



ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE

finding the ways that work

February 1, 2005

Mr. John Martin  
Chairman  
Images for Conservation Fund  
2112 West University Drive  
Edinburg, TX 78539

Dear Mr. Martin:

Environmental Defense is pleased to endorse the goals and programs of the Images for Conservation Fund. For over a decade Environmental Defense has developed and applied incentive-based tools to wildlife habitat restoration on private lands. Advancing wildlife conservation by linking private ranchers with nature photographers is just the sort of approach that we so strongly advocate.

Environmental Defense has long recognized that private landowners are key participants in the conservation of rare, threatened and endangered plants, animals and habitats. This is especially true in Texas where over 97% of the land is in private ownership. In the Hill Country of central Texas Environmental Defense has steadily built relationships with over 50 landowners representing over 100,000 acres of ranchland for the purpose of restoring and enhancing habitats for the federally endangered Black-capped Vireo and Golden-cheeked Warbler.

There are a variety of reasons as to why a particular landowner would participate in endangered species recovery. In central Texas for example, many of the management activities that benefit endangered species also enhance habitats for game animals (thereby potentially increasing the value of hunting leases) and can help landowners qualify for wildlife property tax valuation. These types of financial incentives are essential, not just for the recovery of endangered species, but also for enhancing and conserving landscape and ecosystem integrity.

Images for Conservation Fund's goal of establishing a nature photography economy in the Texas Hill Country has the potential to become a major financial incentive for private landowner participation in wildlife conservation. Environmental Defense is pleased to be a partner in this visionary effort.

Sincerely,

Melinda Taylor  
Program Director  
Ecosystems Restoration