

# Conservation Landscapes for America

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An Initiative of the American Stewardship Network  
White Paper

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A White Paper on America's Living Landscapes, Their Decline, and Our Shared Stewardship Responsibility

### Introduction: A New Vision of American Stewardship

America's prosperity—its food, water, energy, communities, and economy—rests upon a foundation that most people rarely think about: healthy, functioning ecosystems.

These landscapes are not abstract environmental concepts. They are forests that filter our air and anchor rural economies; wetlands that safeguard our towns from flooding; grasslands that feed pollinators and livestock; agricultural lands that nourish our families; and coastal systems that protect millions of residents from storms. These ecosystems form a vast living infrastructure—quiet, essential, irreplaceable.

Yet across the United States, this foundation is eroding.

Fragmentation, unsustainable development, pollution, soil loss, water depletion, declining pollinators, invasive species, habitat destruction, and climate-driven extremes threaten every ecosystem in the nation.

Conservation Landscapes for America is an Initiative of the American Stewardship Network created to respond to these realities. It is a call to action for communities, businesses, landowners, and everyday citizens.

## 1. What Are Conservation Landscapes?

### A National Framework Rooted in Local Action

A Conservation Landscape is any place—large or small, public or private—managed with the intention of enhancing ecological health, supporting biodiversity, and strengthening natural systems.

#### These include:

- Residential yards
- Corporate campuses
- School grounds

- Parks
- Agricultural lands
- Roadside corridors
- Faith-based properties
- Municipal lands
- Regional watersheds

Landscape-scale stewardship must begin at the doorsteps of where people live, learn, work, and play.

## **2. Why Conservation Landscapes Matter**

Healthy Ecosystems as America's Foundation

### **Ecosystem services include:**

- Clean air and water
- Flood prevention
- Pollination
- Soil formation
- Nutrient cycling
- Habitat for wildlife

Economic services include agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism, reduced infrastructure costs, and increased community resilience.

Nature is not separate from daily life or the economy. It is the foundation of both.

## **3. The Problem: Declining Ecosystems in a Growing Nation**

Biodiversity loss, urban sprawl, agricultural intensification, pollution, water scarcity, invasive species, and climate stress all degrade ecological function.

We are losing ecosystem health faster than we are restoring it.

## **4. The Solution Framework: Conservation Landscape Management (CLM)**

**CLM is built on four principles:**

### **1. Support Biodiversity**

### **2. Protect Natural Resources**

### **3. Strengthen Ecological Resilience**

### **4. Connect People with Nature**

CLM can be applied from backyards to entire watersheds.

## **5. Individual Action: Stewardship Begins at Home**

### **At home:**

- Plant natives
- Reduce pesticides
- Improve soil health
- Capture rainwater
- Rewild portions of the yard

### **In community:**

- Support parks
- Advocate for ecological landscaping
- Promote outdoor learning spaces
- Strengthen local food systems

### **As consumers and citizens:**

- Support sustainable producers
- Reduce waste
- Vote and advocate for stewardship-based policy

Healthy ecosystems will not be restored by institutions alone. They will be restored by millions of local decisions.

## **6. A National Network of Local Stewards**

### **Conservation Landscapes for America:**

- Builds a national community
- Shares success stories
- Encourages local stewardship
- Promotes Conservation Landscape Management
- Strengthens a cultural ethic of land stewardship

It is not an organization or certification. It is a movement powered by purpose, values, and action.

## **7. The Path Forward: Rebuilding America's Ecological Foundation**

America cannot sustain its economy, communities, or quality of life without ecological health.

If we wait for someone else to restore America's landscapes, we will lose them.

If we begin where we live, work, and play, we can rebuild healthy, functioning ecosystems—one yard, one field, one community at a time.

### **Conclusion**

Conservation Landscapes for America is an invitation for all Americans to participate in rebuilding the ecological systems that sustain life.

The path forward begins at home, in our communities, and across our shared landscapes. Together, we can secure a future where biodiversity thrives, ecosystems function, families prosper, and communities grow more resilient.