

America's "Top 40" Conservation Research Priorities

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We summarize the content of America's "Top 40 " conservation research questions and how they can inform policy and management needs that emerged from informal interviews with senior policymakers and other decision makers. Policymakers identified impacts of climate change on current policies for management of species, their habitats, land, and water; and energy development alternatives as among the critical issues related to policy and management of natural resources that they confront now and expect to face in 10 years. They noted that knowledge of local climate change impacts; ways to translate scientific data into information on tradeoffs that society values and responds to; large-scale land-use change; and impacts of emerging stressors such as chemicals on natural resources were among the major gaps in the social and biophysical sciences that hinder effective policy development. Finally, policy makers spoke to the need for scientists to improve their ability to communicate how their findings can inform specific policy and management options and tradeoffs. The top 40 questions were well aligned with policymaker needs, including many questions related to the social, economic and ecological impacts of human activity on species, their habitats, and ecosystems in the US.