The Nature Conservancy

# THE NATURE OF INNOVATION

2019 Annual Report

**DIGITAL EXTRAS**

Look for these smart codes throughout this report. Hover your phone's camera over them, and they'll take you to videos and other bonus content.

**ABOUT OUR COVER:** Award-winning illustrator Pablo Delcan, a frequent contributor to *The New York Times*, crafted this image to depict the theme of this report: "The Nature of Innovation." Delcan chose the leaf of a gingko tree—the oldest known living tree species—to demonstrate the critical connections between people and nature and to show how our innovative conservation efforts are not just saving nature, but are helping to save the ecological systems that support all of us.

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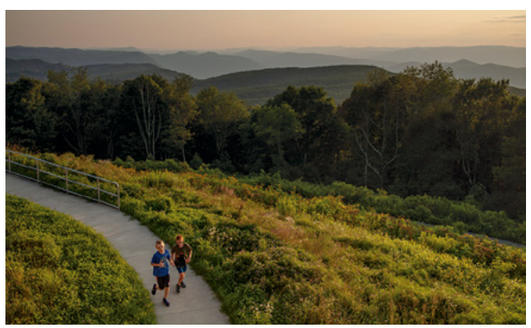



FROM TOP: © PAT KANE; ROSHNI LODHIA; DIANE COOK AND LEN JENSHEL; TRAVIS DOVE

# Innovating for Nature

Most days in the California deserts boast clear, wide-open skies. These arid lands—rich in both biodiversity and the cultural history of many Native American peoples—are also ripe for solar development. As secretary of the interior, this is where I first saw The Nature Conservancy's innovation at work, when the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) turned to TNC for help designing a blueprint for renewable energy development across 22.5 million acres of the iconic Mojave and Sonoran deserts of Southern California.

When done right, clean energy development is a crucial strategy in the fight against climate change, but it must be sited in places where impacts to people and nature are minimal. Fortunately, science tells us there is more than enough already-altered land (former mines, brownfields, degraded agricultural lands or rooftops) to meet the growing need for renewable energy. Working with TNC, the BLM developed a plan for these desert regions that steers renewable energy development to lower-impact, high-potential areas. This minimizes harm to wildlife and habitat while also speeding up the permitting process for energy companies.

The Nature Conservancy's partnership with the BLM in California was about more than protecting the state's deserts—it was about putting science in the hands of developers, utilities, government agencies, Native American tribes and local communities to influence change at scale. We are also using similar strategies to encourage smart wind power development in the Midwest and Great Plains (see page 32) and to enable a mix of low-impact renewable development in other nations, such as Croatia, Colombia, India and Gabon.

In my role as interim CEO of The Nature Conservancy, I have the privilege of seeing this kind of innovation in action every day. In 2019 alone, TNC launched dozens of projects that are bringing together partners in new ways to inspire change on a much greater scale. These programs—many of them still in their pilot phase—are already protecting an area of ocean nearly the size of Germany (see page 11) and helping to conserve a 253,000-acre forest in the heart of Appalachian coal country that will safeguard wildlife, sequester carbon and support the local economy (see page 30).

This year we also celebrated achievements that were the culmination of many years of hard work, deep collaboration and shared learning. In Mongolia, the government approved 22 new national protected areas covering 8.6 million acres, informed by TNC science (see page 8). In Canada's Northwest Territories, we supported the establishment of Thaidene Nëné, a 6.5-million-acre protected area that will serve as a model for Indigenous-led conservation (see page 10). And in Melbourne, Australia, we helped the city launch one of the world's first urban "greenprints"—a comprehensive initiative to develop and advance plans for expanding tree cover, creating wildlife habitat, improving public health and lessening the impacts of climate change (see page 24).

The time to innovate for nature has never been more critical, as the climate crisis continues to imperil our lands, our waters and our very well-being. Across lands, rivers, oceans, climate change, agriculture and cities, all of the projects featured in the pages that follow demonstrate how The Nature Conservancy is answering this challenge. I am optimistic that by working with partners, volunteers and supporters like you, we can create a future where people and nature thrive together.

Sally Jewell

**Sally Jewell**
Interim Chief Executive Officer

The Conservancy is helping the renewable energy industry find sites, like this one in Lancaster, California, built on already-disturbed lands.

© AARON HUEY

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# Passion Drives Innovation

This is my first year as chair of TNC's global board of directors, but I have been deeply involved with our organization since 2004, when I first joined the board of trustees for the Alaska chapter, and later when I joined the global board in 2011. I chose TNC as the conservation organization I wanted to commit more time to for many reasons, but most importantly because we use science, common sense, community partnerships and nonpartisan policy work to achieve our mission.

I believe in TNC. I believe that our colleagues, partners and supporters are making a huge difference in the world to conserve the critical lands and waters on which all life depends—and to find innovative solutions to the complex challenges we face. Growing threats from climate change, environmental destruction and habitat loss require us to respond with urgency and at scale to create a more sustainable future. I believe TNC can rise to this challenge.

TNC has taken on bold, innovative initiatives and partnerships to pilot new ways of doing conservation on a massive scale. This year, we've launched new projects that we hope will inspire more people to adopt and incorporate sustainable practices. From Mongolia to Canada, strong partnerships with government leaders and Indigenous communities have helped protect tens of millions of acres in 2019. Innovative financing and conservation strategies advanced new approaches to help slow climate change in the U.S. And in Peru, we have piloted new ways to spread sustainable fisheries management practices around the world.

These projects demonstrate that conservation at scale—executed with innovative partnerships and strategies—can be done. But we cannot do it without you and your support. Please join us as we work to make an even bigger impact in 2020 and beyond.

With sincere gratitude,

Frances Ulmer

**Frances A. Ulmer**
Chair

Fran Ulmer became chair of The Nature Conservancy's global board of directors on October 18, 2019. She also serves as the chair of the U.S. Arctic Research Commission (USARC) and is a senior fellow at Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. Ms. Ulmer was chancellor of the University of Alaska Anchorage and led the Institute of Social and Economic Research. She served as an elected official for 18 years as the mayor of Juneau, as an Alaska state representative and as lieutenant governor, becoming the first woman elected to statewide office in Alaska.

FROM TOP: © ROSHNI LODHIA; ALEX SNYDER/TNC

© ROSHNI LODHIA



Alingile Mayekiso is a rope technician on a steep-slope project to remove invasive plants in South Africa. The work is paid for by Cape Town's water fund. The plants consume so much water that they contribute to the city's ongoing water shortages.

# Deeper, Truer and Wiser

This past year, I had the privilege of sitting with Native American elders and a group of TNC leaders from North America, New Zealand, and the Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities program. Hosting us at the River Forks Ranch, the Nevada chapter had constructed an arbor out of cedar and pine to shield us from the cold morning wind. We sat for three days around a sacred fire at the foot of the Sierra Mountains and were welcomed by the Washoe people in Washoe territory. We spent our days learning about the damage settlers have inflicted on Native people in North America and what we could do for a better future for all. Together we agreed that we needed to break down barriers and work together in a spirit of hope. The rapidly changing environment demands that we work hand in hand to address the challenges to a rapidly degrading world.

