

National Parks and Landscape Conservation

Mark Wenzler, Vice President, Conservation Programs, National Parks Conservation Association, 777 6th Street NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20002; mwenzler@npca.org

THE MISSION OF THE NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION (NPCA) is to protect and enhance America's national parks for present and future generations. National park landscape conservation includes an evolving role for partners, described by the [2008 National Parks Second Century Commission](#). "We must extend the benefits of the national park idea in society by creating new national parks, collaborative models, and corridors of conservation and stewardship, expanding the park system to foster ecosystem and cultural connectivity." The next year, the Department of the Interior issued [secretarial order 3289](#), declaring that bureaus and agencies must work together, with other federal, state, tribal, and local governments, and with private landowner partners to develop landscape-level strategies for understanding and responding to climate change impacts.

In April 2010 President Obama announced the [America's Great Outdoors](#) initiative, which recognizes that to protect ecosystems, watersheds, and wildlife, conservation must take place across large landscapes. This requires collaboration among landowners, public land agencies, and local communities. Large landscape conservation supports healthy ecosystems and cultural resources. In 2011, the National Park Service (NPS) announced the [Call to Action](#), and that the NPS will protect continuous corridors in five geographic regions through voluntary partnerships across public and private lands.

In 2012, the NPS produced the [Revisiting Leopold: Resource Stewardship in the National Parks](#) report which stated that, "the NPS should ... manage the National Park System as the core of a national conservation network of connected lands and waters ... engaging networks, collaborations ... and partnerships." This report explained that, "while individual parks can be considered distinct units, they are ... embedded in larger regional and continental landscapes influenced by adjacent land and water uses and regional cultures.... Connectivity across these broader land- and seascapes is essential for system resilience over time to support animal movements, gene flow, and response to cycles of natural disturbance."

Park partners help advance landscape conservation in the following ways:

- Protect national park landscapes from external development threats, fragmentation, and the effects of climate change, using advocacy and litigation.

Citation: Weber, Samantha, ed. 2014. *Protected Areas in a Changing World: Proceedings of the 2013 George Wright Society Conference on Parks, Protected Areas, and Cultural Sites*. Hancock, Michigan: George Wright Society.

© 2014 George Wright Society. All rights reserved. Please direct all permission requests to info@georgewright.org.



Figure 1. Proposed mines are a major threat to the pristine waters surrounding and flowing through national parks in Alaska.

