

What Is Conservation?



In brief, WeConservePA uses the word *conservation* to mean the act of caring for and wisely using land to ensure that the land's natural resources can continue to benefit people and wildlife over time, and, where the land is degraded, restoring its capacity to deliver these benefits.

Conservation is defined by [Meriam Webster](#) as “a careful preservation and protection of something, *especially* planned management of a natural resource to prevent exploitation, destruction, or neglect.”

[Wikipedia](#) defines it as “the preservation or efficient use of resources...”

[Wiktionary](#)'s first definition is: “The act of preserving, guarding, or protecting; the keeping (of a thing) in a safe or entire state; preservation.” Its second definition is: “Wise use of natural resources.”

National Geographic's [encyclopedia entry](#) defines it as “the act of protecting Earth's natural resources for current and future generations.”

The entry continues:

Earth's natural resources include air, minerals, plants, soil, water, and wildlife. Conservation is the care and protection of these resources so that they can persist for future generations. It includes maintaining diversity of species, genes, and ecosystems, as well as functions of the environment, such as nutrient cycling.

Conservation is similar to preservation, but while both relate to the protection of nature, they strive to accomplish this task in different ways. Conservation seeks the sustainable use of nature by humans, for activities such as hunting, logging, or mining, while preservation means protecting nature from human use.

WeConservePA uses *conservation* to mean taking action to ensure for present and future generations some or all of the following outcomes:

- The land will serve as natural infrastructure: absorbing rainwater to prevent erosion and flooding and recharge groundwater; filtering stormwater runoff of pollutants before they can enter waterways; and sequestering carbon in plants and soil.
- The land will be available and productive for logging, farming, hunting, and other activities that sustainably draw from nature.
- The land will provide habitat and support for the diverse species with which we share the planet.
- The land will provide other open space benefits such as scenic views and opportunities for outdoor recreation, reflection, and inspiration.

WeConservePA also looks at conservation as encompassing the active stewardship of land (for example, fencing forest to prevent deer overbrowse or redesigning trails to prevent stormwater runoff) and the active restoration of natural functions to degraded lands and waters (for example, reforesting riparian areas or establishing meadow on strip mined land). Even more broadly, conservation describes actions to live sustainably to ensure that future generations may enjoy nature, undiminished.

