past Year

Inform Decisions - Species Conservation

- CEC used NatureServe range maps in Google Earth

- New publication: “Threatened Amphibians of the World”
- NatureServe distribution maps used to identify gaps in protection in mammals in Mexico and Central America
- USGS National Water Quality Assessment to use NatureServe fish data
- NatureServe coauthored paper in *Nature* shows 25% of mammals are threatened
- NatureServe data published in *Ecology* shows 10% of animals in hemisphere may go extinct from global warming
- NatureServe maps & data to appear in *Atlas of North Amer. Amphibians*

Inform Decisions - Landscape-Scale Conservation

- LandScape beta website launched and tested
- Northeastern Regional Habitat Classification emerging as national model
- U.S. federal agencies using NatureServe data to direct conservation to landscapes with at-risk species
- Webinars for planning tools draw international participation
- NatureServe Vista gaining wider use in Latin America

Inform Decisions - Working Landscapes

- Advancing conservation action on military lands
- Helping “Forests on the Edge” program protect at-risk wildlife on working forest lands
- Contributed critical information about at-risk species to US Forest Service Sustainable Forests Report
- Advising Council for Sustainable Biomass Production on methods for conserving biodiversity through product certification
- Training local communities in Pando, Bolivia to develop conservation strategies

Influence Decisions - Infrastructure Development

- Climate Change Strategy highlights impact analyses
- Network collaboration to establish online guidance for transportation planning
- Developing tools to assess cumulative impacts of transportation plans
- Transportation planning workshops continue around the country
- Informing environmental impact assessment of new hydropower initiative
- Joined land use working group of the Western Renewable Energy Zones project

Influence Decisions - Marketing and Communications

- States featured in “Hidden in Plain Sight” are getting good press for their focus on plants
- *Milestones* newsletter features Technology Excellence Initiative and Conservation Planning
- LandScape wall map distributed to audience of nearly 20,000
- Report on *Ecological Performance Standards* drawing interest from multiple agencies, including OMB
- LAC staff testify to Congress

Advance Scientific Understanding - Species & Ecological Classification

- Coastal and Marine classification to become national standard
- NatureServe leads work groups to implement updated vegetation classification
- Ecological Systems map completed for US. Viewable on LandScope America, and available for download from natureserve.org.
- Designing national wetlands assessment
- WWF used NatureServe data to design freshwater ecoregions
- NatureServe to lead International Ecosystems Thematic Network (IABIN)
- Ecological classification of African systems begun

Advance Scientific Understanding - Status, Distribution & Trends

- Climate change Vulnerability Index will be implemented in PA and NV
- Agreement to share Canadian national dataset with Environment Canada
- Threat and trend data for bumblebees, to raise awareness among National Forest visitors
- Range maps for pollinators
- Updating species status ranks
- New “State of Nation’s Ecosystems” report by Heinz Center uses NatureServe status ranks
- New EPA “Report on the Environment” uses NatureServe fish data to evaluate watersheds

Advance Scientific Understanding - Data Systems

- Multi-lingual observation data management system deployed by Parks Canada, with new effort to support import of large data sets
- Data exchange process improvements implemented
- Continued focus on Biotics system advancement, with improved Biotics help desk support, and led three webinar support sessions
- New Biotics installation in Puerto Rico
- Developing Online ITIS Taxonomic Workbench system

Advance Scientific Understanding - Web Products & Services

- Subscription-based product under development for US EPA
- Demonstrated a proof-of-concept web service to TNC
- Species images available to public
- Updated web site for this product line

Advance Scientific Understanding - Decision Support Systems

- Four pilot projects apply Vista to climate change challenges
- NatureServe Vista product now available for free
- Evaluating potential role for NatureServe Vista in TNC conservation tool kit
- Staff led workshops on Ecosystem-Based Management Tools in Australia

Building Conservation Capacity

- Members and staff met in January to draft FY10 Goals
- Hosted 23 participants at successful Natural Heritage Methodology Training in December
- Fundraising results are on target
- Successful LAC Conference yielded joint objectives and a collaboration action plan
- New training opportunities for our LAC members
- Measuring the health of the network
- North American member survey provides insights for membership model
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the TNC-NatureServe Collaboration Team

Moving Forward in FY09

- FY09 Goals emphasize network-wide priorities
- Fundraising priorities are better defined with clear assignments
- Launch of *LandScope America* will raise awareness even more
- Staff focus on--and commitment to--the mission raises up the whole organization

Status of Network – Holding our Own, but Clouds on the Horizon

- Member feedback shows increased financial strain, but no are programs being disbanded

Strong Focus on how to improve linkage of membership to the value of the organization, and to establish metrics for participation. Spend time at the conference thinking about the most important ways for your program and others to improve, and provide specific feedback that NatureServe can work into ideas like leadership training, member-to-member support, and business development initiatives.

The world is a more risky place...

- Risks to NatureServe will increase with continued economic slowdown
- Staff will have to do more with less
- Members can help by:
 - working with staff to pool resources,
 - communicating about your situation so we can marshal help,
 - promoting NatureServe initiatives with legislators and leadership in your home agencies.

Need to shift focus to address new economic realities

- Economic downturn reduces private sector giving
- Government is increasing spending – Stimulus spending
- Raise profile of NatureServe’s members as a critical part of the environmental review process:
 - Adequate staff of environmental review specialists, information managers, and field biologists to respond quickly to increased demand for services
 - Adequate financial resources to support increased need for services from NatureServe for data development, database enhancements, more frequent training and consultation.

- Adequate resources to make information available via the Web, and to participate in LandScope America

Conservation Works: NatureServe's Green Jobs Initiative

- With change comes opportunity
- Stimulus Funding: *Conservation Works*
- Interviewed more than 40 federal agency leaders
- Developed 20 proposal concepts for submission to eight different agencies
- Most concepts mailed April 3
- Next Step: Follow up with agencies

Have a Great Conference !

Share, think, challenge, explore, and enjoy!