

**Conserving the Global Landscape:
Influencing National and International Policies through Environmental Diplomacy**

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The presentation describes the role of the US Department of State in promoting national and international policies to protect the global environment and sustainably manage natural resources, including land-based (or "landscape") resources. It also highlights real world US foreign policy initiatives to conserve tropical forests, coral reefs and wetlands.

State Department's role

The Department of State is the foreign policy and diplomacy arm of the US Government. Its mission is to create a more secure, democratic and prosperous world for the benefit of the American people and the international community. The Department operates through its headquarters in Washington, DC and 288 embassies, consulates and other missions abroad.

In addition to its core consular functions, the traditional role of the State Department is to represent US economic and political interests to foreign governments bilaterally and through multilateral fora such as the United Nations, World Bank and NATO. While these functions remain critically important, the last two decades have seen a new role emerge: "Environmental diplomacy."

Why environmental diplomacy?

Fifty years of exploding populations is destroying natural resources at unprecedented rates in many regions. Fisheries are depleted, tropical forests are disappearing, wildlife species are being driven to extinction. This contributes to poverty, famine and economic and political instability. *Environmental diplomacy is about recognizing the need to conserve and sustainably manage natural resources for the benefit of current and future generations.*

At the same time, a decade of globalization in the form of rapidly expanding trade and related economic growth has placed new strains on the environment in some regions. Illegally harvested timber is a growing share of the world timber trade. Dolphins are severely threatened by the tuna industry. Invasive alien species are wiping out native plants and costing the US and other countries billions of dollars a year. *Environmental diplomacy is about finding ways to make "trade and environment" mutually supportive.*

Add to this a new recognition of the global and often irreversible dimensions of many of our actions. Climate change, ozone depletion and biodiversity loss from mountains to the

high seas affect all countries and all people. *Environmental diplomacy is about finding consensus solutions to global problems.*

Short-sighted development policies half a world away can impact Americans by destroying wildlife we value (even if from afar), increasing resource scarcity and commodity prices, and engendering costly humanitarian and disaster relief assistance. *The goal of environmental diplomacy is to encourage countries to adopt policies that balance economic growth and resource conservation in order to achieve long-term sustainable development.*

Ridges to reefs

America's environmental diplomacy efforts are led by the Department of State's Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES), established by Congress in the 1970's. The Bureau consults closely with a range of government agencies and major US-based environmental and business interests, leads US delegations to international negotiations, and today coordinates the development of foreign policy initiatives related to land, sea, space, science and human health.

Within OES, the Office of Ecology and Terrestrial Conservation represents US interests in a variety of international fora dealing with mountains, forests, rangelands, wetlands, coral reefs and related wildlife values. Venues include the United Nations (e.g. UN Forum on Forests or UN Food and Agriculture Organization), global treaties (e.g. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, International Tropical Timber Organization) and initiatives among "like-minded" countries on specific issues or regions.

This presentation describes how our foreign policy from "ridges to reefs" is formulated and advanced and highlights US-inspired international conservation initiatives launched by three Administrations:

- International Coral Reef Initiative initiated in 1993 in response to destructive cyanide fishing, coral bleaching and marine pollution
- Tropical Forest Conservation Act, a debt for nature program signed into US law in 1998, building on the 1991 Enterprise for the Americas Initiative
- Congo Basin Forest Partnership launched by Secretary of State Colin Powell at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, September 2002
- President's Initiative Against Illegal Logging launched by Secretary Powell in Washington, DC, July 2003
- Forest and wetland reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq and Liberia, 2003-2004