



EcoHealth Alliance

Formerly known as Wildlife Trust

Frequently Asked Questions **Local Conservation. Global Health.**

What is EcoHealth Alliance?

EcoHealth Alliance (formerly Wildlife Trust) is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to local conservation and global health. We are committed to developing local conservation research programs at the intersection of ecosystem, animal, and human health. EcoHealth Alliance is also a leader in the One Health movement, which forges collaboration among physicians, veterinarians, and other scientific-health related disciplines to study the links between ecosystem, animal, and human health.

What is the focus of EcoHealth Alliance's work?

EcoHealth Alliance works at the intersection of ecosystem, animal and human health through local conservation programs and develops global health solutions to emerging diseases. Our deep experience in conservation and animal-borne diseases uniquely positions our organization to identify, predict, and mitigate disease outbreaks.

How long has EcoHealth Alliance been working in these areas?

Our organization was founded in 1971 as the Wildlife Trust; we're now entering our fifth decade with evolving roles, including leading the One Health movement.

Why did you change your name from Wildlife Trust to EcoHealth Alliance?

When we were founded, and for several years after that, our focus was primarily on wildlife conservation; however, over the past two decades we have continued to build our reputation for innovative research into the interconnected relationships between ecosystems and animal and human health.

Why is the rebranding happening at this time of year?

EcoHealth Alliance is the forefront of informing the public, businesses, and the scientific community about emerging diseases. The rebranding is timed to coincide with back-to-school and the important end-of-year business cycle when everyone is concerned about preventing diseases transmission. We all remember the attention H1N1 received in 2009. This year's flu and virus season begins now.

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Local conservation.
Global health.

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How does EcoHealth Alliance's work improve the world we live in?

EcoHealth Alliance protects endangered wildlife and examines emerging animal-borne (zoonotic) diseases that can be transmitted to people. Our dedicated group of scientists, veterinarians, public health specialists, field teams and international partners approach conservation by examining all of the associated factors affecting human, wildlife and environmental health from shrinking/fractured habitats or loss of habitat, species migration and species imbalance as well as invasive species, climate change, failing ecosystems, and human-induced environmental change.

Where does EcoHealth Alliance operate?

Our work spans the U.S. and more than 20 countries in Central and South America, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia to research ways for people and wildlife to share the same resources for their mutual survival.

How does EcoHealth Alliance work with other like-minded organizations?

EcoHealth Alliance works with a network of international conservation organizations around the world, providing a forum for research, education, funding and training. Our network brings together an expert team of local environmental leaders, scientists, and health professionals to share their ideas, recommendations, and innovations in wildlife conservation practice.

What type of work does EcoHealth Alliance do in the field of health and conservation medicine?

Conservation medicine crosses scientific disciplines to examine the health of individuals, communities and populations and the ecosystems in which they live. A primary goal of EcoHealth Alliance is to identify and track emerging infectious diseases and pandemics, especially those that spread from animals to humans, such as SARS, H1N1, H5N1 and HIV.

What wildlife-conservation initiatives is EcoHealth Alliance currently involved in?

EcoHealth Alliance's wildlife programs strive to promote better management of habitats to help ensure that ecosystems remain intact and endangered species survive the threats of human-induced change, pollution and climate change. Key initiatives include the study of disappearing frogs, sea turtles, and other amphibian declines; research on manatee survival and habitats in the Americas and Africa; aquatic conservation and threatened coastal wildlife habitats; and the study of endangered right whales and their habitats.

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How does EcoHealth Alliance achieve its wildlife conservation goals?

The success of EcoHealth Alliance's initiatives has resulted in saving species from the brink of extinction, developing culturally sensitive solutions, and elevating local conservation scientists and their programs on a global scale. In the U.S., EcoHealth Alliance's aquatic conservation program works to save endangered North Atlantic right whales, manatees, amphibians, and sea turtles. We also support conservationists in more than a dozen countries at the local level, in order to save endangered species and their habitats and to protect delicate ecosystems for the benefit of wildlife and humans.

What kinds of scientists do you have on your team?

EcoHealth Alliance develops solutions-based research by recruiting the best scientists and leveraging the expertise of local conservation partners. We're continuing to build our scientific roster with professionals from the fields of veterinary medicine, public health, mathematical modeling, disease ecology, and biology.

How has the rebranding underscored EcoHealth Alliance's mission?

New partnerships are bringing resources and shared knowledge to EcoHealth Alliance's scientists expanding and inspiring their collaborations with colleagues around the world. The recent establishment of the USAID PREDICT program, along with additional funding, has elevated the organization and our existing programs thus cementing EcoHealth Alliance's leadership position and prominence in the areas of local conservation and global health.

How is EcoHealth Alliance aiding the One Health movement's efforts?

