

# News Release



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## **Fish and Wildlife Service Partners with Smithsonian Institution and George Mason University to Foster Conservation Leadership**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute (SCBI), and George Mason University (Mason) have created a partnership to coordinate and foster professional training, career development and youth education for a new generation of natural resource conservation professionals. The partnership will utilize the shared capacities and expertise of the three organizations to provide hands-on training and rigorous instruction to better prepare students for the challenges of biodiversity conservation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Service Director Dan Ashe, SCBI Director Steve Monfort, and Mason Provost Peter Stearns formalized the partnership on October 26, 2012, with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at Mason's Arlington, VA campus.

"The global resource challenges we face demand a new approach – one that uses the most advanced science to deliver effective, landscape-scale conservation," said Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe. "This partnership-driven approach requires conservation professionals who not only have a thorough grounding in science, but who are also adept at strategic thinking, consensus building and project management. This partnership offers us an unparalleled opportunity to provide training and education that will strengthen and develop these skills."

"We are thrilled to have the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service joining forces with the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation," said SCBI Director Steve Monfort. "The new Memorandum of Understanding will enable us to work synergistically to strengthen and enhance our education and training programs for current and future practitioners in the fields of biodiversity conservation, resource management, and sustainability."

SCBI and Mason have formed the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation (SMCS), located on SCBI's property in Front Royal, Virginia. This residential, hands-on, inter-disciplinary collaboration supports education opportunities in conservation science to shape a global network of conservation leaders.

"This agreement – of key importance to the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation – will create a 'pipeline' for the next generation of conservation scientists and leaders," said Peter Stearns, Provost at George Mason University. "The partnership will engage and educate high school, undergraduate, graduate and professional

students and afford them career development opportunities at the Fish and Wildlife Service and other federal agencies."

The MOU identifies a variety of mutually beneficial training, human resources and communications endeavors. Potential areas of collaboration include:

- Providing technical assistance on a variety of topics, from business operations to training and education development
- Developing hands-on, experiential training that prepares undergraduate, graduate and professional students for work in the field of global biodiversity conservation
- Coordinating and executing internships and/or student employment opportunities, consistent with Federal hiring regulations, practices and policy
- Providing expertise in undergraduate and graduate academic instruction in conservation theory, field methods and the human dimensions of conservation.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is the nation's principal federal wildlife conservation agency, entrusted with protecting, restoring and enhancing America's wild places and wild creatures. Just as diverse habitats make for healthy landscapes, a diverse and professional workforce can be more resilient, adaptable and effective. The Service is looking at new strategies and approaches to develop, recruit and retain a creative and innovative workforce to protect fish, wildlife and their habitats for future generations of Americans. For more information on a career with the Service, visit <http://www.fws.gov/humancapital/jobs.html>.

Through its National Conservation Training Center, the Service offers a wide range of professional development and training opportunities designed to meet the conservation training needs of the agency, other Federal agencies and the broader conservation community.

SCBI provides a variety of training and capacity building programs for undergraduate, graduate and professional audiences, specifically targeting individuals and institutions from developing countries.

Mason is an innovative, entrepreneurial academic institution with national distinction in a range of academic fields. It has long-standing graduate and undergraduate programs in conservation biology, conservation studies, and environmental science and policy and has tailored graduate programs to professionals and returning students.

*The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov). Connect with our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/usfws](http://www.facebook.com/usfws), follow our tweets at [www.twitter.com/usfws](http://www.twitter.com/usfws), watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws>, and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfws>.*

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