



## A THREAT TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY

The last remnants of the world's natural areas are quickly disappearing. Unless an effective global conservation strategy stops the loss, all nations, including the U.S., will be poorer, less healthy and less secure.

The global conservation crisis confronts us with critical challenges:

- **NATURAL RESOURCE DESTRUCTION** The loss of forests, fish stocks, fresh water sources, healthy soils, coral reefs, and wildlife impoverishes developing countries. These natural resources provide hundreds of billions of dollars of value to the world economy every year and are the foundation on which many developing economies around the world will grow. And because competition for natural resources—water, arable land and food—can lead to instability, conflict and mass migration, the National Intelligence Council anticipates that resource scarcities will increasingly define security challenges this century.

- **DISAPPEARING SPECIES** One-quarter of the world's mammals and one-third of primates and amphibians are already severely endangered. Unless conservation activities increase dramatically, as many



**“For if one link in nature's chain might be lost, another and another might be lost, till the whole of things will vanish by piecemeal”**

**—Thomas Jefferson**

as two-thirds of all species could be near extinction by the end of this century. Three-quarters of the world's terrestrial plant and animal species are in developing nations. The amount of natural habitat conserved in those regions during the next few decades will determine how many species survive.

The conservation crisis threatens more than the world's environment. It threatens America's goals for a prosperous and stable world.



## HOW HUMAN HEALTH AND PROSPERITY DEPEND ON NATURAL RESOURCES

**WATER** One-third of the developing world's 66 largest cities (500 million people) obtain a significant proportion of their drinking water directly from conserved natural watersheds.

**AGRICULTURE** Wild species such as birds and insects provide \$100 billion worth of pest control services to world agriculture every year. Wild animals pollinate two-thirds of the agricultural crop species that feed the world, contributing \$200 billion a year to world agriculture.

**FOOD SECURITY** Plant breeding programs involving genetic enhancements from the wild relatives of agricultural crops have helped feed billions of people around the world and are valued at an estimated \$115 billion per year. More than three-quarters of fish stocks that are a significant source of protein for two billion people are fully or over exploited.

**PUBLIC HEALTH** Natural ecosystems serve as a buffer between wildlife and human populations, minimizing the transmission of animal-borne infectious diseases—such as AIDS. Avian flu, originating in the wild, has cost the world economy more than \$10 billion and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) more than \$30 billion.

**DISASTER PREVENTION** Small investments in conservation can mean less disaster assistance. Forests absorb and hold water, preventing both catastrophic flooding and severe droughts. Healthy coral reefs reduce the impact of large storms on coastal populations, a protective function valued at \$9 billion a year.

**POVERTY** The income, credit, savings and social security for more than a billion of the world's poorest people are not in any bank or government treasury but in the fields, trees, streams and wildlife around them.