At TNC, we firmly believe—and our science tells us it is possible—that we can create a world where people and nature thrive together. To succeed, we need to make some significant changes to get the world on a more sustainable path. To jump-start these changes on the scale necessary to avoid a bleak future, we are innovating on our traditional approaches to conservation, finding new levers to effect change in complex systems and working with a host of new and often-unlikely partners.

We are focused on four areas: 1) tackling climate change; 2) protecting oceans, lands and water; 3) providing food and water sustainably; and 4) building healthy cities. In these priorities, we are achieving significant results. In North America, our Cumberland deal protected 254,000 acres of working forest in Appalachia that will sequester 5 million tons of carbon. In Mongolia, we helped protect 8.6 million acres of land, surpassing our ambitious goal for 2022. Our FishPath software for sustainable fisheries management is in high demand by governments in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa. And in Australia, TNC worked with local and global leaders on crafting Living Melbourne, a plan for a greener city that provides health benefits, smart infrastructure, and a science-based road map to identify, plan and implement the highest-impact conservation projects.

Our strength is in our values, in our staff and in our ability to bridge divides. Our successes stem from our people driving change and building a diversity of partnerships essential to achieving our conservation goals.

Sitting around that sacred fire in Nevada, one of the elders noted our efforts to do our work "bigger, faster, smarter" and challenged us to also be "deeper, truer and wiser." Filled with that spirit, I look forward to where we can go—all of us together.

David Banks

**David Banks**
Interim Chief Conservation Officer

# PROTECTING LANDS, OCEANS & WATER

**From the grasslands of Mongolia to the Caribbean's reefs, we help save the world's most critical habitats.**

Mongolia's federal and local governments have protected nearly 150 million acres across the country, including parts of its extensive grasslands (seen here). Now, TNC is helping the government protect even more.

# Milestones in Mongolia

## The Conservancy's support sharpens a nation's ambitious conservation goals.

**FOR MORE THAN 10 YEARS,** The Nature Conservancy has given scientific support to the national government of Mongolia, which has now put a staggering 20% of its land—some 77.5 million acres—under national protection. The latest move came in May 2019, when the nation's parliament put new protections on 8.6 million acres.

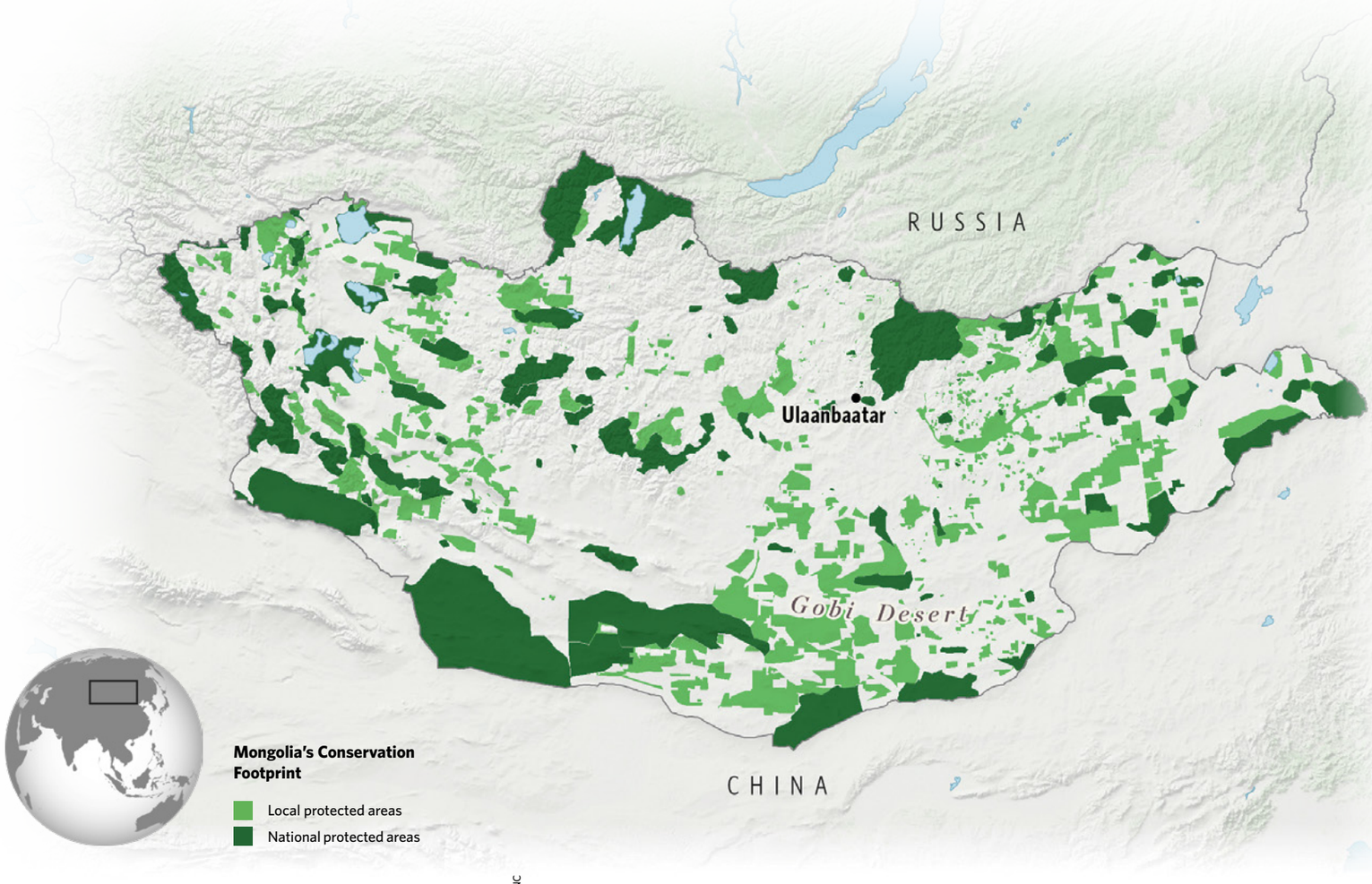
The new protections cover a huge swath of Mongolia's landscape, from the Altai Mountains to the steppe to the Gobi Desert. They help preserve habitats for at least 15 rare species, including snow leopard, argali sheep, wild ass and Przewalski's horse, as well as cultural and historical sites. Together, Mongolia's protected areas will help the country counterbalance growing national changes in mining, overgrazing and climate change, while also allowing local herding communities to remain on the land.

"Mongolians are very proud of their heritage and their nomadic culture, and the families of many of the people in parliament are still herders," says Galbadrakh Davaa, director of TNC's Mongolia Program. "Because of that close connection with the landscape, they deeply understand that Mongolian culture and identity depend on nature."

The Nature Conservancy has also worked at the ground level, helping local communities learn more about the tools available to them to manage the lands they depend on for herding and other activities. With this help, they can create their own natural resources management plans and establish agreements with respective levels of government, which allow the voices of communities to be heard.

In addition to the nationally protected areas, local-level governments in Mongolia have designated 1,220 protected areas covering 66.4 million acres—17% of the country's landmass. The Conservancy would like to see these protections made permanent.

In 1992, the Mongolian government set a goal of ultimately protecting 30% of its land. The Nature Conservancy began working in Mongolia more than a decade ago and has worked to boost that effort by providing science, data and expertise to all levels of government and communities.




