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U.S. Foundation for International Conservation Act

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Leveraging Public-Private Finance for Conservation

Protected areas are commonly recognized as the most effective tool to secure globally significant land and seascapes, their biodiversity, and iconic species. In doing so, these areas contribute to local economies and support U.S. development and foreign policy objectives by providing clean water, supporting food security, and promoting governance and economic opportunities.

However, many of these areas are chronically underfunded, limiting their ability to achieve effective management. Currently, only 13% of the world's annual spending on global biodiversity conservation is allocated to developing countries where most globally significant biodiversity occurs.¹ Further, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, these areas are vulnerable to boom and bust funding cycles in which they must focus on short-term, project-based deliverables, rarely covering core recurring costs. Evidence shows that establishing effective management of individual protected areas costs between \$5-10 million per area per year.

The **U.S. Foundation for International Conservation Act** (S. 618/H.R. 6727), is a bipartisan bill led by Sens. Coons (D-DE) and Graham (R-SC) and Reps. McCaul (R-TX), Meeks (D-NY), Joyce (R-OH), and McCollum (D-MN). It has been introduced in the 117th and 118th Congresses.

The Foundation would match private philanthropic and U.S. government funds to provide long-term, predictable funding for core protected area management activities. This is generally \$1-3 million per area per year. Once in place, this financing can attract additional funds. A review of specific sites found that for every dollar governments invest in protected areas, the economic rate of return is at least 6 to 28 times the original investment.² A USFICA investment of \$1-3 million/year is likely to leverage at least an additional \$6-45 million in additional investments from other sources.

What Would Be Financed?

The Act will help fund the professional staff, technology, scientific monitoring, and on-ground activities that are essential to sustain the success of protected areas and indigenous territories. To ensure its funds are used effectively, the Foundation will target areas where national government and private spending have demonstrated the commitment that qualifies the area for Foundation support. This would typically take 2-3 years of preparation prior to Foundation support. The Foundation will also target its investments to countries where rule of law is reliable, government and local communities will agree to pay-for-performance terms, and where they have already prepared for implementation to improve the lives and economies of local people (i.e. robust benefit sharing mechanisms, sustainable agriculture, forestry, hunting, and wildlife tourism).

¹ World Bank. 2020. Mobilizing Private Finance for Nature. © World Bank, Washington, DC.

² World Bank. 2021. Banking on Protected Areas: Promoting Sustainable Protected Area Tourism to Benefit Local Economies. © World Bank, Washington, DC.



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Conserving Globally Important Places

Projects that have host-country government and local community support and create economic opportunities for local communities would be prioritized. The Foundation's investments will focus on countries with globally significant biodiversity and a demonstrated commitment to conservation. Safeguarding "natural security" against the drivers of famine, extreme weather, and authoritarian rule costs far less than suffering the costs of losing vital benefits provided by healthy ecosystems.

With core functions in place, host countries and the NGOs working in these areas can attract additional funds from other sources, including from revenue, other countries, and philanthropy. The Act's \$100 million authorization, which is doubled by the required private match, provides a carefully derived contribution of \$1 billion over 5 years.

The governing Board of the new Foundation consists of USG officials, donors, and independent experts, providing the U.S. government with an important role in oversight and governance, while bringing private sector donors and expertise to the table. The Foundation would also be required to establish safeguards and accountability mechanisms. By requiring projects to be implementation-ready, funding would be focused toward on-the-ground results and bringing economic, social, and cultural benefits to local communities.

This public - private partnership model of leveraging U.S. funding and expertise has been successful in other

A History of Protected Area Partnerships

In the last 100 years, WCS has protected 27 million km² of the highest ecological integrity areas across the globe. Helping nations and Indigenous People establish and manage 245 parks and territories protecting nature, securing local economies, and strengthening cultural identities, has been at the forefront. WCS is also a partner of the German Legacy Landscapes Fund and two sites where WCS works are initial pilot sites.

Within South America's Madidi landscape, one of the most biodiverse areas on the planet, WCS and partners are working to conserve biological and cultural diversity and consolidate Indigenous territorial management over 15,000km². WCS has established alliances between Indigenous organizations, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, the Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, bilateral donors, the host government, Kreyal Coffee in the U.S., and others to support natural resource management projects including shade-grown coffee, wild cacao, ecotourism, and the growing gourmet market for conservation-friendly ingredients.

congressionally-established charitable organizations and in the Legacy Landscapes Fund launched by the German Government in 2021. The U.S. Foundation would complement existing U.S. international conservation programs and those from other donor nations, including the Legacy Landscapes Fund.

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