

The Nature Conservancy's Position on Hunting and Fishing

The Nature Conservancy does not take a general position for or against hunting and fishing. Many of our members hunt and fish and many others strongly oppose either hunting or fishing or both. The Conservancy has never opposed either, when they are carried out within applicable state and federal laws.

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. While we do not encourage hunting or fishing on the majority of conservation sites that we own or manage, there are several specific situations in which we might allow one or both:

- The most common reason for allowing hunting on Conservancy preserves is to maintain or restore the integrity of biological communities. At many of our sites, populations of non-native animals like feral hogs and of native animals like deer can grow well beyond the ability of the natural communities to withstand their effects. In those situations, we sometimes employ carefully managed hunting as a tool to reduce populations in order to reduce the damage that they cause, allowing natural communities to recover their full vigor and diversity.
- We are increasingly aware that we cannot carry out our work in a vacuum -- we must be sensitive to the human communities in and around the sites at which we choose to work. In many cultures, subsistence hunting and fishing are both an historical fact and a practical necessity. In others, they have been integral to the fabric of family and community life for generations. In these places, we sometimes allow the continuation of traditional hunting and fishing practices after we have acquired new properties in order to avoid disrupting the local economy or stimulating unnecessary anger and resentment among our new neighbors. In these situations, we only allow hunting or fishing after we are confident that they will not threaten the conservation targets that we are trying to protect. We continue to monitor these sites so that we can be certain that the long-term effects on the local biota are benign.
- Occasionally, those who give or sell property or conservation rights to the Conservancy make the gift or sale contingent on the continued availability of the property to them for hunting or fishing. Again, we only allow hunting or fishing after we are confident that they will not threaten the conservation targets that we are trying to protect and we continue to monitor these sites so that we can be certain that the long-term effects on the local biota are benign.
- Finally, The Conservancy has acquired millions of acres of conservation land for subsequent transfer to state, federal, and local governments. In many cases, these transfers help to create or extend wildlife and game management areas that are required by statute to provide recreational opportunities, including hunting and fishing, to local citizens.

In all cases, Conservancy programs that allow hunting or fishing do so only after carefully evaluating the biological and sociological effects of that choice, usually involving thorough site planning processes designed to focus on the protection of the plants, animals and natural communities. We are not aware of even a single situation in which allowing hunting or fishing on a TNC preserve has increased threats to our conservation targets.