



The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

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## News Room

### Washington Post Response

#### Setting the Record Straight Regarding *The Washington Post* 'Big Green' Series

For more than 50 years, The Nature Conservancy has sought to preserve plants, animals and natural communities by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. We have made laudable progress toward our mission, helping protect more than 116 million acres around the world. But with development pressures mounting over the past few decades; with the world's population expanding and increased demands placed on precious resources from fisheries to forests, the challenge of protecting natural areas and biodiversity has grown ever steeper.

The Nature Conservancy began to recognize in the 1980s that land purchase alone – our signature conservation tactic – was not sufficient to meet the challenge. The Nature Conservancy had to become more innovative and collaborative to effect long-term conservation, working with communities of people, businesses and others to protect *their* landscapes, *working* landscapes, places that support economies and ways of life, wildlife and ecosystems. Because time is not on its side, The Nature Conservancy had to learn to take risks.

On May 4, 5 and 6, 2003, *The Washington Post* ran a series of highly critical articles, entitled '**Big Green,**' that focused on several of those risks and implied that The Nature Conservancy had neglected or failed in its mission because of them. We want to set the record straight – both about the risks we've taken, our mistakes and how we propose to correct them; but also about our record of achievement, grossly neglected and misrepresented by *The Washington Post* 'Big Green' series.

We must and will continue to take risks in our work to protect lands and waters today, before they and their wealth of life are lost to us and to our children.

*The Washington Post* 'Big Green' series about The Nature Conservancy was based on a two-year investigation conducted by reporters from *The Washington Post*. The Nature Conservancy cooperated fully with *The Washington Post*, providing literally thousands of pages of requested documents and scheduling interviews with dozens of staff, partners and other experts, including four separate interviews with [our president, Steve McCormick](#). Instead of a balanced report, however, *The Washington Post* 'Big Green' series lacked a fair contextual description of our accomplishments and simplified complex issues, explored in depth in the following pages.

Although *The Washington Post* 'Big Green' series was fraught with mischaracterizations and omissions of fact, we at The Nature Conservancy recognize some mistakes we have made in pursuit of innovation and conservation change. Many of these we had begun correcting and learning from before *The Washington Post* investigation began. We take full responsibility for our actions, as we always have. Through intensive self-examination across The Nature Conservancy, as we have done throughout our history, we know we will emerge a stronger organization, one better able to accomplish our conservation goals.

#### [Board of Directors Adopts Recommendations from Governance Advisory Panel](#)

At its meeting on January 30, 2004, The Nature Conservancy's Board of Directors adopted a number of governance changes recommended by a board-chartered panel of [independent, outside experts](#). The changes, including a complete restructuring of the board, were designed to enhance organizational governance and ensure the board is optimally structured to set strategy, review policies and procedures and exercise necessary oversight.

#### [Recent Accomplishments](#)

Read about recent Nature Conservancy accomplishments from around the world.

#### Questions or comments about ***The Washington Post*** 'Big Green' series?

We'd be glad to respond to your questions or comments about *The Washington Post* 'Big Green' series or other topics. Please [ask us your questions online](#).

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With the links and documents below, we aim to set the record straight for our members, supporters and detractors about the issues of oversight, judgment and integrity raised by *The Washington Post* in its 'Big Green' series. By reviewing our mission, strategy and values, and summarizing the steps we are taking to correct our missteps, we hope to convert the criticism leveled at us into a real dialogue about the future of how we do conservation.

**Clarifications regarding *The Washington Post* 'Big Green' series and further information:**

- [The Nature Conservancy's Mission, Strategy and Values](#)
- [The Nature Conservancy's work with the Business Community](#)
- [The Nature Conservancy's Conflict of Interest Policy](#)
- [The Nature Conservancy's Compatible Development and Resource Extraction Activities](#) (e.g., Texas City Prairie Preserve, Virginia Coast Reserve)
- [The Nature Conservancy's Conservation Buyer Projects](#) (e.g., Martha's Vineyard, MA; Shelter Island, NY)
- [The Nature Conservancy's Executive Compensation and President's Discretionary Fund](#)
- [The Nature Conservancy's Commitment to Science](#)

[Download the complete package](#) (PDF, 226 kb)

[Message from Nature Conservancy President and CEO Steve McCormick](#)

**What others say in response to *The Washington Post* 'Big Green' series:**


Select letters that we received in support of the Conservancy after the publication of *The Washington Post* 'Big Green' series.

- [Arthur W. Arundel](#), Chairman and Founder, Times Community Newspapers
- [National Audubon Society](#), President John Flicker (PDF, 28 kb)
- [Conservation International](#), Chairman and CEO Peter Seligmann, and President Russell Mittermeier (PDF, 213 kb)
- [Jim Desmond](#) (PDF, 24 kb)
- [Environmental Defense](#), Senior Attorneys Michael J. Bean and Tim Searchinger (PDF, 306 kb)
- [International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies](#), President G. Brent Manning (PDF, 33 kb)
- [Nature Conservancy of Canada](#), President John Lounds (PDF, 332 kb)
- [William D. Ruckelshaus and Daniel J. Evans](#)
- [Stanley A. Temple](#), Biologist (PDF, 741 kb)
- [Toledo Institute for Development and Environment \(TIDE\), Belize](#), Executive Director Wil Mahia (PDF, 532 kb)
- [John C. Whitehead](#)
- [World Parks](#), President Byron Swift (PDF, 180 kb)

[Comments from our Members and Supporters](#) regarding *The Washington Post* 'Big Green' series.

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