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The Science Alliance Model: Maximizing the Impact of Partnerships

The Executive Order signed by President Roosevelt in 1936 creating the Patuxent Research Refuge represented the first step in integrating wildlife science, conservation, and management at the Nation's first wildlife research center. Now more than 70 years later, the original wildlife research refuge has evolved into the U.S. Geological Survey's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Patuxent Research Refuge. This unique alliance, situated near the nation's capital, works to conserve wildlife, habitat, develop new strategies for species and ecosystem restoration, and delivers new science and technologies for wildlife in an era with new challenges such as climate change, urbanization, and large-scale energy development.

The Science Alliance Model

This model places emphasis on a relationship-based approach to guiding interactions between scientists and those who use scientific information to make decisions. We believe that an effective alliance between scientists and decision makers is one where there is receptivity and appropriate organization on both sides of the interaction. When a proper framework is in place, such an alliance should deliver the most effective impact. By impact, we mean that scientific information is produced, delivered, and assimilated in such a way that it leads to ***changes in management practices, policies, regulations, engineering applications, scientific approaches, theories, conceptual models, or other aspects that drive on-the-ground conservation, ecological restoration, or the advancement of new scientific knowledge.*** Alliances of this sort are based on joint, long-term commitments between the science organization and the decision-making agency. They are not based on single project results nor on science that seeks to answer individual questions in isolation. Ultimately, the Science Alliance Model is based on a ***long term relationship*** that is grounded in adaptive science and adaptive management.

Mutual Benefits:

Decision makers benefit from constant interaction in the science process, which helps them integrate scientific approaches into conservation planning, program execution, or restoration activities.

Scientists benefit from understanding the complexities of conservation/restoration planning and program execution and continually refine their hypotheses, theories, and approaches. Furthermore, the scientists witness and participate in solving conservation problems through the application of scientific information.

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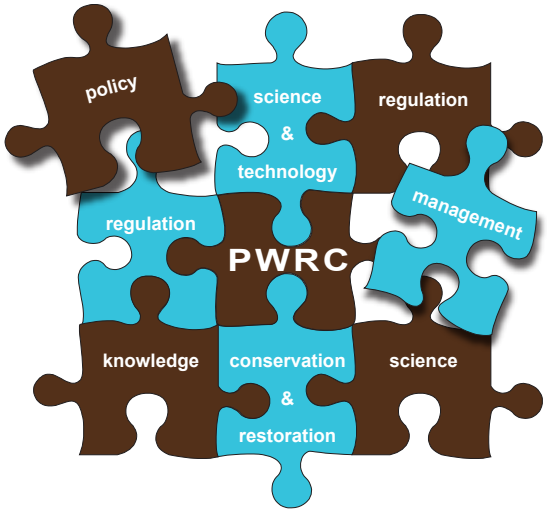

Considerations

- The Science Alliance Model is perhaps most effective for addressing complex problems at a landscape scale over a long period of time. In such an approach, the science provided addresses processes and complex relationships, such as population-habitat linkages, where the applicability of these research results is broad in geographic or taxonomic (multispecies) scope.
- The most effective alliances will include decision makers who have demands for science as part of their fundamental mission and the scientists who provide the right information that can impact conservation and restoration programs.
- The science side of the model must be correctly organized to draw from a broad range of disciplines to deliver comprehensive science capabilities when needed.
- Decision makers connected to the larger resource management community will be able to effectively apply the science at a landscape scale.
- The science that is shared through this relationship goes beyond products, such as publications and fact sheets, and is ultimately judged by its ***influence*** on conservation and restoration thinking and approaches. Effective science contributes to the development of rules and guidelines for conservation planning and ecological restoration.
- Ultimately, the Science Alliance Model is one based on sustained commitments rather than a fee-for-services funding process. Funding, in such a case, needs to be addressed within a broader context that ensures the vitality of the alliance and the success of the enterprise.