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NCEAS Establishes New Collaboration with The Nature Conservancy and the Wildlife Conservation Society

The National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis (NCEAS) has joined with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) to form Science for Nature and People (SNAP), an initiative aimed at addressing modern conservation and economic development in ways that will benefit humankind, especially the planet's poorest and most marginalized citizens.

The first working group of SNAP, which meets this week in Santa Barbara, will focus on a project titled "Western Amazonia: Balancing Infrastructure Development and Conservation of Waters, Wetlands and Fisheries." The working group also includes international experts from Brazil's National Institute of Amazonian Research, National University of the Peruvian Amazon, the United Nations Development Program, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation.

SNAP will leverage the highly productive synthesis research model first established by NCEAS. "Over the course of this week, the group will begin tackling the challenging issue of how to model and balance the competing demands for resources in the Western Amazon," said Frank Davis, NCEAS director and a member of SNAP's governing board.

SNAP's mandate is to find practical, knowledge-based ways in which the conservation of nature can help provide food, water, energy and security to Earth's fast-growing population. The SNAP official launch announcement was made at the annual meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) currently underway in New York City. CGI's 2013 theme, "Mobilizing for Impact," explores ways that its members and member organizations can be more effective in leveraging individuals, partner organizations and key resources in their commitment efforts.

"As the world's population pushes past seven billion, the correlation between nature and the food, water, energy and security needs of people becomes increasingly clear," said Peter Kareiva, chief scientist at The Nature Conservancy and acting director of SNAP. "This collaboration will have immediate appeal and relevance to industry, politicians and average people."

This unprecedented collaboration will harness the expertise of many organizations, scientists, policymakers and practitioners, breaking down the traditional walls between disciplines, institutions and sectors. SNAP's working groups will research, analyze and develop solutions to urgent problems at the intersection of nature and human well-being. The program has invited scientists and specialists from around the globe to submit proposals for working groups to fill important knowledge gaps and advance solutions with a clear pathway to implementation. Working groups will convene periodically over two years to address these challenges, generating recommendations, publications and materials to support practitioners and decision-makers.

SNAP's founding organizations will tap the expertise and local knowledge of thousands of staff members in more than 65 countries, providing the capacity to actively test strategies that conserve nature and benefit people. These organizations have a proven track record of assembling multidisciplinary teams to find answers to the planet's greatest challenges. The collaboration will also soon be adding partners from the humanitarian sector to extend its expertise and reach.

"SNAP will become the go-to place for practitioners and policymakers from around the world to seek and find solutions to their most pressing problems around human well-being and the conservation of nature," said John Robinson, WCS executive vice president for conservation and science, and member of SNAP's governing board. "To announce this collaboration at the Clinton Global Initiative speaks to the far-reaching impact that SNAP's results could have on future policy applications."

The aim of SNAP's initial project, which examines the Western Amazon, part of the world's largest river basin, is to consider a science-based road map for integrated river basin development that balances ecosystem health and connectivity, food security and infrastructure needs, and how best to translate that map for timely action by decision-makers.

The second project, titled "Integrating Natural Defenses into Coastal Disaster Risk Reduction," will explore how the conservation and restoration of coastal habitats can help protect coastal communities and livelihoods from the impacts that result from other extreme environmental events, such as hydro-meteorological hazards like hurricanes Sandy and Katrina.

"We aim to generate knowledge that is science-based and practical," added Robinson. "When filtered through key institutions ready to use it, the findings will lead to better policies, more effective field practices and durable economies that value nature's services and secure the livelihoods of families at risk."

SNAP has been funded through founding grants from Shirley and Harry Hagey, Steve and Roberta Denning, Ward W. Woods, Jr., Seth Neiman and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. More information about the initiative is available at www.snap.is.

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