

THE STATE OF THE NATION'S ECOSYSTEMS



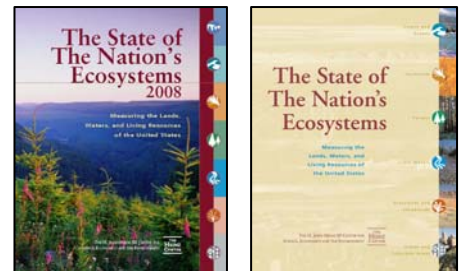
Our vision is to establish an integrated national system for gathering & delivering environmental information, to support the stewardship of the nation's essential natural resources.

For over a decade, the Heinz Center has pioneered efforts to provide decision-makers and the public with the most accurate information possible on a series of key indicators that describe the state of the nation's lands, waters and living resources.

The State of the Nation's Ecosystems is the most comprehensive report on the condition of the natural resources on which our country depends. It details broad national and regional trends in the nation's ecosystems: coasts and oceans, farmlands, forests, fresh waters, grasslands and shrublands, urban and suburban areas, and the country as a whole.

New 2008 Report

In June, 2008, The Heinz Center is releasing the second State of the Nation's Ecosystems report on the condition and use of U. S. ecosystems. As with the first report, issued in 2002, it brings together the work of over 150 collaborators from businesses, environmental organizations, academic institutions, and federal, state, and local governments. This report contains new data for nearly two-thirds of the reported indicators, as well as several revised and newly developed indicators. The report was completed in the same collaborative fashion as its 2002 predecessor, and to even higher technical standards.



Scientifically Credible, Politically Neutral

The goal of the State of the Nation's Ecosystems project is to provide a national perspective on the condition of the nation's ecological assets, one that is not limited by specific geographic boundaries, not focused on a specific problem or pollutant, and not aligned with any specific policy agenda. Policy makers and the public demand that decisions affecting the environment be made with sound, unbiased information. This second edition of the State of the Nation's Ecosystems demonstrates that it is possible to provide a broad, integrated picture of ecosystem condition that is scientifically responsible and politically unbiased, and to improve and refine such a report in an ongoing manner. The report has earned broad bi-partisan support because it contains the facts; it does not interpret whether conditions are "good" or "bad."

The First Decade: Measuring Our Progress

- ✓ ***Produced and refined the first set of national indicators*** to describe ecosystem conditions
- ✓ ***Created the framework*** for a national environmental reporting system
- ✓ ***Identified significant gaps*** in current federal environmental monitoring
- ✓ ***Utilized the best science available*** to ensure credibility, relevancy and reliability
- ✓ ***Developed an objective product*** with the collaboration of hundreds of volunteer experts from business, government, science and NGO's

Most Americans would be surprised to know that the U.S. does not have a comprehensive system for tracking environmental conditions. With a record of ten years of leadership and innovation, our project provides a reliable, nonpartisan foundation for such a system.

Both the 2002 and 2008 reports are now available for purchase. Please visit our project website to learn more.

www.heinzcenter.org/ecosystems

The 2008 Report

The *State of the Nation's Ecosystems 2008* provides up-to-date, high quality, scientifically credible information necessary to tackle key environmental issues. The report includes information about:

- **Changes in the area and composition of major ecosystem types**, so that we can answer questions such as whether the nation is gaining or losing farm and forest land and whether natural habitats are becoming more fragmented.
- **Chemical and physical characteristics of land, water, air and living resources**, so that we can anticipate how changes in nutrients, contaminants, water levels and habitat quality may affect plants and animals and the benefits they provide to people.
- **Plant and animal communities and the individual species that make ecosystems their home**, so that we can identify emerging threats from non-native species or potential loss of native species, as well as major changes in the productivity of ecosystems.
- **Commodities such as fish, timber, crops, livestock, and water and recreational uses**, like bird-watching and hiking, so that we can better understand how we use our natural resources to enhance our economy and our well-being.



Road Map to a 21st Century Environmental Information System

The monitoring programs that provided data for *The State of the Nation's Ecosystems* are high quality, but were developed for specific purposes, and often produce data that is incomplete or incompatible with that of other programs. These systems cannot provide the information needed to address the environmental challenges of the 21st century –particularly as the nation faces a changing climate.

The Heinz Center has recommended a series of actions to address this need. They include:

- **Congressional authorization** of a system of **national environmental indicators**.
- **Executive branch actions to foster development of such indicators** in advance of Congressional action.
- **A broad national effort to improve data available to decision makers and the public.**
- **Expanded federal and state funding for monitoring.**

See *Road Map to a 21st Century Environmental Information System*, available on the Center's website.

About the Heinz Center...

At the crossroads of science and environmental policy, the Heinz Center brings leaders together from business, government, academia, and environmental groups to brainstorm solutions that are both scientifically and economically sound. Founded in 1995 in honor of Senator H. John Heinz III, the Center's guiding philosophy is that only by working together can we solve today's environmental challenges and leave the world a better place for generations to come.

THE H. JOHN HEINZ III CENTER FOR SCIENCE, ECONOMICS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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