

# EASTERN PARTNERSHIP FORUM SUMMARY REPORT



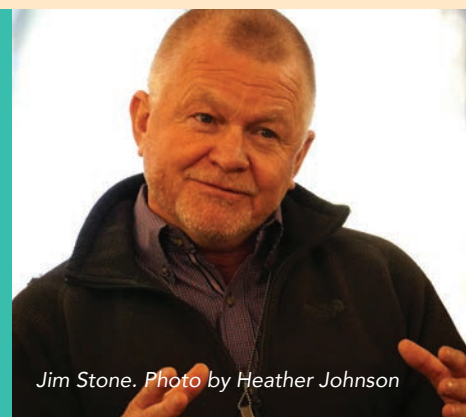
Photo by Reese Thompson

**P**artnerscapes, together with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) program, hosted the second of three planned **workshops to identify ways we can accelerate collaborative conservation and partnerships.** The workshop was held January 17–18, 2024, at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Although a large winter storm prevented some from traveling, 56 participants from across the east and southeast were able to attend. **The forum provided us with an opportunity to get perspectives from private landowners and land managers, federal and state agencies, and non-governmental organizations.**



Photo by Joe Milmoie, USFWS

*"This isn't about  
cows or fish. It is  
about people"*  
- Jim Stone



Jim Stone. Photo by Heather Johnson



## WORKSHOP GOALS WERE TO:

- Provide peer-to-peer networking and learning,
- Share skills and lessons learned in the delivery of conservation programs and partnerships,
- Assess needs and opportunities to improve partnership development across private and public lands,
- Identify gaps and strategies to better equip practitioners to conduct private lands work, and
- Offer input on developing a framework for networking between conservation practitioners and private landowners.



Photo by Joe Milmoie, USFWS

## AGENDA

To achieve workshop goals, the agenda for the two-day forum was split into the following four sessions:

- 1. KEYS TO SUCCESS:** Outlining the top skills it takes to be a successful private lands biologist,
- 2. GAPS & STRATEGIES:** Pinpointing gaps that prevent us from reaching goals for collaborative conservation and identifying the strategies and opportunities to bridge those gaps,
- 3. NETWORKING:** Identifying and accelerating effective networking opportunities, and,
- 4. TYING IT ALL TOGETHER.**

Three of the four sessions started with a speaker panel, made up of a mix of private landowners and conservation practitioners. Following each panel, facilitators led a question-and-answer session and an interactive process to gather input from all the participants. Wall boards, flip charts, and sticky notes were used to gather independent thoughts and ideas, which were then distilled down to several broad overarching themes. Open space was used to gather information for the networking session, which allowed participants a chance to move around the room, add ideas to flip charts, engage in conversations, and share ideas.

We found many similarities between the western and eastern forums. Although landscapes and practices vary across the country, many of the challenges we face are nationwide, and the things that make conservation partnerships successful are often very similar. During the eastern forum, we were able to expand our networking session by adding an additional half day to the agenda. This allowed more time to gather specific ideas to accelerate networking opportunities across the east and southeast.



Photo by Joe Milmoie, USFWS

# RESULTS

## Top Skills

- Trust
- Listen
- Find Common Ground
- Communication
- Be a Part of the Community
- Relationships
- Be Available/Dependable
- Learn Together
- Respect
- Flexibility



Photo by Joe Milmoie, USFWS



Photo by Heather Johnson



Photo by Joe Milmoie, USFWS

## Gaps

- Funding
- Capacity
- Staff Turnover
- Training and Mentoring
- Communication
- Outreach



Photo by Heather Johnson

## STRATEGIES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Increase Funding and Add Flexibility
- Increase Capacity
- Reduce Turnover of Staff and Hire for the Right Skills
- Increase Training and Mentoring Opportunities
- Increase Communication through Varied Methods
- Increase Outreach Frequency and Coordination

## NETWORKING

- Mentoring and Coaching
- Funding
- Leveraging
- Local Events
- Landowner-to-Landowner/Peer-to-Peer
- Outreach – Events, Materials, Social Media
- In-the-loop Communication
- Field Trips
- Partnership Forums



Reese Thompson. Photo by Heather Johnson

*"It is about mutual respect and trust, and these are both earned"*  
- Reese Thompson





*"Listening is  
the number one  
cardinal rule"*

- Bill Owen

Bill Owen. Photo by Heather Johnson

**T**hank you to all the participants who attended the Eastern Partnership Forum. Our vision is to increase efficiency and effectiveness of our voluntary collaborative partnerships by sharing and learning from one another. This transferability of knowledge, experience and lessons learned will build

upon our past success to help influence the future. This forum is one of a three-part series, and we will host another one in the Midwest in April 2024 to complete the series. Based upon feedback from the western and eastern forums, additional forums are being considered.

## STAY CONNECTED!

### Websites

<https://partnerscapes.org/>  
<https://www.fws.gov/program/partners-fish-and-wildlife>

### Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/partnerscapes>  
<https://www.facebook.com/PFWProgram>

### Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/partnerscapes/>

### Partnerscapes Conservation Network

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/partnerscapes.conservation.network>



Photo by Joe Milmo