

Testimony before the Commission on Ocean Policy
by
John Berry: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
June 14, 2002

Good morning, my name is John Berry and I am the Executive Director of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. I want to thank you, Admiral Watkins and members of the Commission, for this opportunity to testify before you today and share with you some of the exciting models and key lessons that we at the Foundation have learned after 17 years in working with the federal government and the private sector to conserve our nation's natural resources. Our mission at the Foundation is to sustain our fish, wildlife, and plant resources through the protection of vital habitats and better stewardship. The Foundation achieves this mission by forging partnerships between the public and private sectors, bringing new resources to conservation by leveraging public and private funding, and by investing in emerging conservation techniques and innovative solutions to natural resource challenges. The Foundation offers a new perspective on coordinating resources to benefit ocean governance by pulling from our experience in partnership building with over one thousand government, private and community organizations.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation continues to look for ways in which we can help restore, protect, and better manage our ocean resources while still providing for the multiple socio-economic uses that depend on them. The Foundation believes that people are the missing link to many of our ocean resource problems and also knows that there are many models and lessons learned through the Foundation's experience that can contribute to this discussion. Specific recommendations to enhance ocean policy overall include:

1. Bolstering limited ocean management resources by engaging the private sector;
2. Reducing agency overlap and inefficiency by coordinating federal resources;
3. Accepting and including people and economics as part of the conservation equation; and
4. Empowering communities through support of locally driven stewardship and management activities.

1. Bolstering limited ocean management resources by engaging the private sector

Key Recommendation *Engaging the private sector: Since corporations also need to be responsible stewards of land and water resources, it is critical to engage them in dialogue and assist them in conservation investments.*

Monetary resources for most agencies that work within the coastal zone are often stretched thin between mandates. This shortage of funds can at times hamper managers from meeting requirements, but even more importantly it leaves very little additional resources for testing of new and innovative ideas, constituency services, and community efforts. All of these additional

activities would greatly contribute to a more informed and more efficient use of ocean management resources.

The Foundation partners with many of the agencies charged with ocean resource responsibilities and works to leverage these limited dollars with funding from the private sector through direct partnerships with corporate and foundation sponsors as well as with grantee matching funds. Specifically, through the life of the NOAA/NFWF partnership (1994-2001), the Foundation managed \$21,806,880 of NOAA funds to the benefit of coastal and marine resources and leveraged these funds to \$52,013,630, an average ratio of 2.4:1.

Our partnership with the Shell Oil Company Foundation is an excellent example of how corporate America can play a leadership role in restoring and conserving our natural resources. In fact, we feel so strongly about the importance of private-sector partnerships that we see their participation as the model, rather than the exception, in marine and all natural resource conservation programs. Corporate partners bring new ideas, expertise, financial resources, and environmental education opportunities that extend beyond what the environmental community and government can do on their own.

Model for Public/Private Partnerships

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation joined with the Shell Oil Company Foundation in 1998 to create the Shell Marine Habitat Program. The geographic focus of this partnership is the Gulf of Mexico, where Shell Companies maintain a large offshore presence for oil and gas extraction and onshore for refineries and chemical production. The purpose of this partnership was to raise awareness about the Gulf's unique environment, build the partnerships necessary to sustain the health of the ecosystem into the future, and provide the seed capital needed by local groups to implement priority on-the-ground and on-the-water conservation projects.

The Shell Oil Company Foundation's financial commitment to this partnership is very significant--\$5 million over five years. To our knowledge, this is the largest corporate foundation commitment to conservation of a marine ecosystem in history. The Shell Marine Habitat Program demonstrates a commitment to helping ensure the continued sustainability of the Gulf's natural resources.

Finally, Shell helps raise awareness about the Gulf's bountiful resources in a way that is virtually impossible for most government agencies and conservation organizations. By highlighting the Shell Marine Habitat Program in advertising, Shell Oil Company has introduced literally millions of people to the Gulf of Mexico's environment, the need to address those issues now, and the successes we have experienced to date. As you on this Commission well know, there is rarely funding available to provide this sort of exposure to the public regarding natural resource issues.