This map shows how 37% of Mongolia has been protected by the national and local governments. The Nature Conservancy started working in Mongolia in 2008 and has conducted a nationwide ecological assessment to help government at all levels identify and protect critical habitats.

To help the government focus its land-protection commitment, TNC carried out a nationwide landscape-level ecological survey. That project identified the most critical areas for protecting biodiversity, which then served as the basic blueprint for designating nationally protected areas.

"Mongolia's environmental protection law requires representation of all the country's ecosystems in the protected-area network," says Enkhtuya Oidov, the executive director of the Mongolia Program. "We helped the government identify the least-protected ecosystems, including the intact temperate grasslands in Mongolia."

The Mongolian government is now working to designate nine new national-level protected areas that will cover 3.3 million acres. And TNC continues to support the government in its final push to protect 30% by 2030. —*Matt Jenkins*

**SEE MORE**

Scan the code with your phone's camera to watch a video about how Mongolia is preserving vast landscapes, or visit: nature.org/ProtectMongolia





Herders in the grassland steppe of eastern Mongolia's Tosonhulstai Nature Reserve.

# 6.5 Million Acres Protected in Canada

**FOR MORE THAN A DECADE,** The Nature Conservancy offered key support in the creation of Canada's newest protected area, Thaidene Nëné—6.5 million acres of beautiful forest, lakes and a new national park reserve. Wolves, bears, lynx and iconic herds of free-ranging caribou are all found in the protected area, located below the Arctic Circle in the Northwest Territories.

But most importantly, Thaidene Nëné protects the traditional homelands and ancestral rights of the Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation. The Nature Conservancy and its Canadian affiliate, Nature United, helped the Łutsël K'é Dene achieve their conservation vision by sharing technical expertise, supporting a variety of community-led development programs and raising funds that will enable them to manage the land. The community will co-govern Thaidene Nëné with federal and territorial governments in an unprecedented partnership that sets a new global standard for conservation.

Thaidene Nëné, together with the neighboring Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary, will protect an ecological system spanning more than 18 million acres, creating one of the largest terrestrial protected areas in North America. *—Dustin Solberg*

Steven Nitah negotiated on behalf of the Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation to establish Thaidene Nëné, a protected area that includes the homeland of this community.

*"Being a global leader in conservation is not just about what we conserve—it's about how we conserve."*

**Hadley Archer,**
Director, Nature United
(TNC's Canada affiliate)

© PAT KANE

# Increasing Ocean Protection by 15% in 10 Years

**SEE MORE**

Scan the code with your phone's camera to watch a video showing how countries use debt to protect oceans, or visit: nature.org/DebtForOceans

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: © JASON HOUSTON; CHRISTOPHE MASON-PARKER/TNC PHOTO CONTEST 2018; JASON HOUSTON

As part of our goal to increase marine conservation zones around the world by 15%, TNC is working with coastal and island nations to refinance their debt and use the savings for marine protection. Seychelles is leading the way in this innovative effort; one protected area will include the waters near Mahé Island, shown here. Seychelles is home to the critically endangered hawksbill turtles.

**IN 2019**, The Nature Conservancy announced a campaign to increase marine conservation zones around the world by 15% within a decade. But protecting marine resources takes money, and many coastal countries are deeply in debt.

In response, TNC launched a financing program called Blue Bonds for Conservation that tackles the problem from both ends. First, TNC arranges the purchase of part of a country's national debt, using funds from investment banks. Then, similar to refinancing a home, the debt

is restructured with more favorable interest rates and longer repayment terms. This in turn frees up funds to pay for national marine conservation programs. To be eligible for Blue Bonds, a country must commit to protecting a portion of its marine areas, with a target of 30%.

Seychelles is working to finalize a marine protection for an area totaling the size of Germany. The Conservancy has identified dozens of coastal and island countries with potential for the first round of 20 debt conversions. Over the next two decades, the program could generate as much as $1.6 billion for marine conservation. *—Julian Smith*

# Local Land Protection Gets a Boost

**OVER HALF A CENTURY,** the Land and Water Conservation Fund—a key federal funding source in the United States for everything from national parks to local athletic fields—has left its mark in all 50 states. But its congressional authorization expired in 2015, and the fund has relied on uncertain stopgap measures. Finally, in 2019, after campaigning by TNC and partners, Congress and the White House permanently reauthorized the fund—helping to secure its future.
*—Dustin Solberg*

Ever since it was created in the United States in 1965, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has helped protect national treasures like Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming (above), home to myriad species, including the red fox (top).

## Turning Coral Reefs Into Classrooms

**ACROSS THE CARIBBEAN,** three new Coral Innovation Hubs launched by TNC and partners are accelerating large-scale reef restoration, with the goal of bringing millions of corals to life over the next five years. Home to state-of-the-art lab facilities, these science centers also hosted a virtual field trip that helped 171,000 students in 60 countries learn about the importance of saving coral reefs.
*—Jocelyn Ellis Abood*

## Protecting the World's Mangrove Heartland

**INDONESIA IS HOME** to more than a fifth of the world's mangroves, which protect coastlines, capture carbon and provide essential habitat for birds and fish. But more than 40% of the country's mangroves have been lost. Now, Mangrove Ecosystem Restoration Alliance (MERA)—a diverse partnership that engages governments, corporations and local communities—is working to protect and restore nearly 1.25 million acres of mangroves in Indonesia by 2025, starting with the last remaining mangrove forest in the capital city, Jakarta.
*—Jocelyn Ellis Abood*

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## Saving New South Wales' Last Wild Wetlands

**IN ONE OF THE BIGGEST** private conservation purchases in Australian history, The Nature Conservancy bought the Great Cumbung swamp for roughly $39 million. The area contains some of the last large wetlands in the Murray-Darling Basin, the country's agricultural heartland, where most of the land and water resources are used for crops and livestock. A critical lifeline for water birds like straw-necked ibis and yellow-billed spoonbill, the area is also rich in Indigenous culture.
*—Justine E. Hausheer*

## Empowering Indigenous Women to Protect the Amazon

**SINCE 2003**, TNC has partnered with eight Indigenous groups to manage 12 million acres of the Brazilian Amazon. The work has a special focus on supporting Indigenous women as forest stewards. The Conservancy has helped women of the Xikrin Indigenous People produce *babaçu* oil, a healthy, traditional food similar to coconut oil that can be sustainably harvested and boost the local economy.
*—Melisa Holman*

FROM TOP: © KEVIN ARNOLD; PAUL NICKLEN/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC IMAGE COLLECTION

# REDUCING RISKS FOR WHALES

**THE NATURE CONSERVANCY**, California crab fishers and fishery managers are making the seas safer for whales. In 2019, the group improved an early warning system to reduce the risk of humpback and blue whales entangling themselves in fishing gear. The Conservancy also helped NOAA create online courses about how to respond to entangled whales.
*—Danielle Furlich*

**TOP:** The Conservancy helps Xikrin women protect the Brazilian Amazon and diversify the local economy.
**ABOVE:** In California, TNC works with the fishing industry to reduce the threats of fishing gear to humpback whales, shown here in Monterey Bay.

# PROVIDING FOOD & WATER SUSTAINABLY

We can feed the planet's growing population without destroying the nature that supports us.

Local divers are now earning more for their sustainably caught octopus, crabs and sea snails by working directly with sellers at fish markets like this one in Lima, Peru.

