

Embrace Private Conservation of Land and Natural Resources

Private stewardship and markets play a critical role in land and natural resource conservation. Much of America's land and other natural resources have suffered because government ownership encourages mismanagement and overuse, because no individual has a long-term stake in protecting resources owned in common. In addition, public lands are managed based on political priorities that often produce misguided political management decisions. Examples include the devastation caused by uncontrolled forest fires, overgrazing, and destruction of species and habitat.

- Lawmakers should consider marketplace incentives and private property-based approaches to encourage land and natural resource conservation.

- Existing laws impede private conservation by making property owners lose use of their land. These laws should be reformed. These include measures in the Endangered Species Act, wetlands regulations, and potential invasive species laws.
- Lawmakers should look for ways to privatize resources owned in common to allow private conservation. Areas in which this has been done successfully but could be expanded include the establishment of fishing rights, privatization of coral reefs, and privatization of species and their habitats in private wildlife refuges.

Angela Logomasini and CEI Staff