The Shell Marine Habitat Program greatly stimulates interest in the Gulf of Mexico's environment. Funding from this program continues to provide much needed seed capital to launch literally dozens of important projects that might never have started otherwise. Furthermore, we sincerely believe that this model can be replicated in coastal and marine areas across the country. It

is our experience that other members of the corporate community are more than willing to contribute to sustaining our environment, provided the opportunity and the proper conditions.

Two replications of this model for public private partnerships have recently been established by the Foundation in the Pacific Northwest. First is a partnership with the Bonneville Power Administration in the Columbia Basin and the second is a partnership with Seattle City Light on the Skagit and Tolt Rivers of the Puget Sound watershed. Both projects, summarized below, benefit Pacific salmon and demonstrate that the private sector and government can work together in large-scale commitments to conservation.

Bonneville Power Administration Partnership

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) partnered with the Foundation to launch a new 5-year, \$25 million water conservation program for the Columbia Basin—from the mouth of the estuary up to the border of Canada, covering Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana. Specifically, this partnership will design and manage a new program, working closely with NOAA Fisheries, to provide resources for non-profit organizations, tribes, state water resource departments, local governments, and private landowners in the Columbia Basin to help endangered salmonids. Targeted activities for funding under this program will include the implementation of innovative methods to increase in-stream flows for listed salmonids and to eliminate fish passage barriers to spawning and rearing habitat. This is the first such partnership for BPA in an effort to meet their Endangered Species Act (ESA) obligations. BPA selected the Foundation because of our solid track record of effectively working with many different partners to achieve conservation goals. We see this partnership as a win for industry and a win for conservation of the resource.

Seattle City Light Partnership

Seattle City Light and the Foundation partnered to create a \$1.8 million fund for salmon habitat protection, acquisition and restoration on the Skagit and Tolt Rivers in Puget Sound. These river systems still include some of the most productive wild salmon habitat in Puget Sound and this fund will assure that at least 20 miles of riparian streambanks in important rearing and spawning areas will be protected through acquisitions and easements, and more than 1000 acres of estuarine and upstream wetlands will be restored.

2. Reducing agency overlap and inefficiency by coordinating federal resources

Key Recommendation *Cross-agency cooperation and coordination: At a recent Sustainable Fisheries Conference in Spokane that attracted over 900 practitioners and policy-makers in the Pacific Northwest, two key themes emerged: the need for more local public involvement in the race to save the salmon and its habitat, and the need for much better/more effective/less bureaucratic cross-jurisdictional coordination with all the agencies responsible for some aspect of salmon recovery.*

Many coastal and even ocean related issues fall under the purview of multiple agencies. Internal coordination among line offices in one agency is challenging, but coordination across

agencies and between Federal, State, and county governments is nearly impossible. Although mandates for an agency may be species specific, such as preserving native oysters or habitat specific like water quality, we now realize that we can often make greater progress if we step back and determine how these mandates are connected and related. With today's limited resources for these issues, it is important that agencies are given avenues to provide a coordinated approach and take an ecosystem-wide view.

The Foundation holds partnerships and funds with over 12 agencies, and we have developed an expertise in identifying areas of shared interest and streamlining potential overlap. For example, Foundation/NOAA partnership funds have been enhanced with over \$3 million in other agency funding. These agencies include the Environmental Protection Agency, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), U.S. Association for International Development, Department of State and others. These partnerships were formed by identifying opportunities for coordination and shared mandates. Dedicated managers that were brought together to look for solutions to shared problems orchestrated much of these savings in federal dollars.

A primary opportunity for improved efficiency is through coordination of agency resources at Federal, state, and local levels. The common approach to make management decisions on a regional problem has historically been to formulate a task force or high-level decision-making body. Although this level of coordination has been somewhat successful in setting priorities and defining the problem from many perspectives, the approach falls short in its ability to engage state and local governments as equal partners and often completely excludes the public at the community level, thus losing incredible implementation potential. Co-funding projects and coordinating multiple federal, state and local agencies on review panels has helped agency staff to take a watershed approach to restoration, beyond their agencies boundaries. Salmon runs may be the best testament for the need in agency coordination, for no matter how many resources an agency may put into a coastal salmon habitat, they are wasted if similar effort and resources are not dedicated to restoring the run inland.

