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## **Grants from Doris Duke Charitable Foundation Advance NatureServe's Support for State Wildlife Conservation Strategies**

*Arlington, Virginia* — The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF) has awarded two major new grants totaling nearly \$800,000 to NatureServe, a non-profit group that uses science and information technology to guide effective conservation action. Under the first grant, NatureServe will help state governments develop, implement, and communicate their state wildlife conservation strategies. The second grant will help NatureServe to disseminate and support NatureServe Vista, a new software tool for conservation and land use planning.

“To be valuable, conservation data has to be put in the hands of the people who need it—not just sit in a database or in a report on the shelf,” said Mark Schaefer, President and CEO of NatureServe. “With these funds from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, NatureServe can help ensure that state wildlife strategies use the best data and evolve over time as new data come to light. That way the strategies can reach their potential to effectively guide local, state, and even national conservation efforts.”

The grants are among the first under DDCF's revised strategic plan for its Environment Program. The goal of DDCF's Environment Program is to preserve wildlife in the United States by supporting efforts to complete the nation's wildlife conservation system—the lands and waters essential to the conservation of America's native diversity of plants, animals, and natural communities. The foundation does this through three major initiatives: identifying critical lands, implementing land protection, and building the knowledge needed for conservation.

“NatureServe is the only group in the U.S. devoted specifically to developing the scientific data and information technology tools needed to advance conservation,” said Dr. Mark Shaffer, DDCF Program Director for the Environment. “The NatureServe network of natural heritage programs has a proven track record of results, and will play a valuable role in the development and implementation of high-quality state wildlife conservation strategies.”

Under the federal State Wildlife Grants program, each state is currently preparing a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. These strategies aim to identify the most important places to be conserved and the actions needed to protect wildlife in each state. With state strategies due to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by October 2005, great effort is being devoted to developing them.

NatureServe's program aims to enhance the usefulness of the state strategies by providing coordination, capacity-building, and technical support to state agencies. Specifically, under a three-year, \$342,000

grant from DDCF, NatureServe will assist with training and data management, developing consistent data formats, and ensuring that state strategies can be more easily updated in the future. Training sessions will be held in conjunction with state natural heritage programs, the National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII), and the Organization of Fish and Wildlife Information Managers (OFWIM). NatureServe will use its ecological expertise to help states establish systems to monitor progress on the strategies, with an emphasis on assessing change in the health of species populations and habitat integrity.

NatureServe is working closely with several partners to accomplish these goals, in particular the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA), The Nature Conservancy, Defenders of Wildlife, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. After the state wildlife conservation strategies are published, these partners will together write a national summary report to highlight conservation priorities of regional and national significance.

A second grant from DDCF provides \$450,000 over three years to support the use of NatureServe Vista, a new software tool that aids conservation and land use planning. With these funds NatureServe will:

- use NatureServe Vista to help the states meet their information management and analysis needs in order to better implement the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies.
- develop capacity among the existing network of state natural heritage programs to provide certified support and service for NatureServe Vista.
- develop the needed infrastructure to provide NatureServe Vista users with training and ongoing technical support.

The result of this work will be the successful deployment of the first-ever commercial quality, fully-supported conservation planning software. NatureServe Vista is the product of a multi-year software development effort by NatureServe and a coalition of partners that was primarily funded by DDCF.

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**NatureServe** is a non-profit conservation group dedicated to providing the scientific information and technology needed to guide effective conservation action. Representing a network of 75 natural heritage programs and conservation data centers in the United States, Canada, and Latin America, NatureServe is a leading source for detailed scientific information about threatened plants, animals, and ecosystems. Visit us online at [www.natureserve.org](http://www.natureserve.org).

The mission of the **Doris Duke Charitable Foundation** is to improve the quality of people's lives through grants supporting the performing arts, wildlife conservation, medical research, and the prevention of child maltreatment, and through preservation of the cultural and environmental legacy of Doris Duke's properties. Online at [www.ddcf.org](http://www.ddcf.org).