WILDLIFE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

A VOLUNTARY, COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO SPECIES CONSERVATION ON PRIVATE LANDS

National Alliance of Forest Owners

National Council for Air and Stream Improvement

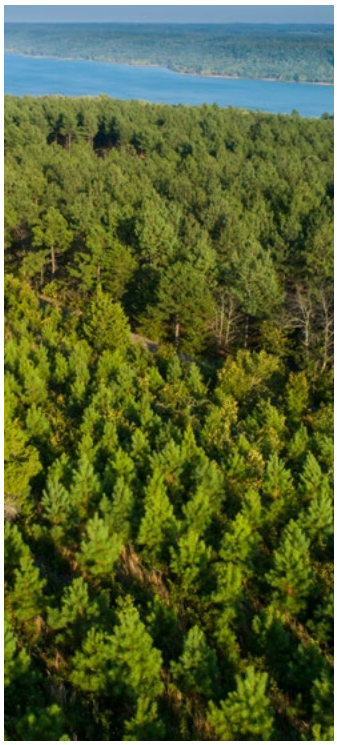
The Wildlife Conservation Initiative (WCI) has a very simple objective: to conserve common, at-risk, and listed species through active forest management of private working forests.

The WCI was founded on the recognition that private working forests are an important conservation tool.

NAFO members own and manage more than 44 million acres of private working forests in **30** states – the scale needed to achieve real conservation success. NAFO members demonstrate their ongoing commitment to species conservation through independent, third-party verification that they manage their forests sustainably.

The WCI, which began as individual, regional collaborations, has now grown into a formal, agency-wide initiative and a model for engaging forest owners, federal and state agencies, and stakeholders in effective species conservation.

NAFO member companies partner with NCASI, the USFWS, and other collaborators to identify priority species that need private working forests for their habitat, collect field data on how active forest management affects species populations, and use the data to determine together how to maintain and improve conservation benefits.



The WCI has ongoing species conservation projects in every USFWS region where NAFO members own or manage significant acres of forest land.

A FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

In January of 2023, the National Alliance of Forest Owners (NAFO), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the National Council for Air and Steam Improvement, Inc. (NCASI) signed a ground-breaking Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formalizing the Wildlife Conservation Initiative as a programmatic partnership for voluntary and proactive collaborative conservation benefiting common, at-risk, and listed species.

The Wildlife Conservation MOU:

- Promotes cooperation and collaboration.
- Creates consistency as a USFWS agency-wide initiative.
- Encourages the partners to explore proactive, voluntary conservation efforts before regulatory action is warranted.
- Codifies the value of active forest management in private working forests as a powerful conservation tool.

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PROJECTS OVERVIEW

The WCI has 14 conservation projects underway in 6 of the 8 USFWS Regions. Two additional projects are being planned. WCI projects are varied in terms of species and location, crossing state and USFWS lines.

U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE REGIONS:

REGION 1

Bees: Assessing pollinator biodiversity across different forested landscapes

Pollinators & Carnivores: Investigating plant pollinator networks and diets of forest carnivores