# Empowering Communities to Make Their Fisheries Thrive

## FishPath brings scientific decision-making tools to artisanal fishing fleets across the globe.

**IN 2015,** the fleet of wooden fishing boats that sets out each morning from the Peruvian town of Ancon had been catching less of just about everything—octopus, sea snails and crabs. For these dive fishers, a smaller catch means they earn less—and they needed to find a fix. They started to enact voluntary management measures to recover their fisheries, and then found a solid science partner in The Nature Conservancy, which introduced them to FishPath.

It's an innovative scientific decision-making process designed by TNC to help local communities and government agencies renew and protect their fisheries.

Hundreds of millions of people worldwide rely on fisheries for their livelihoods. But overfishing and mismanagement are a problem in more than a third of the Earth's fisheries. Most of those fisheries are unregulated and lack the support of sound science. Collecting information on the status of fish stocks—factors like fish size and reproduction rates—takes time, effort and expertise. For many communities, even basic data collection has been out of reach. Plus, there's no one-size-fits-all approach that will work on spiny lobsters in Africa, red snapper in Mexico and whelks in Rhode Island.

FishPath is a program where TNC staff help communities evaluate the distinctive features of their fishery, as well as any available data, and then suggest options for management. "For many small-scale fisheries, FishPath opens a window for them to get concrete plans in place," says Carmen Revenga, TNC's sustainable fisheries strategy lead. "It gives them a path forward."

An important part of FishPath is building trust with local fishers and supporting communities as they manage their own fisheries. In Ancon, local fishers worked with TNC staff to craft a community-based fishery management plan that included setting size limits and temporarily closing some local fishing spots to allow populations to rebound. Those decisions, paired with leadership and market incentives, helped improve the populations and local catch of snails and crabs in just one year.

Between TNC and partners, FishPath is being used in about a dozen countries around the world. The program is guiding management of similar dive fisheries in Chile, queen conch fisheries in the Bahamas and coral reef fisheries in Hawaii, and it's also at work in Kenya, Seychelles, Micronesia, Indonesia and Australia. —*Julian Smith*

**LEFT:** The Conservancy is helping dive fishers in Peru's central coast manage their fishing grounds more sustainably. The program, called FishPath, gives communities the tools to make decisions about their local fisheries.

**SEE MORE**

Scan the code with your phone's camera to watch a video about how this fishing community in Peru has turned to science in its search for sustainability, or visit: nature.org/FishPathPeru

**ABOVE:** Crews in this dive fishery bring in a harvest of sea snails, crabs and octopus—made more sustainable by a local commitment to protect the resource for the long term. **TOP:** The small-boat fleet at Ancon on the coast of central Peru has agreed to adopt science-based measures that have led to better catches.

PAGES 14-15 AND THIS PAGE: © JASON HOUSTON

© JASON HOUSTON (BOTH)

**SEE MORE**

Scan the code with your phone's camera to see how cities are preserving nature to improve water, or visit: nature.org/AfricaWater

# Helping African Cities Conserve Land for Water Security

**IN AFRICA,** The Nature Conservancy developed a pair of ambitious water funds—and has many more in the works. Water funds, introduced by TNC and partners to locales around the world, are programs that help urban water users pay for upstream forest and waterway restoration that boosts the downstream supply of clean water for homes and businesses.

In 2015, TNC established a water fund that is supporting 28,000 farmers to save water along the Upper Tana River, a main water source for Nairobi's 4 million people. Then in 2018—the same year Cape Town, South Africa, came perilously close to running out of water—TNC launched the Greater Cape Town Water Fund. The water fund is removing invasive, thirsty and highly combustible tree species such as pine and acacia, which consume about a sixth of Cape Town's water supply. The effort will not only free up some 14.5 billion gallons of water for Cape Town each year but also reduce the risk of wildfire and restore native wildlife habitat.

TNC, together with several partners, is now developing water funds for a half dozen other cities across Africa. —*Matt Jenkins*

**TOP:** A water fund in Kenya is working to provide residents of Nairobi with a clean, reliable supply of water. **ABOVE:** Specialized remote access teams remove invasive plants from the greater Cape Town region in South Africa.

FROM TOP: © NICK HALL; ROSHNI LODHIA

For Pacific Island nations, the tuna harvest represents valuable income. A new transparency initiative supported by TNC means eight nations will bring new monitoring and oversight to the fleet and more sustainability for all.

© JONNE RORIZ

# Pacific Nations Pledge New Transparency in the Tuna Market

**EIGHT PACIFIC ISLAND** nations came together with support from The Nature Conservancy in April to boldly commit to full transparency in their national tuna fisheries.

The Technology for Tuna Transparency Challenge, led by the Federated States of Micronesia, is an initiative of historic proportions. For the first time ever, developing countries have committed to 100% transparency in their entire tuna fisheries by 2023 through on-board observers and state-of-the-art electronic monitoring.

These nations are truly ocean states with waters that sweep across the western and central Pacific Ocean. They control around half the planet's skipjack tuna catch—the planet's most commonly canned fish—meaning the momentum of their collective actions ripples through a global industry.

This is a huge win for the oceans and people. Better oversight means foreign vessels can't take more than their fair share, so more revenue goes back into Pacific Island communities. And vessels can't get away with illegal fishing or reckless bycatch of sensitive species such as sea turtles. It is long past time to bring fisheries monitoring into the 21st century—successful transparency could transform seafood sustainability in the Pacific and beyond. —*Dustin Solberg*

# Improving Sustainability on Rented Farms

**LANDOWNERS** who are not farmers own 62% of Midwest farmland, meaning growers are leasing much of the land they farm. The Nature Conservancy is working with partners to help landowners and farmers work together to commit to new conservation practices, ensuring a healthier landscape for growing food and water supplies. *—Christine Griffiths*

Some modern farming practices leave ground exposed and harm the soil, but TNC is working with partners to boost farmland conservation measures.

## Restoring Australia's Oyster Reefs

**THE NATURE CONSERVANCY'S** expertise is driving a bold effort in Australia to restore 60 shellfish reefs in six years (left). Native oyster reefs were almost wiped out in the early 20th century, but at sites such as Windara Reef, where restoration is underway, new oyster reefs are already fostering diverse marine life. *—Dustin Solberg*

## More Fish in the Sea

**THE RICH SEAS** of Baja California support local fishers and provide over 70% of Mexico's commercial fishing catch, but only 1 out of 10 fisheries are managed sustainably. Over the past three years, TNC and local partners have supported 25 communities in creating no-take fish replenishment zones—allowing populations to rebound. In some of these areas, there have been 30% increases in fish biomass. *—Maggie Terry*

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## New Water Funds Launching in Colombia

**THE NATURE CONSERVANCY** and the Latin American Water Funds Partnership pioneered water funds in Latin America. The programs allow cities to fund protection of upstream water sources, such as forests and rivers, to ensure their own water security. In Colombia, thanks to a new coalition of more than 40 partners, the goal is to impact five priority watersheds by 2022. *—Kim Nye*

## Global Cooperation Protects Indonesian Fisheries

**U.S. CONSUMER DEMAND** for plate-sized, juvenile snapper is hurting fish populations in Indonesia, the world's largest source of this valuable fish. Thanks to TNC's efforts, 14 seafood companies have pledged not to buy immature snapper from Indonesia and instead focus on the more sustainable harvest of larger, adult snappers. *—Matt Jenkins*

# MAPPING SOIL HEALTH TO TRACK PROGRESS ON FARMS

Fields like this one in the U.S. heartland could thrive well into the future with better soil health practices. A new high-tech program known as OpTIS shows where soil conservation is gaining ground.

