

## **Abstract**

Conservation scientists aim to inform decisions about management of natural resources by assessing the probability that alternative management actions will lead to specified outcomes. Yet financial resources are too limited to pursue all scientific research that might be applicable to decisionmaking. To maximize the utility of their research, conservation scientists must set priorities for their efforts. We present a list of America's "Top 40" high-priority questions that, if answered, would help inform some of the most important current and future decisions about resource management in the United States. The process of identifying these questions included multiple rounds of personal interviews with decisionmakers, broad solicitation of questions from scientists and policymakers, and an intensive workshop. Our objective was to open a wider dialogue among scientists, managers, decisionmakers, and other conservation professionals about how conservation science better can be focused to meet societal needs and desires for conservation policy and management.

## **Keywords**

Conservation, decisionmakers, environment, natural resource management, priority setting