

*“The loss of open space is an urgent and important problem, and the Forest Service clearly has a role in helping balance growth and development with open space conservation. We can work with others as a conservation partner to help conserve critical open space across the landscape.”*

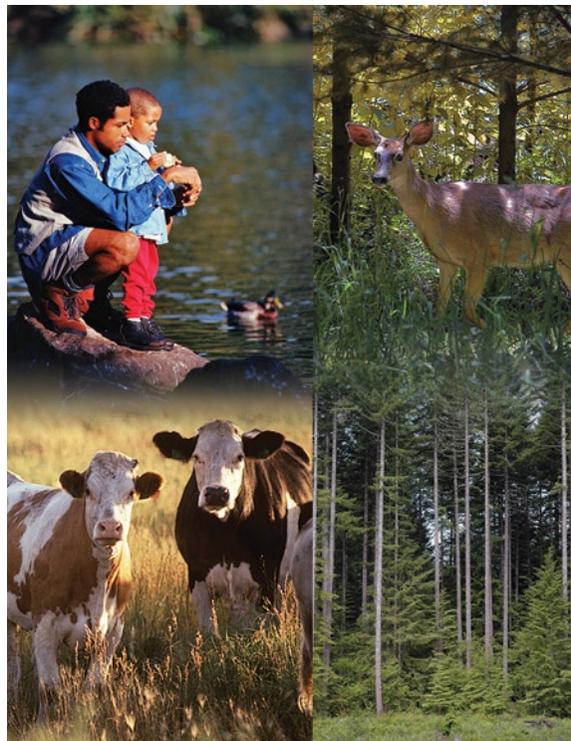
*“I firmly believe the Forest Service must work at the landscape scale to stay relevant in a rapidly changing world and to successfully fulfill our responsibility of sustaining the Nation’s forests and grasslands.”*

*Gail Kimbell, Forest Service Chief*

*March 2007*

## For More Information

Visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/openspace> for a copy of the Forest Service’s open space conservation strategy; interactive, aerial images of open space loss; conservation success stories; links to open space programs; publications; and other helpful resources.



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FS-888

September 2007



United States Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service

# Open Space Conservation Strategy Highlights

*Cooperating across boundaries to sustain  
working and natural landscapes*



## The Loss of Open Space

Across the United States, open space is being rapidly developed as more people choose to live at the urban fringe and in scenic, rural areas. We are losing 6,000 acres of forests, farms, ranches, and other open spaces each day. The loss and fragmentation of open space impacts the sustainability of natural systems and the overall quality of life for Americans.

Rapid growth into wildlands increases the risk of wildfire for people and property, decreases the economic viability of natural resource enterprises, contributes to the spread of invasive species, and fragments habitats. At stake is the ability of private and public lands to provide:

- Clean water,
- Scenic beauty,
- Wildlife and biodiversity,
- Outdoor recreation,
- Wood and food, and
- Natural resource-based jobs.

## Why the Forest Service?

In 2003, then-Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth identified the loss of open space as one of four great threats facing our Nation's forests and grasslands. Development of open space affects the agency's ability to manage the national forests and grasslands, as well as our ability to help private landowners and communities sustainably manage their land for private and public benefits. Forests and ecosystems do not recognize boundaries, so the Forest Service collaborates with partners across the landscape to promote sustainable forestry and open space conservation.

## Our Vision

Our vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an **interconnected network of open space across the landscape that supports healthy ecosystems and a high quality of life for Americans.**

## Our Goal

Sustain the environmental, social, and economic benefits of forests and grasslands across the landscape by:

- **Protecting** the most ecologically and socially important lands;
- **Conserving** working lands as sustainable forests and grasslands;
- **Expanding** and connecting open spaces in cities, suburbs, and towns; and
- **Reducing** the potential ecological impacts and risks of development.

## A Conservation Partner

The Forest Service has developed an Open Space Conservation Strategy to help us be a more effective conservation partner.

The strategy builds upon our existing open space programs and expertise, and expands our involvement to fully utilize resources and skills from all parts and levels of the agency. Our role is not to regulate development or land use, but to work with States, communities, landowners, and others to strategically conserve open space across the landscape.

We plan to focus our conservation efforts on four priorities:

1. Convene partners to identify and **protect** priority open space.
2. Promote national policies and markets to help private landowners **conserve** open space.
3. Provide resources and tools to help communities **expand** and connect open spaces.
4. Participate in community growth planning to **reduce** ecological impacts and wildfire risks.