Red Tree Vole: Understanding how red tree voles use younger forests

REGION 3

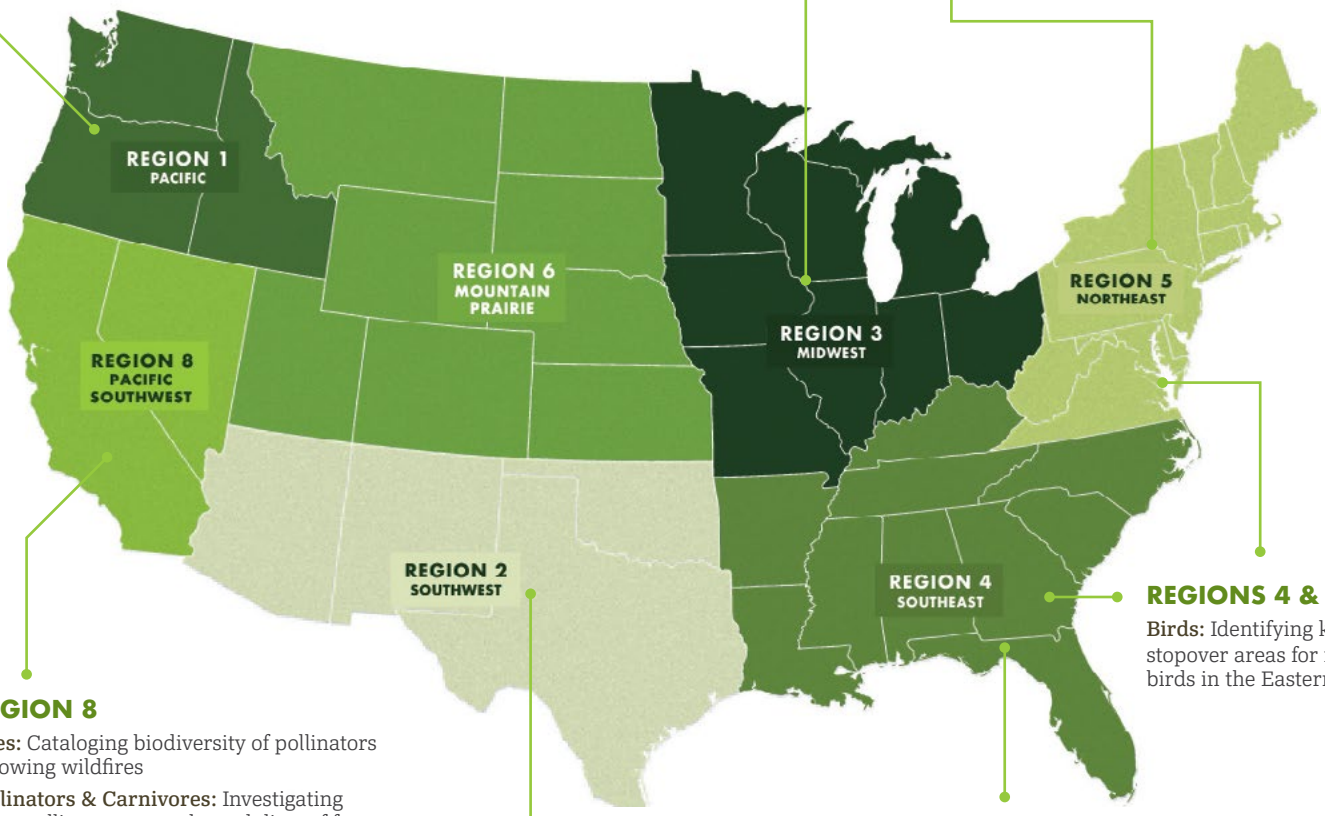
Wood Turtle: Understanding conservation benefits of sustainable forest management on wood turtles

REGION 5

Wood Turtle: Understanding conservation benefits of sustainable forest management on wood turtles

Birds: Assessing management strategies for conservation of at-risk bird species

Butterflies: Evaluating the status and distribution of the Diana fritillary



REGIONS 4 & 5

Birds: Identifying key stopover areas for migratory birds in the Eastern U.S.

REGION 8

Bees: Cataloging biodiversity of pollinators following wildfires

Pollinators & Carnivores: Investigating plant pollinator networks and diets of forest carnivores

Western Pond Turtle: Evaluating the status and distribution of at-risk western pond turtle

REGION 2

Aquatic Species: Surveying at-risk mussel populations in rivers and streams surrounded by working forests

Bees: Surveying native bumble bees and long-horned bees on forested landscapes

REGION 4

Gopher Tortoise: Understanding how gopher tortoises use open canopy forests

Multi-species: Documenting the direct link between sustainably managed forests and biodiversity at a landscape scale

NOTE

Project titles have been simplified for ease of understanding... over the loud objections from the Ph.Ds who are engaged in this important work

LEARN MORE

For more information on the WCI or any of these projects, please email WCI@NAFOAlliance.org.