Around the world, diseases like SARS, Avian flu, H1N1 and HIV are spread from varying factors related to wildlife trade, the global movement of people and animals and failing ecosystems. These diseases have serious public health, economic, and conservation consequences. New species of pathogens are being discovered by EcoHealth Alliance researchers, which may one day help predict or mitigate the next emerging disease like SARS or H1N1.

Has EcoHealth Alliance helped discover any new diseases or predict disease outbreaks?

EcoHealth Alliance research recently uncovered the wildlife reservoir of the SARS outbreak. Dr. Peter Daszak discovered chytrid, which is a fungal disease that is systematically wiping out amphibian populations around the world. EcoHealth Alliance's team of scientists also helped connect the environmental factors to determine exactly what led to the deadly Nipah virus outbreak in Malaysia.

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What is the PREDICT program and how does it relate to EcoHealth Alliance’s work?

In 2009 the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) initiated a new global emerging pandemic threat program based on EcoHealth Alliance’s innovative hotspots map. The five-year program, called PREDICT, brings together a coalition of organizations to research and better understand emerging diseases among high-risk wildlife and in high-risk countries.

What is EcoHealth Alliance doing globally to support PREDICT’s efforts?

Working with three other collaborators on PREDICT, and using EcoHealth Alliance’s mathematical modeling team and local networks, we are responsible for collecting and testing target-species samples from India, China, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand, Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, and Colombia.

What is the meaning of EcoHealth Alliance’s new tagline: “Local Conservation, Global Health”?

For the past four decades, the outbreak of new emerging diseases has increased exponentially. Over 75 percent of new diseases originate in non-human animals and jump to humans, with severe and often deadly consequences. It is imperative that we keep a close eye on these types of outbreaks, and develop best practices to save ecosystems, conserve wildlife, and save human lives.

What are the human costs of these infectious diseases?

As the leading cause of human fatalities worldwide, infectious diseases lead to the deaths of 13 million people per year. To provide just one well-known example, the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS have resulted in more than 33 million people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide. EcoHealth Alliance scientists are at the nexus of disease transmission looking to predict and prevent the spread of possible pandemic threats.

What are the economic costs of these infectious diseases?

There are a number of important economic effects of the growing number of emerging infectious diseases, which have risen significantly over the past 20 years. The economic uncertainties surrounding new diseases, even those that are not considered pandemic, include damage to GDP due to declines in production, declines in global travel, less face-to-face service, and even labor force losses due to chronic disease and death. EcoHealth Alliance believes it’s crucial to monitor and prepare for these uncertainties, because otherwise corporate, household, and overall social welfare can be left vulnerable during times of crisis.

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How does EcoHealth Alliance develop global solutions for health and conservation?

At the grassroots level, EcoHealth Alliance empowers local conservation scientists to build their capacity; integrate best practices in conservation; and create culturally appropriate solutions to protect wildlife, while at the same time safeguarding human health. As scientists concerned about the environment we can no longer focus on just one aspect of conservation, since every function of a viable ecosystem affects the health of animals and humans alike.

Why is EcoHealth Alliance's work important in today's world?

Biological impoverishment, habitat fragmentation, climate change, increasing levels of toxins in nature – along with the rapid global movement of people and other living organisms – have diminished ecosystem function resulting in unprecedented levels of disease. These factors pose a threat to the survival and health of all species, including humans. In fact approximately 75 percent of emerging infectious diseases affecting humans today is of zoonotic origin (a disease that jumps from wild or domestic animals and spreads to humans).

What kinds of diseases can jump from animals to humans?

The lethal Hantavirus of the American southwest moves from rodents to people. More recently, the avian influenza virus has broken all epidemiological rules by jumping from chickens straight to humans, claiming the world's attention as a potential pandemic. Analysis and predictions by EcoHealth Alliance scientists is helping to focus attention on the H1N1 ("swine flu") influenza pandemic. The results of the organization's West Nile virus research initiative is expected to aid the study of other emerging wildlife diseases, like the deadly Nipah virus.

Why is tracking these kinds of diseases important?

Animal-borne (zoonotic) diseases are a huge threat to biodiversity, and over the last few decades a growing number of diseases that jump between species – including wildlife, domesticated animals, and humans – has escalated significantly. EcoHealth Alliance scientists are actively working in many countries to identify potential infectious disease threats through viral discovery.

Don't these diseases threaten animal species, as well as humans?

Yes, and that is an aspect of infectious disease that is often overlooked in the discussion of the health consequences to humans. Critically endangered wildlife species are at grave risk of extinction from these types of disease outbreaks.

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Are donations to EcoHealth Alliance tax deductible?

Yes. EcoHealth Alliance is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization, and all donations are tax deductible.

Where can I learn more about EcoHealth Alliance and its programs?

Visit www.ecohealthalliance.org to learn more – and find out how you can support our work in local conservation and global health.

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