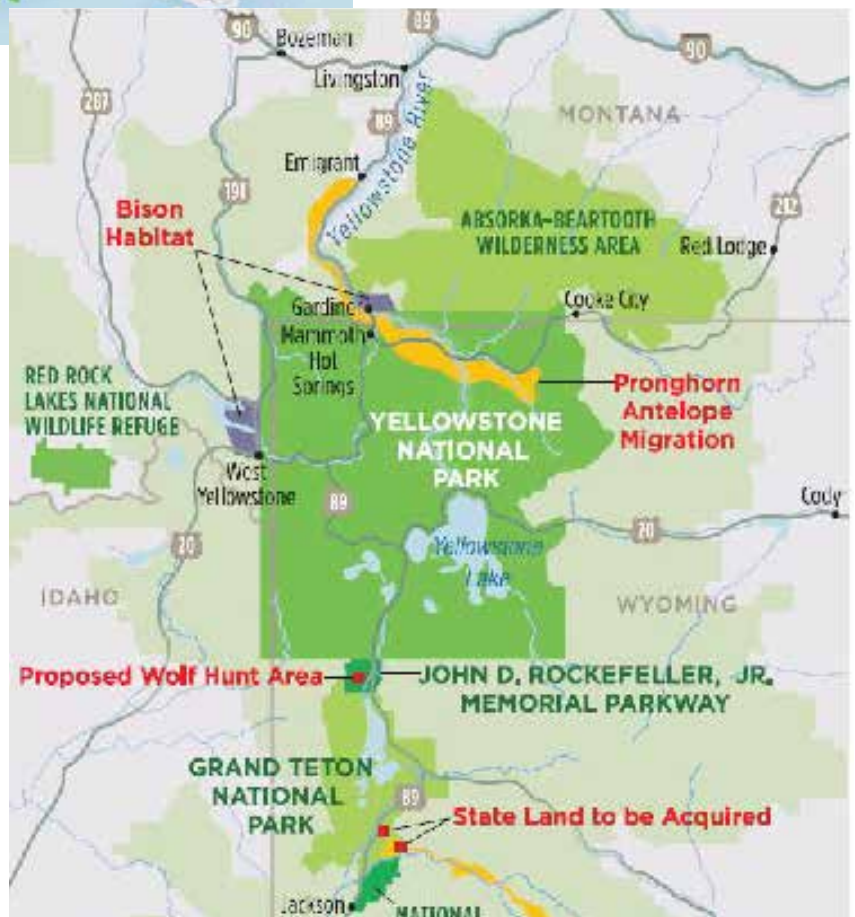
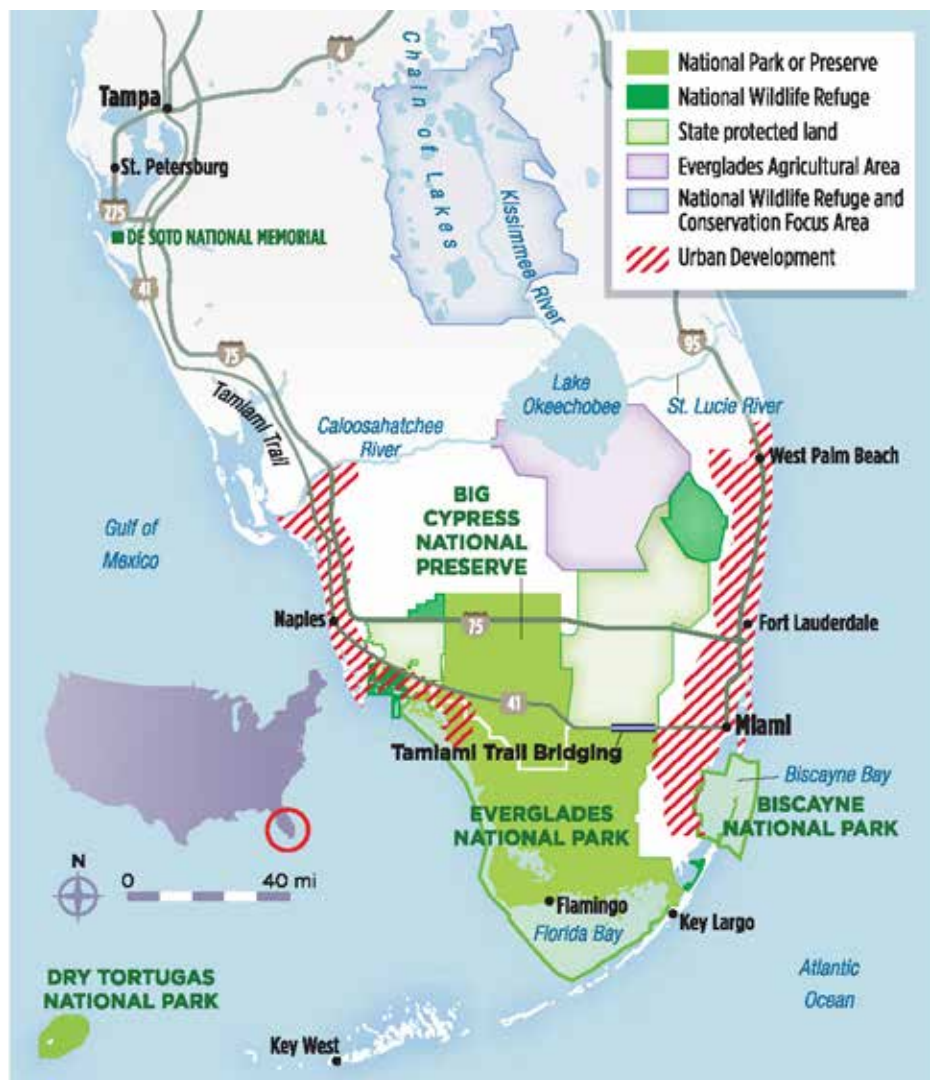


Figure 2. To remain healthy, pronghorn antelope need free access to habitat beyond the borders of protected parks.

Figure 3. Restoring water flow is essential to restoring the health of Everglades National Park.



- Connect park lands by working with landowners, land managers, and decision makers to establish corridors.
- Restore lands and waters that surround and run through parks by building consensus and advocating for funding.

Protect

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve protects the watershed necessary for the perpetuation of the sockeye salmon fishery in Bristol Bay (Figure 1). Every summer over 50 million wild salmon surge across Bristol Bay's rivers and lakes. Over 500,000 acres next to Lake Clark have been staked with mining claims. An Environmental Protection Agency risk assessment says mining could harm water quality, critical habitat, and fishing. NPCA works with tribes, wildlife and park advocates, tourism businesses, and the fishing industry to oppose destructive mining.

Connect

The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem stretches across 20 million acres of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho (Figure 2). Pronghorn antelope in both Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks participate in rare long-distance migrations to find snow-free winter habitat. Fencing and development near park boundaries isolate pronghorn, leaving them at risk for disease, harsh winters, and harassment from predators. NPCA organizes on-the-ground projects, like reconnecting pronghorn habitat by removing fences that block pronghorn seasonal migration.

Restore

Everglades National Park encompasses the largest subtropical wilderness in the United States of America (Figure 3). Ecological improvements are critical, and decisive action must be taken to restore clean water flows. NPCA leads a coalition that advocates for the federal Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. This multi-billion-dollar collaboration between state and federal agencies includes more than 60 projects to restore the landscape.