

Marine Conservation Finance

NEW AND SUSTAINED FUNDING FOR OCEAN AND COASTAL CONSERVATION, RESTORATION, AND PLANNING

For years, there has been chronic underinvestment in our oceans. Underfunded and shrinking budgets at the federal, regional, state, and local levels have left critical habitats unmapped and unprotected; reduced scientific investments; hampered restoration efforts; and impeded new, impactful initiatives such as restoration, coastal and marine spatial planning, and ecosystem-based management. In 2011, The Nature Conservancy will work with partners and experts to help identify sources and promising ideas to increase investments in our oceans and coasts.

SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS

NEW OCEAN FUNDING SOURCES

The Conservancy is launching a 12-month study to identify new and innovative financing strategies to fund ocean and coastal conservation, restoration, and planning initiatives. The strategies and ideas will be identified based upon academic literature searches, on-the-ground experience, and ideas brought forth by experts and leaders in the marine field, as well as other sectors.

The results of this research will be compiled into a draft white paper that outlines a range of potential funding options, and roundtables will be convened to vet and discuss the ideas.

Despite declining funding trends, public opinion poll results and the outcomes of more than 30 state and local referenda in 2010 reveal that the great majority of the American people still believe in the importance of protecting natural resources.



A tricolored heron hunts for small fish at low tide among the exposed oyster reefs in Port Aransas, Texas. © Erika Nortemann/ TNC

Participants will be drawn from experts in conservation finance and the Conservancy's extensive network of partners. Participants will be asked to refine the options, generate new creative approaches, and expand the community that is supportive of new funding.

This endeavor will culminate in a final white paper that details possible funding options that work in the challenging fiscal environment we face, and considers the potential interest of partners.



Exploring the intertidal zone along Puget Sound in Washington.
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CREATING EFFICIENCIES IN EXISTING FEDERAL FUNDING

Environmental issues typically receive less attention during economic downturns. The recession and high unemployment have made job creation the top priority in the nation. Furthermore, the soaring federal budget deficit has made it clear that spending must be stabilized or reduced. The vast majority of state governments face similar budget problems.

In light of this changed federal funding landscape, the marine conservation community will need to do more with less. Improved inter-agency coordination in the federal budget planning and execution process emerges as one of the most efficient ways to achieve conservation results despite challenging economic times.

The Conservancy and its partners will work with the Administration to identify a series of recommendations to create increased funding

efficiency among programs. The Conservancy will also sponsor a forum on the federal budget process. The forum will provide a thorough review of the mechanics of the federal budget process and highlight budget processes within specific agencies, ultimately helping the NGO community to proactively engage with government agencies on budget planning and execution.

FOUNDATION FOR LASTING RESULTS

The Conservancy's Marine Conservation Finance project is driven by the belief that establishing targeted and sustainable conservation financing for our oceans and coasts is critical to balancing environmental needs with human uses. Conserving these ecosystems through adequate funding ensures that they maintain the ability to sustain people and nature, both now and into the future.



Sea urchin in Hawaii. © Nancy Sefton

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