**FARMERS** are increasingly using the latest in conservation practices to renew soil health while also protecting water quality and capturing atmospheric carbon. To accelerate the adoption of these practices and better focus assistance efforts, TNC and key agricultural partners are using publicly available satellite imagery to map soil conservation trends across large areas in the Midwest. *—Christine Griffiths*

## Belize Nearly Triples Its Marine Reserves

**BELIZE** announced a bold plan to protect nearly 12% of its waters—almost tripling its marine reserves. TNC played a key role in this effort, lending scientific insights to fishers committed to identifying critical areas for protection. By giving fish room to recover, Belize is securing healthy fisheries across the world's second-longest reef system. *—Maggie Terry*

In Belize, new marine reserves offer a boost to the future of commercially valuable species such as lobster.

## Saving Nature and Expanding Agriculture

**SOUTH AMERICA** supplies the world with commodities like beef and soy. Seeing rising pressure to expand farm production into remote forests and grasslands—biodiversity hot spots—TNC and international agricultural partners created Agroideal.org, a powerful online decision-support tool that is proving to help industry balance growth with protection for nature in Brazil, Argentina and, soon, Paraguay. *—Melisa Holman*

With smart planning, science-based strategies and strong partnerships, we can make the green cities of tomorrow resilient, healthy and equitable.

# BUILDING HEALTHY CITIES


**LEFT:** In Atlanta, TNC and community partner HABESHA, Inc. are training residents for jobs that support green infrastructure. Sevon Coulibaly helps at one of HABESHA's community gardens. **RIGHT:** In Australia, TNC is helping the city of Melbourne develop a plan to expand its urban tree canopy as the city grows.

# Helping Melbourne Create a "Greenprint" for Nature

**ABOVE:** A crimson rosella in Melbourne. The city is developing a plan to ensure that future development brings with it more parks and nature.

**IN A CITY** consistently ranked among the world's most livable, Melburnians take pride in their green community full of birds, urban trees and parks. But Melbourne is growing fast, and new neighborhoods haven't always incorporated the parks and forests for which the city is known.

The Living Melbourne plan—a "greenprint" for how and where nature can help make the city more sustainable, for both people and wildlife—represents a collaboration among more than 30 communities, agreeing on common values and goals.

"Melbourne needed a plan to... sustain [its] livability for people and nature," says Cathy Oke, councillor for the city of Melbourne. "We have to have a coordinated strategy to manage it across the entire metropolitan area."

The Living Melbourne plan uses spatial data technology to analyze existing forest resources, and also offers guidance to local leaders and community groups on how to work together to advocate for, and finance, more nature in the most beneficial places. The plan calls for efforts to protect and restore natural areas—on both public and private land—to increase forest cover in Melbourne's districts by up to 10%, and it will be guided by maps that show the most impactful locations for conservation. Now, Melbourne is a world leader in planning for urban nature to protect biodiversity as well as human health.
*—Misty Edgecomb*

PAGES 22-23, FROM LEFT: © LYNSEY WEATHERSPOON; PETER TARASIUK; PETER TARASIUK. THIS PAGE, FROM LEFT: © GREG OAKLEY/MINDEN PICTURES; PETER TARASIUK

# Training for New Green Jobs in Atlanta

**ATLANTA BOASTS** the highest percentage of urban tree canopy coverage among large U.S. cities. But it is a rapidly growing metropolis that is also home to the nation's most extreme economic disparity. Working at the nexus of these realities, The Nature Conservancy and HABESHA, Inc., a Pan-African organization that cultivates leadership in youth and families, created the Urban Green Jobs program. Forty-five residents—mostly from Thomasville, a historic African American community on the city's south side—have participated in the paid training program that teaches about green-space management, urban agriculture and other conservation topics from industry experts.

"This is a tight-knit community that has rallied to find solutions to flooding, inequitable access to quality green spaces and the need for jobs," says Ayanna Williams, TNCs Healthy Cities director in Georgia. "The program offers paid training and internships so that Thomasville Heights residents can become competitive in the growing green workforce industry."

Participants apply their newfound expertise through activities such as leading stream cleanups and planting trees to better manage stormwater runoff and improve public green spaces. To date, 64% of participants have found employment or launched entrepreneurial ventures, following the program. The Conservancy is considering similar programs for other cities. *—Sherry Crawley*

**SEE MORE**

Scan the code with your phone's camera to watch a video about this innovative community program, or visit: nature.org/ATLgreenjobs

**TOP:** Cashawn Myers, executive director of HABESHA, has helped create public gardens in Atlanta.
**BOTTOM:** Aelaina Cannon helps out at the 7-acre Urban Food Forest, which was created in 2019.

© LYNSEY WEATHERSPOON (BOTH)

In northern India, TNC is helping fight the choking smog that threatens tens of millions of peoples' lives in Delhi and elsewhere, by giving farmers an alternative to burning their fields when they prepare to plant new crops.

## Improving Delhi's Air Through Cleaner Farming

**EACH YEAR**, farmers in northwestern India burn some 23 million tons of rice residue in their fields, which, on some days in autumn, can generate almost half of Delhi's record-breaking air pollution. The Nature Conservancy is working to persuade farmers to stop burning and instead use an agricultural machine called the Happy Seeder to prepare their ground for the next crop. Over the past two years, farmers have put some 16,000 Happy Seeders into operation. *—Matt Jenkins*

The Nature Conservancy is helping to promote green infrastructure that traps and cleans stormwater.

### Soaking Up Water in America's Largest Cities

**IN PHILADELPHIA,** TNC worked with community-based organizations, including affordable housing providers, to install green infrastructure that prevents water pollution. In Detroit's iconic Greater Eastern Market district, TNC helped create a plan that incorporates stormwater management and public green space into the redevelopment of almost 200 acres of land. *—Maggie Terry*

### Shading Albuquerque's Heat Island

**ALBUQUERQUE'S** tree cover of about 10% is low, even for a desert city. And with no relief from shade trees, the city becomes a heat island that's about eight degrees hotter than nearby rural areas during the day. The Nature Conservancy's urban conservation program and partners will plant 100,000 trees over the next 10 years. They'll cool neighborhoods and bring other benefits, like cleaner air. *—Jocelyn Ellis Abood*

### Putting Communities First With Urban Conservation

**THE NATURE CONSERVANCY** and Center for Whole Communities established a network of 170 members, representing 24 cities, dedicated to improving urban ecosystems and supporting equitable outcomes for people. The Cities Network partners with community-based organizations to design, fund and implement conservation projects that reduce heat, improve air and water quality, provide flood protection, and enhance the well-being of residents. *—Kim Nye*

FROM TOP: © NATALYA SKIBA/TNC; KARINE AIGNER

**A single retrofitted pond can capture more than 10,000 pounds of pollution each year.**

# CLEANING STORMWATER THROUGH THE CLOUD

**...THE DIGITAL CLOUD,** that is. TNC has created a joint venture with tech company Opti to retrofit stormwater ponds in the Chesapeake Bay watershed with devices that can remotely control the storage and release of water. These controls allow the ponds to better filter water so that cleaner water reaches the bay. Walmart is providing the ponds for the project's pilot phase. *—Matthew Kane*

Urban stormwater runoff is one of the leading causes of river pollution, especially in the northeastern United States. That's why TNC is helping like areas like Delaware and Washington, D.C. (seen here), find ways to trap and treat runoff before it reaches rivers.