For coastal Oregon and California, the Foundation's Pacific Grassroots Salmon Initiative (PGSI) has successfully demonstrated that combining modest funds from two agencies (NOAA and BOR) can build local capacity for activities that eliminate fish passage barriers and restore important habitat for salmonids in mostly coastal watersheds. By identifying salmon as a shared interest to both agencies, the Foundation was able to help coordinate efforts to foster decisions based on the watershed and increase the effectiveness of each dollar by increasing the likelihood of success for the run as a whole. In a similar manner, the Washington Salmon Conservation Fund is an excellent example of federal and state agency coordination. Each project selected for funding under this program is coordinated with and reviewed by state and federal agencies, as well as a Washington state technical review team to assure that the projects are scientifically-based, address limiting factors for salmon recovery, and engage local citizens. Although most of the projects are very local, they fit into an overall salmon recovery strategy at the watershed level for the state due to this large-scale coordination.

3. Accepting and including people and economics as part of the conservation equation

Key Recommendation *Invest more resources into local volunteer efforts to secure the success of the larger programs, raise public awareness, engage citizens, and increase the public's sense of place and stewardship. Science and technology alone can not stop pollution and habitat degradation. The public at every level and age needs to be knowledgeable and engaged.*

The creation of Marine Protected Areas and other conservation measures that work to restrict human activities are likely to be a strong and popular tool for marine conservation now and into the future; however, the Foundation cautions that parks and reserves will never be the complete answer to ocean resource conservation concerns. Much more needs to be done. The Foundation effectively works with many partners in achieving local conservation goals while addressing some of the economic challenges of communities that rely on “working landscapes”. Recently, we began adapting terrestrial conservation programs that historically partnered landowners and agencies like the Bureau of Land Management, to become partnerships that can reduce non-point source pollution and benefit working marine landscapes. There are three types of programs that the Foundation has initiated in working with communities in the Pacific Northwest that demonstrate this point: economic conservation, landowner stewardship and working marine landscapes.

Economic Conservation Program

There is untapped energy at the grassroots level for finding new and innovative ways to help conservation priorities make good economic sense. The Foundation has supported many of these ‘bridging’ organizations such as Salmon Safe in Oregon that work with vineyards and other agricultural associations to certify their products, thus giving them an economic boost for implementing best management practices. The Oregon Cattlemen’s Association is another good model of helping conservation be economically sound for landowners. The Association is launching an Oregon Rangeland Trust that will cover the state from coast to desert to identify ways that landowners could improve conservation on their lands and waters and makes it economically feasible for them in the long term. Other organizations are also working to help economically depressed rural communities create jobs through conservation cooperatives and innovative local product marketing. The common thread through each of these partnerships that we believe is transferable to the Commission’s mission is working with local industry through economic incentives to reach conservation priorities.

Working Marine Landscapes Program

Many of our marine landscapes have been transformed beyond their natural purpose into the ‘tug-boats’ of the coastline, supporting a myriad of industries and uses resulting in an increasing threat to their original natural functions. The Foundation recommends that we continue support these working marine landscapes, while supporting their transition into a sustainable environment of natural, economic and social use. A strong example of a working marine landscape, the Port of Portland and seventeen other organizations in the Columbia Basin are developing a 25-year blueprint for sustainability for the Columbia River in celebration of the Lewis and Clark Bi-Centennial. To date, many of the economic development opportunities for the Columbia corridor revolve around shipping, power production and irrigation conveyance systems that alter the environment. In an effort to create a new, more conservation-oriented vision for economic

sustainability, several partners will work towards a comprehensive approach driven by local communities that provides both job opportunities as well as a diminished impact on the environment. The Lewis and Clark celebration is an example of preserving the working landscape and all of its uses for the benefit of many while restoring the working landscape's natural functions.

Landowner Stewardship Program

When we talk about marine issues we think less of the 'landowner' than we do in terrestrial systems, but individual and community landowners are just as important to the management of our oceans. Non-point source pollution is an excellent example of a management problem that will not be solved unless we can reach the communities and individual landowners that impact the ocean environment through their everyday land use practices. We have been working to engage and build the capacity of Native American nations, in the coastal Pacific Northwest and the Columbian Basin, to improve habitat and implement innovative water quality and quantity conservation programs on native lands. We recommend building the capacity and the knowledge of the local landowner and land owning communities to ease the way for the implementation of policies and regulations while building a lifestyle based on sound conservation practices.

