

**Testimony of Mark F. Rockefeller, Chairman, Board of Directors
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation before the
Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife Regarding
“Managing Ocean and Wildlife Resources in a Dynamic Environment:
Priorities for the New Administration and the 111th Congress”**

Madame Chairwoman, Congressman Brown and Members of the Subcommittee –

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to appear today to discuss the current trends in conservation and environmental work throughout the United States and what can be done at the federal level, in particular, to encourage the expansion of private funding.

As we all know, these have been especially difficult and challenging times. While the last few years have provided a very positive trend related to increased environmental awareness and giving – the entire landscape has changed in the last six months. Overall philanthropic giving has taken a sudden dip and environmental giving is expected to lose resources as funders begin to respond to more ‘human need’ related programs (such as shelters, food banks, etc.).

With the unanticipated and rapid decline in the economy and also major changes in the political climate, I believe the way to increase conservation funding from private sources (corporate, individual, and foundations) is to:

- 1) Provide clear prioritization of federal goals and objectives; and
- 2) Create incentives to maintain and increase environmental giving by promoting the partnering of private and federal resources around common goals.

First, I need to say that I believe strongly that there are many immediate and high-priority conservation needs. And, more importantly, I strongly believe there is significant financial giving capacity that can be harnessed from the corporate community and other philanthropic funders if the right actions are taken, even in this difficult economy.

As this Subcommittee knows well, the Federal Government continues to be the largest funder of conservation work throughout the United States. Congress and the Federal Government oversee much of that funding directly and other funds are distributed to state fish and wildlife agencies through federal programs such as the Pittman-Robertson Act.

The federal dollars are divided among several different agencies and cover hundreds (if not thousands) of different priorities. This investment has significant public benefits and positive impacts – on land, in the sea, and in the air. As a conservationist and father, I strongly support these efforts.

That said, federal agency expenditures on conservation are also so broad and diverse, it is incredibly difficult to comprehend exactly what the Federal Government's overall goal is for such spending. What are the federal conservation priorities?

For example, many federal statutes require agencies to treat all issues equally rather than encouraging agencies and conservation partners to prioritize their efforts around achieving measurable conservation outcomes. Moreover, across federal agencies -- and even within individual agencies -- there are differing conservation goals and objectives. For private funders, these competing priorities cause confusion and lead to inaction.

State Wildlife Action Plans have helped to establish priorities at the state level; however, many of these plans are still quite broad and don't adequately address conservation issues that cross state boundaries (e.g., conservation of habitat for migratory species).

Major private funders in conservation tend to be focused on many of the same funding priorities of the Federal Government. However, often the programs are not operated as a single effort. While funders in conservation tend to gravitate towards (not away from) the Federal Government (largely because of leveraging opportunities), it is my experience that the federal agencies are either not equipped, not interested, or otherwise constrained from working with private funders. Federal Government lacks the necessary culture of "partnerships."

Why?

Our experience is that private funders are generally seeking public partners to leverage their funds, ensure a strong scientific-basis for their investments, identify strategic priorities, and provide appropriate oversight to ensure a project achieves the anticipated results once funding has been initiated.

The Federal Government is an attractive partner because it has financial resources, but most importantly, it has the ability to provide planning, science, strategy and certainty of completion.

As Chairman of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), I oversee an entity that was specifically created by Congress to promote and fund public-private partnerships. What started as a small experiment to leverage federal funding for conservation through public-private partnerships has grown into a highly successful, major catalyst for conservation action. Since our inception 25 years ago, NFWF has successfully leveraged nearly \$500 million in federal funds into over \$1.5 billion in on-the-ground and in-the-water conservation.

A few recent successes exemplify how NFWF has been able to establish partnerships among corporations and federal agencies with great success. For example, NFWF and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recently established a partnership with Covanta Energy, a waste-to-energy company located in the U.S., and Schnitzer Steel, to pilot a program, *Fishing for Energy*, through which fishermen dispose of derelict gear, free of charge, that Covanta in turn burns to create energy. And the results have been extraordinary; in one year, the partnership has collected and disposed of over 122 tons of derelict fishing gear from 10 gear collection ports in the Northeastern United States. Each ton of debris burned produces enough electricity to power one home for 25 days. That is enough recycled energy to run a U.S. home for eight years!

In 2008 NFWF also announced a landmark partnership with ArcelorMittal—the world’s largest steel company—to address the ever increasing pressure on the freshwater ecosystems of the Great Lakes. The pooled resources of ArcelorMittal and several federal agencies has facilitated unprecedented coordination of partners and resources to support projects including habitat improvements for the endangered piping plover in Michigan, stream corridor restoration in Illinois, invasive species removal in Wisconsin, and wetland restoration in New York. With the President’s FY 2010 budget request including significant increases for Great Lakes restoration, the future for partnerships in the region is very bright.

While we continue to experience a period of growth and success in bringing new funds to wildlife conservation, we still continue to fail to fully maximize the potential. Even NFWF (an organization uniquely positioned and experienced at working with agencies) finds it difficult to convince agencies to partner with us in order to leverage existing federal funds with private dollars. Too often, federal agencies opt instead to do their work alone and only with federal funds.

I am not opposed to the Federal Government as the single funder of certain efforts – but as an avid conservationist and businessman, I want to see all potential funds (both public and private) captured and put on the ground during this time of great environmental need.

We believe there are several untapped opportunities to establish new partnerships that will expand the base of funding for conservation. Our own experience this past year working with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) illustrates some of this potential. Through the Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program, NRCS awards approximately \$20 million annually to support projects that advance innovative practices and technology to improve stewardship on working farms and ranches. This program is highly attractive to private funders as it is geared to ensuring that America maximizes food production while enhancing environmental protection goals such as minimizing soil and nutrient runoff, improving wildlife habitat, and reducing water and energy consumption.

NFWF reached out to several corporations and private foundations who share an interest in these issues. Based on our initial inquiries, we were able to identify 6-10 private funders who were excited about the opportunity to work with NRCS and NFWF to leverage funds and expand the pool of financial resources to address the high demand for this program.

We believe there are other existing federal programs that offer similar opportunities to generate partnerships with interested corporations and private foundations. It is critical for the federal government to take full advantage of these partnership opportunities if we want to achieve measurable progress in restoring healthy populations of fish and wildlife and their habitats.

I was very pleased to see in recent days statements from Secretary Salazar regarding his efforts to define a set of conservation priorities under an initiative dubbed "America's Treasures." While this initiative has yet to take shape and definition, I am very hopeful about this opportunity.

As you may be aware, NFWF is scheduled for reauthorization this coming year. I offer the opportunity to use our reauthorization as a mechanism for this Subcommittee to consider changes that will facilitate the kind of effective public private partnerships we have described today.

I believe efforts to clarify, inspire and focus potential private support will be very beneficial.

I appreciate your allowing me this time before the Committee. I am available at the appropriate time to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you again.