### Using Vacant Lots to Teach Job Skills

**ACROSS THE UNITED STATES,** TNC collaborates with communities to transform vacant lots into green spaces. In Wilmington, TNC supports Delaware Center for Horticulture's green jobs program, which provides residents with on-the-job training in landscaping and horticulture. Similarly, in Rochester, New York, TNC helps Greentopia, which hires young people to cultivate pollinator flower gardens while gaining business experience by selling bouquets. *—Melisa Holman*

### Studying Nature as Preventative Care

**LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY,** can breathe just a little bit easier as TNC and the University of Louisville's Envirome Institute began planting 8,000 trees and shrubs across the city in fall 2019. The program will test how the trees can filter pollution and protect residents from cardiac disease and other ailments. The Green Heart study will follow 735 local people for several years to provide medical evidence of the value of nature. *—Misty Edgecomb*

### Restoring Wetlands in Drought-Stricken Chennai

**IN CHENNAI, INDIA,** TNC is aiding in the restoration of urban wetlands to help buffer the impact of droughts and floods—while also improving wildlife habitat. At the Sembakkam Lake pilot project, TNC is removing silt and invasive plants, and building wetlands that will reduce the amount of organic pollution entering the lake by 50% to 70%. *—Matt Jenkins*

© GREG KAHN

In 2019, TNC helped purchase and protect a quarter million acres of Appalachian forest near the borders of Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky.

# CHANGE CLIMATE TACKLING

We're focusing on innovative, science-based solutions that match the urgency of this crisis, such as protecting forests from Appalachia to Indonesia and working to develop a clean energy future.

# Cumberland's Big New Deal

**The Nature Conservancy helps protect 253,000 acres of Appalachian forests and prepares a biodiversity hot spot for climate change.**

**IN JULY 2019,** The Nature Conservancy announced a massive new land deal that helps conserve a broad swath of forest in the central Appalachian Mountains—a haven for biodiversity that scientists predict will become even more valuable as climate change moves the habitable zones of many plants and animals.

Together, the purchases total 253,000 acres of working forestland in Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia. One of the largest-ever land acquisitions led by TNC in the eastern United States, the Cumberland Forest Project showcases a visionary strategy drawing on an array of new tools. It includes transforming industrial forests into biodiverse carbon sinks capable of generating valuable credits on the carbon market—helping the project pay for itself.

The Conservancy's impact investment arm, NatureVest, created a $130 million fund to pursue the purchases. The Conservancy drafted plans to manage the lands for improved biodiversity and to bring in revenues from sustainable timber harvesting, carbon capture and recreational leases. The projects can support local jobs in conservation, forestry and the region's burgeoning outdoor industry.

"This is the largest land deal TNC has completed using investor capital so far, and a model we'll keep building on to help make the most of our resources and achieve conservation at a new scale," says Charlotte Kaiser, managing director for NatureVest.

Conservation wins don't get much bigger than this one, given the area's exceptional natural resources. Nearly equal in size to Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park, the Cumberland Forest Project lands are also connected to protected state and federal forests, parks, and other preserves, all in the heart of the central Appalachians, one of the most biologically rich regions in the eastern United States.

Dr. Mark Anderson, TNC's director of science for the eastern U.S., has identified this part of the Appalachians as a crucial migration corridor for both plants and animals as they move to adapt to climate change. "This project elevates our conservation to a new level," he says, "a level where we can include resilience to climate change in our decisions about what land to protect."

Anderson and dozens of other TNC staffers have been laying the groundwork for the Cumberland Forest Project for years. "It's a large enough scale," says Will Bowling, TNC's Central Appalachians project director for Kentucky, "that we can aim to have a highly functional landscape here in a hundred years and beyond." *—Jon Elliston*

**LEARN MORE**

Scan the code with your phone's camera to see more photos and video, and an interactive biodiversity map of the region, or visit: nature.org/CumberlandMap

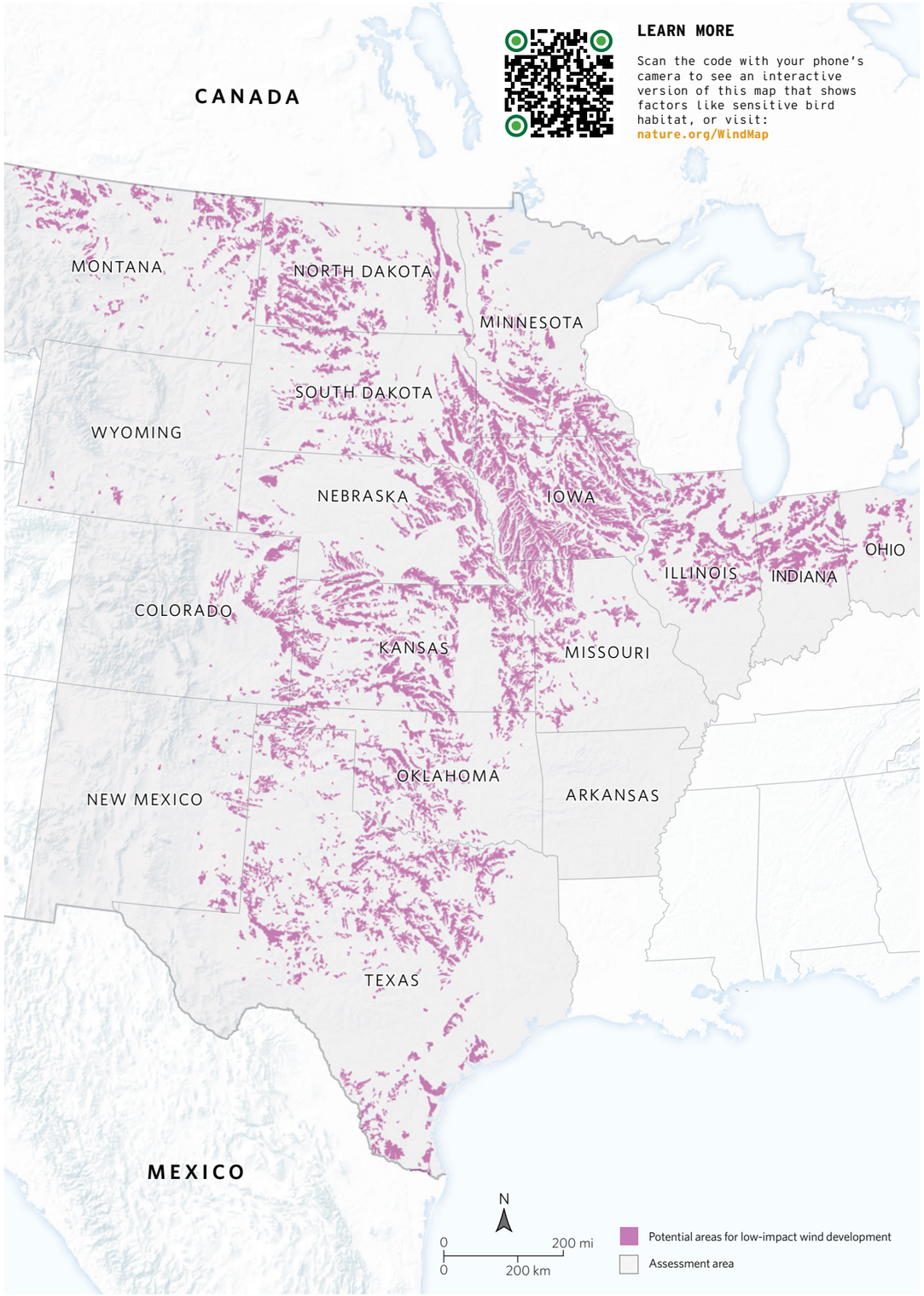
**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** Elk are making a comeback in the Appalachians, thanks to successful reintroductions. Wildflower and pollinator in a meadow at Virginia's High Knob Lookout Tower. People devoted to restoring and saving nature on the Clinch River are pushing for a promising future as the new Cumberland Forest Project brings new hope. This innovative land deal is opening doors to new opportunities in the central Appalachians.



