



ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE

finding the ways that work

May 14, 2003

Letters to the Editor
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To the Editor:

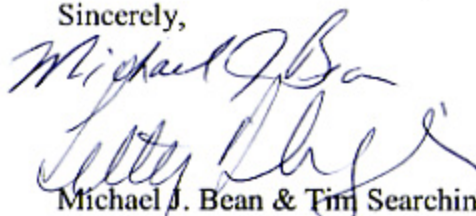
For more than 40 combined years, we have worked as lawyers trying to protect imperiled species and their habitats throughout the nation. Our work has sometimes involved us in controversial struggles, including congressional battles and litigation. Consistent with its non-adversarial approach, the Nature Conservancy has often sat out these battles.

Despite our different approaches, candor compels us to admit that no other organization even comes close to matching the Conservancy's record in saving rare species. In our work across the country, we have found Conservancy staff talented, pragmatic, keenly focused on real world environmental results, and successful at achieving them. Successfully protecting the environment requires a range of approaches by different groups, including the cooperative approach at which the Conservancy excels.

Our first-hand knowledge also indicates that the Conservancy has generally been a superb steward of its lands and is often scrupulously attentive to legal requirements that other landowners ignore. One small example tells a large story. From 1977 to 2000, endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers vanished from 21 of 23 sites in Virginia. Commercial timber owners cut most of these sites, notwithstanding state and federal protection of this species. The Nature Conservancy is the only landowner in Virginia that has ever voluntarily submitted to state and federal regulatory requirements for this species and the only Virginia landowner with this species still on its land.

We have no independent knowledge of the particular matters described in the Post series. We do know enough about the conservation accomplishments of the Conservancy to marvel at them.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Bean & Tim Searchinger
Senior Attorneys