4. Empowering communities through support of locally driven stewardship and management activities

Key Recommendation *Simultaneous consultation with watershed councils—it is critical that they are consulted in every aspect of policy development, as they are both the beneficiaries and those impacted by the decisions.*

Whether it is through marketing, education or public awareness campaigns, people need to be aware of the issues at a personal level so that they are empowered to make environmentally conscious decisions and/or lifestyle changes. One of the biggest hurdles may not be getting people to care, but convincing them that they can make a difference. Support for small local grantees that are initiating community stewardship projects may be bridging this divide. Various 'tools' will be recommended to the Commission, all of which are likely to be easier to implement and enforce through an empowered public. Giving the community a sense of 'ownership' and 'responsibility' as well as the resources to do something locally fosters 'community-based management' in many of our grantees' local communities through watershed councils, commissions and other local planning initiatives.

Locally Driven Stewardship

In order to streamline the opportunity for community groups to participate in salmon habitat projects, King County in Washington established a \$1 million Community Salmon Fund for projects less than \$50,000 that are both scientifically-based and include community involvement. These projects provide local residents, neighborhood associations, and non-profit groups in King County with resources and technical assistance to engage in restoration projects that make a difference locally and increase their sense of stewardship. Additional funds to increase the resources available for grants, and expand the program Sound-wide will be sought from private

foundations and local corporations. All of the projects are coordinated with the appropriate local watershed councils.

Encouraging Neighboring Communities to Work Together

Friends of the San Juans and Island County Marine Resources Committee, WA, part of a community-based management initiative called the Northwest Straits Initiative is another key partner in Washington community stewardship. Assessing and understanding current forage fish populations and nearshore habitats in Puget Sound and the Straits are critical in learning more about the needs for salmon recovery. The Foundation provides funds to these local organizations and governments to assist with mapping, engaging volunteers, and coordinating efforts across the Sound out to the Pacific. One of the outcomes from the nearshore work will be to identify candidate sites as potential marine protected areas.

Linking Community Stewardship with Government Resources

In Oregon and Washington, the various citizen-based multi-stakeholder watershed councils help the state and federal regulatory agencies identify conservation priorities in their watersheds and seek ways to address conservation issues that incorporate everyone's roles and responsibilities into consideration. Funding watershed coordinators as well as habitat projects in order to implement their ideas, community visions and plans, is critical to linking community stewardship with government resources. Support to the Coquille, Coos, Mid-Coast, and North-Coast watershed councils in Oregon helped them to implement many local estuarine and upstream habitat improvement projects.

Conclusion

If the realities of low budgets and broad and complex mandates continue for those agencies responsible for our oceans, then the Commission's biggest challenges may fall to finding new players and new resources to build our governing capacity. I hope that some of the example programs and activities that I have briefly touched on here today will help the Commission as they look for resources to improve the governance of our ocean and the implementation of these policies. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is happy to assist the Commission in any way possible as they continue in their deliberations and commends Admiral Watkins and the other members of the Commission for taking on this difficult but historical task for the benefit of our nation's oceans. Again, I would like to thank the Commission for this opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Basic Facts About the Foundation

The Foundation promotes conservation solutions by awarding challenge grants using its federally appropriated funds to match private sector funds. We have a statutory requirement to match federal funds with at least an equal amount of non-federal funds, which we consistently exceed. No federal appropriations meet our administrative expenses - these costs are met through private fundraising activities distinct from our matching grant fundraising. The Foundation does assess administrative fees for programs when an agency asks us to carry out a special project, such

as the Economic Contributions of the Ocean study. The fee is 5% percent or less and does not involve the funds appropriated to the Foundation.

The Foundation is governed by a 21-member Board of Directors appointed by the Secretary of the Interior and in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce. The board operates on a nonpartisan basis. Directors do not receive any financial compensation for service on the board; in fact, all of our directors make financial contributions to the Foundation. It is a diverse board, representing the corporate, philanthropic, and conservation communities; all with a tenacious commitment to fish and wildlife conservation.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation continues to be one of, if not the, most cost-effective conservation program funded in part by the federal government. By implementing real-world solutions with the private sector while avoiding regulatory or advocacy activity, we serve as a model for bringing private sector leadership to federal agencies and for developing cooperative solutions to environmental issues.