PAGES 28-29: © CAMERON DAVIDSON. THIS PAGE: © STEVEN DAVID JOHNSON. OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE: © STEVEN DAVID JOHNSON; TRAVIS DOVE; TRAVIS DOVE

*"This project elevates our conservation to a new level, a level where we can include resilience to climate change in our decisions about what land to protect."*

**Dr. Mark Anderson**, Director of Science for Eastern U.S., The Nature Conservancy






# Siting Wind Energy Right

**AS DEMAND** for renewable energy in the United States increases while costs drop, opportunities to develop wind and solar power are growing. The Great Plains region stands to become the country's wind powerhouse, while tapping into the sun's power can be accomplished across the country.

But not every acre of land is a good fit for renewables. So in 2019 The Nature Conservancy created new interactive maps to help states and big power purchasers identify sites for future renewable energy projects, while also protecting nature.

Building off more than 60 years of conservation science and planning expertise, TNC's interactive Site Wind Right map shows where the development of low-impact wind energy can be accelerated across the central U.S. This award-winning mapping shows that states, communities and companies can develop wind power while still protecting flyways for migratory birds and prairies for pronghorn antelope, burrowing owls and prairie chickens.

Further west, to help California meet its ambitious 100% clean energy goal, the Conservancy's Power of Place study shows how 11 Western states can share affordable renewable power while still protecting habitat and prime agricultural lands. A state agency task force is already using the study to plug into renewable energy on the ground.

By factoring in nature from the outset of energy planning, TNC is proving there's a clear pathway to clean, affordable, low-impact energy for people and nature. *—Dustin Solberg*

New TNC research shows there's room for both clean energy and natural lands for wildlife.



# Helping States Win on Climate

**IN THE UNITED STATES**, where climate change is often portrayed as a partisan issue in national politics, leaders from coast to coast are joining the movement toward clean energy at the state level. With encouragement from TNC, seven states recently adopted ambitious goals for clean energy and limiting greenhouse gas emissions. Highlights include:

### New York
Electricity will come from 100% carbon-free energy sources by 2040 and achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

### Washington
All of the state's electricity will come from clean energy sources by 2045.

### California
Lawmakers approved a legal mandate of 100% zero-carbon electricity by 2045, with a renewable energy milestone of 60% by 2030.

### Colorado
A new successful energy bill includes a reduction of at least 90% in state greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

### Maine
Passed legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% and source 100% of its electricity from renewables by 2050.

### Nevada and Maryland
Both committed to generate 50% of their electricity from renewable resources by 2030.
*—Randy Edwards*

# Helping African Communities Get Paid for Preserving Land

**THE HADZABE,** a hunter-gatherer tribe in northern Tanzania, secured tenure to 79,000 acres of traditional hunting grounds with help from TNC and partners. This paved the way for the sale of carbon credits from forests protected by the community. The $300,000 in revenue is sending children to school and employing wildlife rangers—earning the Hadzabe the UN's prestigious Equator Prize. *—Margaret Southern*

By securing land tenure for the Hadzabe, the Ujamaa Community Resource Team, a local partner of TNC, opened the way for innovative conservation that's helping to maintain a traditional way of life.

## A New Insurance Program for Reefs

**REEFS SHELTER** fisheries and protect coastal communities from storms, but they can be damaged by hurricanes. Along the coast of Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula, TNC worked with hotels, governments and universities to create an innovative trust, funded by state taxes and tourism fees, that purchased the world's first insurance policy to finance coral-reef and beach repair after severe storms. *—Debra Jones*

## Raising Climate Awareness in China

**TO RAISE** awareness of global warming and its impact on oceans, TNC cosponsored the Elysium Epic Trilogy photo and video exhibition in Beijing, Shanghai and Chengdu, China. The exhibition featured artwork from expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic oceans, and the western Pacific, and was viewed by over 100,000 visitors in 23 days. *—Matt Jenkins*

FROM TOP: © NICK HALL; JENNIFER ADLER



# PROTECTED FOREST GENERATES CARBON CREDITS

A new carbon credit project in one of Chile's temperate rainforests brings new opportunities for forest restoration. **BELOW:** Giant alerce trees in TNC's Valdivian Coastal Reserve are carbon storehouses that live up to 4,000 years.

**THE NATURE CONSERVANCY'S** lush Valdivian Coastal Reserve in Chile protects one of the last remaining temperate rainforests on Earth. After halting deforestation in the 124,000-acre reserve, TNC developed Chile's first certified carbon credit project. The project has now avoided an estimated 580,000 tons of CO2 emissions—equivalent to taking more than 120,000 cars off the road for a year. *—Debra Jones*


Activists gather at Times Square in New York City to demand world leaders take bold action for #NatureNow during the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit and Climate Week.

## Nature Inspires at Climate Week NYC

**NATURE TOOK** center stage at this year's Climate Week NYC, which was held in conjunction with the UN Climate Action Summit. Thanks largely to the Nature4Climate coalition TNC helped initiate, more than a third of the 200-plus climate events focused on using nature as a solution to fight climate change. During the summit, 65 countries committed to net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. *—Debra Jones*

## CEOs Speak Out on Climate

**THE CEO CLIMATE DIALOGUE** is a bold new coalition built by industry and select nonprofits—including TNC—to advocate for smart climate legislation. The group issued an urgent public call to enact long-term federal climate policy, including an economy-wide price on carbon. And in November, they brought their unifying message to Capitol Hill. *—Debra Jones*

FROM TOP: © NICK HALL; KASHFI HALFORD/TNC

**THE NATURE CONSERVANCY** raised more than $1.055 billion in total revenue and support in 2019. This includes nearly $600 million in private support, similar to the three prior record-setting years for the organization excluding an extraordinary gift of $165 million in 2018. Thanks to our strong financial position, we were able to deploy more than $752 million on conservation programs, land purchases and conservation easements in 2019.

