Press Release:

SCB North America Develops New Definition of "Conservation"

Building on SCBNA's 2025 webinar series "A Conversation on State Wildlife Agencies," SCBNA's Policy Issues Working Group collaboratively developed a definition of conservation (approved by the SCBNA Board of Directors on January 22, 2026). The definition is intended to guide actions within SCB North America, the broader Society for Conservation Biology global community, and all those interested in the protection and recovery of nature.

At a time of accelerating biodiversity loss and climate change, and as public values surrounding conservation evolve, SCBNA believes it is important to articulate a contemporary understanding of conservation that reflects both current science and society's changing relationship with nature. The definition is intended to promote clarity, encourage dialogue, and help guide SCBNA in advancing its mission.

SCBNA's Definition of Conservation

*"**Conservation** is a practice informed by the best evidence-based science and place-based knowledge whose outcomes protect and restore the natural environment—including its air, soil, water, biological diversity, ecosystem processes, and evolutionary potential—to ensure equitable benefits derived from nature and safeguard its value for current and future generations of all life."*

The definition was developed over a ten-month period through extensive discussion and input from researchers, educators, students, retired state and federal natural resource professionals, and other members of the public interested in conservation. In addition to the definition itself, the Working Group is preparing a companion paper that will further explain the rationale behind the definition and clarify the meaning of key terms.

"Conservation is ultimately about relationships - among people, nature, and future generations. This definition captures both how and why conservationists protect and restore nature in a rapidly changing world," explains Fred Koontz, SCBNA Policy Committee Member.

Why did SCBNA decide to create this definition?

"Definitions matter because they shape how we communicate, collaborate, and make decisions," states Lauren Jonaitis, former Vice President of Policy (SCBNA Board of Directors). "As conservation biology has evolved, SCB North America recognized the need for a modern, inclusive definition that reflects the field today. A shared definition provides the foundation needed to unite scientists, practitioners, policymakers, and communities around effective conservation action."

Teri Wright, SCBNA Policy Issues Working Group Member, says, this new definition "puts humans in their proper place in conservation. Instead of humans being front and center, it is obvious now that we are part of *nature* and therefore, it is to our benefit to ensure we save all we can in order for all remaining life on earth to flourish and recover in restored habitats."

SCBNA is encouraging cooperative new efforts to fully embrace the vision of conservation put forth in the definition. Achieving this vision will require strengthened cooperation and coordination among a diverse group of scientists, policymakers, and stakeholders.

For further information, or to share feedback on how you hope to apply the definition, please contact mail@scbnorthamerica.org.