

## NEWS RELEASE

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DORIS DUKE  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION  
Environment Program



# Nature is Part of the Plan

## New Project to Help Integrate Wildlife Conservation with Land Use and Infrastructure Investments in the Northeast

**New York** – The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF) today announced a grant of \$400,000 over three years to Regional Plan Association (RPA). RPA will apply the funds to a new project to improve the integration of nature conservation with land use planning and infrastructure investments in 13 states across the Northeast, from Maine to Virginia.

“So many communities are interested in going green and conserving nature, and we want to help them do so in a way that is efficient, effective, and meaningful for wildlife at risk,” said Jeff Lerner, program officer with DDCF’s Environment Program. “Regional Plan Association, with its unique combination of a commitment to nature conservation and experience in community planning and infrastructure investments, is perfectly positioned to help local leaders identify natural areas of the highest conservation value, and then incorporate the protection of those areas into their land use plans.”

“Communities want to be smart with their money and align strategic investments in nature conservation with their agendas for land use, transportation and other infrastructure,” said Robert D. Yaro, president of RPA and co-chair of America 2050. “The challenge with nature conservation is often one of translating research and recommendations into actionable information at the local level, and understanding how such coordinated action also can be supported by state and federal government. That is exactly what we will be doing with this new project.”

The new project will draw upon the conservation information already gathered by each of the 13 states in their Wildlife Action Plans. These plans were created at the request of Congress, which mandated that each state develop a comprehensive strategy for conserving its wildlife. The plans were developed by the state wildlife agencies, working together with local scientists, sportsmen, conservationists and other members of the public, and approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Additional background, as well as copies of each of the plans, can be found at [www.wildlifeactionplans.org](http://www.wildlifeactionplans.org).

To help communities that want to include these action plan priorities in their local land use decisions, RPA will focus on the following activities under this new program:

1. **Mapping Assessment:** RPA will create a series of maps showing action plan priorities in comparison to trends in population growth and urban development, plans for infrastructure projects, current land use policies and other relevant considerations.

2. **Coordination:** RPA will convene a Regional Steering Committee for Landscape Conservation, bringing a wide array of agencies and organizations together to review the mapping assessment and make recommendations for local, state and federal government.
3. **Implementation:** RPA will provide seed money and technical assistance to community initiatives aimed at demonstrating the integration of wildlife priorities into local land use decisions, with these initiatives to be selected through a competitive proposal process.

This new program is in keeping with the goals of America 2050, a national effort co-led by RPA to meet the infrastructure, economic development and environmental challenges of the nation as the U.S. prepares to add approximately 130 million residents by 2050.

Bruce Babbitt, former Secretary of the Interior and member of the national steering committee of America 2050, noted that the project could be a model for the nation. “Conservation of our natural heritage and associated landscape resources must be a critical part of a national infrastructure plan. Our work in the Northeast will serve as a national model for how federal, state and local government can work together.”

The specific states that will be included in the project are Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia and West Virginia.

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