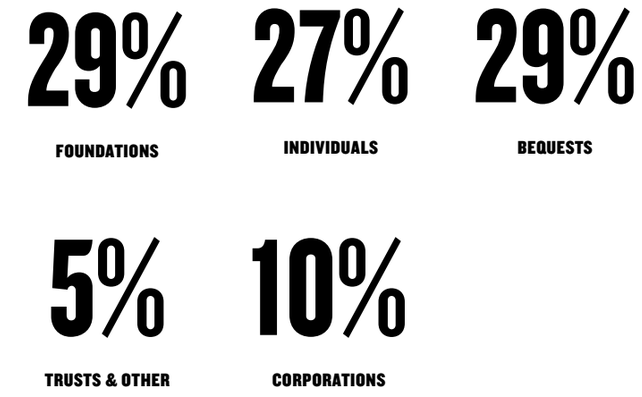
In addition to the success of our fundraising efforts, in 2019 we bolstered our balance sheet through the refinancing of $100 million in long-term debt using a creative funding structure that significantly lowered our capital costs. Additionally, in 2019, the management of our long-term investment portfolio produced returns in excess of our benchmarks, which served to help support the long-term prospects of the business while also allowing for further spending in support of our mission.

While programmatic efficiency dipped to 71.2% in 2019, down from 74.2% in 2018, this is in a range we find broadly acceptable, as we expect some fluctuations in this metric due to the cyclical nature of conservation-land-purchase activity.

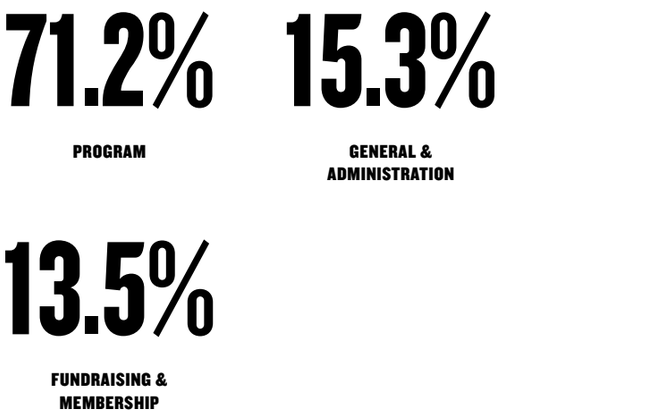
The financial results shown here are derived from TNC's audited June 30, 2019 consolidated financial statements, which have received an unqualified opinion. The Conservancy's completed, audited financial statements can be obtained online at **nature.org/annualreport** or by calling **(800) 628-6860**.

**Leonard Williams**
Chief Finance Officer

## Dues and private contributions by donor type




## Programmatic efficiency




© BILL MARR/TNC





*For the fiscal years ending on June 30, 2019 and 2018 (in thousands)*

| SUPPORT & REVENUE | 2019 | 2018 |
|---|---|---|
| Dues and private contributions | 595,311 | 791,713 |
| Government contributions | 127,764 | 117,894 |
| Investment income | 93,994 | 192,946 |
| Other income | 139,021 | 70,784 |
| Land sales and gifts | 99,464 | 115,203 |
| **Total Support & Revenue** | **1,055,554** | **1,288,540** |

| EXPENSES & PURCHASES OF CONSERVATION LAND & EASEMENTS | | | % of each dollar spent 2019 | 2018 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Conservation activities and actions | 520,142 | 523,959 | 49.2% | 46.8% |
| Purchases of conservation land and easements | 232,085 | 306,594 | 22.0% | 27.4% |
| **Total Conservation Program Expenses & Purchases of Conservation Land & Easements** | **752,227** | **830,553** | 71.2% | 74.2% |
| General and administrative | 161,705 | 163,778 | 15.3% | 14.6% |
| Fundraising and membership | 142,548 | 125,350 | 13.5% | 11.2% |
| Total support services | 304,253 | 289,128 | | |
| **Total Expenses & Purchases of Conservation Land & Easements** | **1,056,480** | **1,119,681** | | |

| ASSET, LIABILITY & NET ASSET SUMMARY | | |
|---|---|---|
| Conservation lands | 2,128,184 | 2,036,278 |
| Conservation easements | 2,288,383 | 2,221,307 |
| Investments held for conservation projects | 774,397 | 861,423 |
| Endowment investments | 1,309,105 | 1,291,521 |
| Planned giving investments | 322,475 | 325,927 |
| Property & equipment (net of depreciation) | 141,972 | 126,947 |
| Other assets ❶ | 745,774 | 546,461 |
| **Total Assets** | **7,710,290** | **7,409,864** |
| Accounts payable and accrued liabilities | 219,410 | 116,595 |
| Notes payable | 398,491 | 345,351 |
| Other liabilities ❷ | 375,754 | 349,445 |
| Total net assets | 6,716,635 | 6,598,473 |
| **Total Liabilities & Net Assets** | **7,710,290** | **7,409,864** |

❶ Primarily includes cash, pledges of future gifts, collateral received under securities lending agreement, notes receivable, and deposits on land and other assets.

❷ Primarily includes deferred revenue, payable under securities lending agreement, planned giving liability, and other liabilities.

**Note:** The figures that appear in the financial summary shown are derived from the 2019 & 2018 consolidated financial statements that have been audited and have received an unqualified opinion.

The complete, audited 2019 & 2018 financial statements for The Nature Conservancy can be seen at **nature.org/annualreport**, or can be ordered from The Nature Conservancy at **(800) 628-6860**.

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Frank Volcere from Green Islands Foundation collects data on fish species in Seychelles. The country was a pilot for TNC's Blue Bonds for Conservation program, and it will soon reach its goal of protecting 30% of it marine waters.

FROM TOP: © ROSHNI LODHIA; DEVAN KING/TNC

# Empowered to Innovate

In order for TNC to deliver conservation at scale globally and meet the urgency of our mission, innovation must be embedded in all that we do. Our people must be empowered to try new ideas and ways of working. We must utilize the best data and latest technology creatively to inform and support our work. Our processes and organizational structures must be sufficiently nimble to take advantage of opportunities to achieve lasting conservation at scale.

We are working closely with our colleagues worldwide to improve our operations, tapping into the expertise and innovation found in every corner of TNC. Expanding on our history of solving complex problems, we are approaching challenges through a systems lens, by understanding the dynamic nature of the challenges we aim to address and adapting as we go.

We recognize that our people are our key strength and that diversity is core to leading innovation. This is translating to greater investments in developing our people and in hiring and retaining a diverse, highly engaged team. We have launched a number of programs designed to expand our collective skill sets and put into practice new ways of effectively leading in an increasingly interconnected world.

We have developed technology and processes that provide easier access to the conservation and financial information most relevant to evaluating the effectiveness of our conservation and fundraising initiatives. This allows us to determine the best investment opportunities for driving conservation at scale and helps us collaborate more efficiently, sharing knowledge and experiences globally.

We are focused on embedding Our Values of Integrity Beyond Reproach, One Conservancy, Respect for People, Communities and Cultures, Tangible Lasting Results, and Commitment to Diversity into everything that we do. These are our bedrock and they are critical to TNC achieving the same level of excellence in how we work as we do in what we achieve for conservation.

I am inspired by your commitment as team members, partners and supporters, and by your drive to find new ways to make a meaningful impact on conservation. Thank you for all that you do to make powerful change happen in the world.

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A Spanish-language translation is available at **nature.org/informeanual.**


## Conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends.

To learn more about the Conservancy's work in 79 countries and territories and all 50 U.S. states, visit **nature.org.**


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