

# Committee on Resources

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## Witness Testimony

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Testimony of

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Before the Subcommittee on Fisheries,

Wildlife, and Oceans

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, we appreciate this opportunity to offer our experience and views on the operations of the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation.

My name is Carlton Owen. I am Director of Wildlife and Resource Issues for Champion International Corporation. Champion is one of the nation's largest manufacturers of pulp, paper, and forest products. Additionally, we are among the nation's largest private forest landowners with more than 5.3 million acres in seventeen states.

In my capacity I am responsible for forestry-related environmental issues including wildlife habitat and forest policy for our lands in the U.S. In this position I have had a long and productive relationship with the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation.

While we have had numerous experiences with the Foundation, today we would like to share just three as being representative of our shared activities with the Foundation. Further, we would like to review some of the results those projects are yielding.

### **Basing Management Decisions on a Foundation of Science**

The business of forest management is complex at best. To be successful, especially as we seek to achieve truly sustainable forest management, it is increasingly important that our managers have access to the best science available. In many areas, the needed information just does not currently exist. Therefore, we and others must invest in new research to determine the best ways to manage our forests so as to protect all outputs and lifeforms of the forest.

On a large watershed that we own in the mountains of eastern Tennessee, the Foundation has joined us in a recently begun study with Tennessee Tech University. That study will help us to evaluate the feasibility and relative costs and effectiveness of several survey methodologies to determine the biological resources that occur in the freshwater streams on our property. We believe that this information will be valuable not only for our management purposes but also for use in enlisting other private landowners to assist in the protection of critical aquatic resources. The approaches we are pursuing break with that common to many research projects. There are many people who believe that private landowners are the problem -- but few who understand that we are and must be part of the solution. The Foundation is one of these few, and with their support, we have been able to elevate the status of private landowners in the conservation arena. Our goal is not just to add to the science and information base but also to develop cost-effective methodologies that landowners can apply in their own management planning, and develop effective protocols for future cooperative efforts. With such simple tools based upon sound science, private landowners can continue to do their part in the overall effort to protect the nation's aquatic resources.

### **Putting Information in the Hands of Those Who Need it Most**

The concern for identification and protection of threatened and endangered species on private lands is emotionally-charged and often fraught with conflict. The Foundation has joined us in a pilot project in the State of Alabama where we have sought to provide common-sense, user-friendly information directly to those who need it most -- private logging contractors and foresters working with private landowners.

The result is a full-color, shirt-pocket-sized field guide identifying listed species and providing forest management considerations. It is free of the technical and legal jargon that all too often serves to frighten and confuse. Like this field guide, our goal is simple -- to put usable information in the hands of those people who are most likely to encounter listed species on a daily basis. By taking this approach we are seeking to enlist these concerned citizens in the protection of species.

This project has been so successful that we have just completed a second printing in Alabama, and we plan to develop guides for several of the other states in which we operate. Our success with the Foundation has encouraged a number of other agencies and conservation organizations to join us in these follow-up efforts. The Foundation has helped us with this low-tech approach to endangered species identification and protection that is building bridges rather than barriers.

### **Finding Solutions Through Cooperation**

In an ideal world, sufficient incentives would exist for private landowners to actively participate in species conservation. Unfortunately, because of the way in which the ESA has been implemented, the threat of an endangered species being found on one's private property evokes visions of horror for the average citizen.

If those who are concerned about protection of the nation's wildlife resources are not able to overcome this all-too-common feeling, we will never be able to enlist the nation's majority landowners -- private citizens -- in efforts to protect and recover our nation's bountiful wildlife.

We, like many others including the Foundation, are seeking new ways to approach protection and management of listed species. We'd like to bring to your attention one of the most promising models for conservation anywhere in the nation -- Project SHARE in Maine. Project SHARE, which stands for Salmon Habitat and River Enhancement, was started two years ago as an alternative means to the normal gridlock that often results with the listing of a new species.

In this case the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service were considering a petition to list the Atlantic salmon as threatened or endangered throughout all or a portion of its range. While some of the advocates for listing saw a new tool to stop otherwise legitimate land management, private landowners and sportsmen saw the threats of increased management costs, declines in property values, and regulatory burdens. In the words of Secretary of the Interior Babbitt, another "train wreck."

Project SHARE was formed by Champion and two other forest products companies with extensive holdings in the prime salmon habitat of Downeast Maine. Our goal was not to form a coalition to oppose listing, rather to create a coalition to address voluntary habitat restoration and management. Our belief was simple enough -- if we could support the state and federal agencies that have responsibility for protection of the species and show alternatives to the normal regulatory approaches that follow species listing, then the responsible agencies would have more options to develop flexible, constructive, and potentially beneficial plans. Today, Project SHARE boasts a long list of cooperators, including state and federal agencies, universities, sportsmen's groups, local businesses, blueberry growers, and the aquaculture industry. To date, the bulk of the funds necessary to meet the organization's goals in research, management, and education, have come from the private landowners themselves. However, active involvement and encouragement by the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation and challenge grants have made SHARE a success beyond our wildest dreams.

Because SHARE offers a positive forum for constructive action, many organizations from the private, public, and non-profit sector have come together. As a result of the success of this broad-based effort, the Federal agencies originally proposing a listing action to have recommended a course of action that could substantially limit regulatory burdens while strengthening the potential for focus on the wildlife resource.

In short three gains stand out:

- The recovery planning process is being led by the state with direct involvement by all of the interested and affected parties;
- Recommendations being considered are less "command and control" and more positive in nature; and
- Less time is being spent in "fighting the listing" and more time is being spent in "planning and implementing the

recovery."

We believe SHARE stands almost alone as a potential success story in recent application of the Endangered Species Act. It meets several of our critical tests for success where endangered species are addressed:

- states take the lead in recovery planning;
- private landowners and other affected parties are part of the planning process; and
- non-regulatory solutions are given high priority

While these by no means exhaust our concerns about the current ESA, they do provide hope that creative solutions to species protection and recovery are available. I'll not go further into my pitch for reasonable reform of the ESA. We'll save that for another time.**Final Points**

While the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation is far broader than the involvement that we have depicted, we believe these three examples high-light some of the real values and successes.

- First, the Foundation is leveraging funds and encouraging research that will help develop a platform of peer reviewed, sound-science to aid in the management of the nation's natural resources.
- Secondly, the Foundation's staff and board have recognized that enlisting everyone in the protection of the nation's natural resources is critical to success. Education and information materials such as those we have jointly designed for loggers are serving to enlist others for conservation while additionally serving to dampen the fears flamed by command and control regulation common in the past.
- Additionally, our experience with Project SHARE supported in large part by the Foundation stands as a shining example of the potential to build bridges for conservation; to take an inclusive approach to species recovery; and to explore new and more productive ways to address endangered species protection. As an organization that very effectively bridges the gap between federal agencies, the academic/scientific community, and the private sector, the Foundation is an invaluable resource for us in promoting the role of the private sector in conservation.

While the Foundation's funds are often critical in leveraging additional financial resources for projects like those we have described, there is another, perhaps more important benefit. The National Fish & Wildlife Foundation provides credibility and creativity that bring for profit corporations, not-for-profit conservation interests, and government agencies together for the good of conservation. The positive relationships formed often last well beyond the life of a given project.

Our experience suggests that the Foundation is achieving important results that will prove increasingly important to the cause of natural resource conservation. We for one are proud to be a partner in this success.

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