

# News Release



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## Secretaries and Leaders of U.S. Natural Resources & Environmental Agencies Establish Partnership for Cooperative Conservation

WASHINGTON, D.C.-- In collaboration with the President's Council on Environmental Quality, leaders of the Departments of Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Defense and the Environmental Protection Agency have signed an interagency Memorandum of Understanding establishing the **Partnership for Cooperative Conservation**.

The agreement establishes a framework for federal agencies to increase collaboration with each other and with other public, private and nonprofit entities in natural resources and environmental management.

"This Partnership builds upon President Bush's vision of cooperative conservation to enable participants to take advantage of the enormous benefits that come from federal government agencies working more effectively together in the spirit of shared results and real solutions," said James L. Connaughton, Chairman of the President's Council on Environmental Quality. "This presents a classic opportunity for the whole of our effort to be greater than the sum of its parts." Other signatories agreed.

"This forward-looking agreement is needed because federal agencies engaged in natural resources and environmental management increasingly face issues that transcend jurisdictional boundaries and involve multiple stakeholders," Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne said.

In addition to Kempthorne and Connaughton, those signing the MOU included Edward T. Schafer, Secretary of Agriculture; Carlos Gutierrez, Secretary of Commerce; Stephen L. Johnson, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency; and Alex A. Beehler, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of the U.S. Department of Defense.

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“Cooperative conservation is the best strategy for federal agencies to work with private landowners, industry, and organizations to conserve our resources for the benefit of society today as well as future generations,” Secretary Schafer said.

The Partnership for Cooperative Conservation aims to institutionalize and sustain interagency momentum developed under President Bush’s Executive Order 13352: *Facilitating Cooperative Conservation*, dated August 30, 2004.

“The Partnership for Cooperative Conservation works because it engages the public, improves inter-agency communication, shares best practices and ensures collaboration,” Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez said.

The recent memorandum of understanding also responds to recommendations from the February 2008 Government Accountability Office report, GAO-08-262, *Natural Resource Management: Opportunities Exist to Enhance Federal Participation in Collaborative Efforts to Reduce Conflicts and Improve Natural Resource Conditions*.

Key elements of the MOU call for the agencies to:

- Create an interagency working group of all the participating agencies.
- Encourage actions that facilitate partnerships and collaboration at multiple levels.
- Coordinate priorities and action plans.
- Establish regular working group meetings and enable formation of ad hoc task groups and sub-teams.

“The challenges of conservation don't reside in one government agency. They belong to all of us. This MOU will help us to take on these challenges using teamwork, so we can identify problems and develop solutions,” said Beehler, who has been in charge of environmental and natural resources at the Department of Defense.

“This agreement is a testament to the work of all the departments,” said Kempthorne. I especially want to thank Deputy Secretary of the Interior Lynn Scarlett for her leadership on it.”

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