



OVERVIEW

WHAT IS NATURAL SECURITY?

The term “natural security” recognizes that the ties between **conservation** and **security** have become increasingly clear. The world is less safe when criminals profit from stealing and poaching countries’ wildlife and natural resources, and when shortages of fresh water, food, and other natural resources lead to instability and conflict.

WHY DOES INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION MATTER?

Targeted U.S. investment in international conservation efforts contributes to America’s long-term foreign policy objectives and enhances U.S. economic and national security interests around the globe.

HOW DOES THE U.S. INVEST IN INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION?

The U.S. is a longstanding leader in international conservation, as demonstrated by lawmakers’ sustained, bipartisan support for critical federal programs that underpin efforts around the globe.

Together with other countries, non-profit organizations, and private sector partners, the U.S. government:



Works to enhance law enforcement to combat wildlife poaching and disrupt wildlife trafficking networks known to finance crime, corruption, and violent extremism.



Invests in protecting fresh water, forests, fertile soil, and fisheries to promote economic stability and ensure communities have access to clean water, food, and other resources they need to survive and prosper.



Helps countries maintain natural defenses that can mitigate the effects of natural disasters, such as floods and landslides, and make communities more secure and resilient.



Strengthens natural resource governance, legal trade, and sustainable supply chains to level the playing field for American workers and provide economic opportunities for U.S. companies in the developing world.

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AMERICANS SUPPORT NATURAL SECURITY

Nearly four in five American voters—regardless of political affiliation—support the current, modest U.S. investment in international conservation. **More than half** believe that environmental problems elsewhere in the world have a major impact on the United States.

Americans recognize that international conservation efforts, which account for only **a fraction of one percent of the U.S. federal budget**, provide Americans with billions of dollars in value by addressing key security challenges:

- Helping to prevent global conflict and instability;
- Reducing international crime;
- Guarding against natural disasters; and
- Promoting free and fair trade.

KEY NATURAL SECURITY CHALLENGES



Wildlife Trafficking

The illegal trade of endangered and threatened wildlife and their parts—such as elephant ivory, rhino horn, tiger bones, pangolins, and shark fins, as well as illegal timber and fish—is a transnational organized crime generating billions of dollars annually. These profits finance criminal syndicates and extremist groups that threaten U.S. security interests and corrupt the rule of law.



Food and Water Scarcity

Natural resource scarcity, such as water shortages, soil degradation, and loss of food supplies, can lead to population displacement and make communities vulnerable to conflict and radicalization. Disputes over natural resources exacerbate existing instability, contribute to regional tensions, and can erupt into armed conflict, threatening American interests overseas.



Natural Disasters

Natural disasters—hurricanes, droughts, floods, landslides—can devastate communities around the globe, requiring years of costly recovery and rebuilding and further straining natural resources. By investing to maintain health forests, wetlands, aquifers, and rivers, we can help blunt the impacts of natural disasters when they strike and make communities more resilient to extreme weather events.



U.S. Economy and Markets

Illegal trade in natural resource commodities, including timber and seafood, undermines global markets, depresses prices, and makes it difficult for law-abiding U.S. companies to compete. By working to stop illegal trade and help countries manage their natural resources legally and sustainably, new markets for U.S. products open and U.S. jobs and companies' supply chains are protected.