



Planetary Health—Environmental Change and Public Health

Environmental changes caused by human activity can significantly impact public health and wellbeing, but often these consequences are not clearly quantified or understood by policy-makers. Steven A. Osofsky, Population Medicine and Diagnostic Sciences, has worked with colleagues at Harvard University's T.H. Chan School of Public Health to launch a consortium, the Planetary Health Alliance (PHA), and an emerging field called planetary health, which seeks to improve understanding and apply appropriate metrics, regarding the public health impacts of human-caused environmental change. The goal is to inform decision-making in the realms of land- and ocean-use planning, environmental conservation, and public health policy.

In a proof-of-concept project, \$1 million of this funding is being allocated to a Cornell-led effort to promote sectorally integrative policy and practice in the Kavango Zambezi (KAZA) Transfrontier Conservation Area, a conservation and development initiative of five member countries of the Southern African Development Community. Within KAZA, the conservation of wildlife is often in conflict with livestock production; infectious agents in wild animals, particularly foot and mouth disease viruses, have made it difficult or impossible for beef farmers to enter the world market, due to restrictions based on the livestock's proximity to wildlife. The current solution—vast fencing to separate livestock and wildlife—interrupts wild animals' migration pathways and endangers their survival.

Osofsky and his collaborators are focusing on the way beef is actually processed to keep products virus-free for international sale—an approach that does not completely depend on fences. This could open global markets for farmers living with wildlife and enhance livelihood opportunities in both agriculture and sustainable ecotourism. Osofsky and team envision a win-win situation for farmers and the environment, and one that models close collaboration and communication between policy-makers and researchers.

This southern African project is part of the larger program, funded to document case studies in

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Funding Received

\$1.7 Million

spanning 3 years

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