

Conservation Working For America

Big River Forest, CA
© Rachid Dahnoun

HOLIDAY 2019 | CONSERVATIONFUND.ORG

2 ECONOMIC VITALITY

3 VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

LAND, WATER AND WILDLIFE

4 HOW YOU CAN HELP



Our Response to an Urgent National Challenge

U.S. working forests are a critical part of our country's green infrastructure. They sequester over a half-billion metric tons of carbon per year, sixty times more carbon than any other natural land ecosystem. They provide critical habitat for wildlife, and clean and filter water for more than 200 million Americans across 68,000 communities. They also are an irreplaceable economic driver in rural communities, supporting over 8.6 million American jobs.

Fragmentation and development could cause us to lose 36 million acres of privately-held forests in the coming years—which would significantly impact our environment, economy and climate. Our solution: The Working Forest Fund.® This future-focused model has already enabled us to protect over 650,000 acres of at-risk forests, but we have bigger goals to complete this challenge—to protect 5 million acres of the most sensitive, natural working forests.

Our first step is to scale up our financial resources to accelerate the pace of protection. Turning to the capital markets, we completed a \$150 million green bond in September—the first bond where proceeds will be directly used to permanently conserve U.S. working forests.

The next step in pursuing our goal is to substantially increase the level of philanthropic support for this urgent mission and to leverage the bond proceeds across more projects. Please read on to learn how you can join us in this critical effort.

See interview with our EVP of Investment and Growth on p..2



What Can You Do To Help Protect America's Working Forests?

Ask Eric Kostegan.



Eric Kostegan
Executive Vice President,
Investment and Growth

Q. What is the impact of losing our working forests?

A. *The impact is enormous because once these working forests are fragmented and/or developed, they can never be put back together again. When we lose our working forests, we lose part of our country's critical infrastructure. Working forests provide a cornucopia of social, ecological, biological and economic benefits. They currently support 8.6 million jobs but have the potential to grow that sector exponentially: reinvigorating rural communities all across the nation. If we lose these forests, we lose these benefits. We are working to ensure our country's working forests can continue to play a vital role in our everyday lives.*

Q. What is causing loss of forestland in the U.S.?

A. *Today, 41 million acres of forestland are owned by investors who trade about 4 million of those acres annually. Forests are bought, harvested and then sold to maximize financial returns which often results in fragmentation to make room for the construction of vacation homes, golf courses and commercial development. This model reflects the fundamental tension between for-profit businesses and conservation values. When ecologically significant forests are converted to non-forested uses, we lose all the life-sustaining benefits they provide—and it's impossible to put those forests back together again.*

Q. How do the green bonds work?

A. *We are using the proceeds from our green bonds to purchase at-risk working forestland to buy time for us to arrange permanent conservation outcomes. During our holding period, we receive revenue from sustainable timber harvests and other sources that will help us service the interest on the green bonds over a ten-year period. This means all of those dollars will always be working for conservation. But it isn't enough to just purchase the land—we have to create protections that keep our working forests intact and working. With philanthropic support from individuals, companies, and foundations, we can place safeguards on the land that prohibit development and subdivision. We protect our forests through the transfer of a conservation easement to a governmental agency or conservation organization, and then we sell the protected forest to investors or private companies and invest in the next working forest project. We also sometimes protect our forests by selling them directly to public agencies or conservation organizations, and then, again, we reinvest the proceeds.*

Greenseams® Milestone: 4,000 Acres of Flood-Prone Land in Milwaukee Protected

More than 1.5 million people live and work in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, metro area. As the region has grown over the years, increased development has led to more houses, pavement and concrete taking over absorbent wetlands. Consequently, rain and snowmelt has flowed downstream, overflowing sewer systems and causing significant flooding.

Almost 20 years ago, The Conservation Fund and the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) launched an innovative flood management program called Greenseams to curb the negative effects of development while improving the region's resiliency and protecting important open spaces in the metropolitan area. Greenseams was designed to purchase land and conservation easements from willing landowners across the Milwaukee, Menomonee, Oak Creek and Root River watersheds where major suburban growth is expected to occur. Since 2001, the program has worked to protect 116 properties across 28 communities. That land now helps reduce the risk of flooding by storing and draining water naturally, while also connecting greenspace for hiking and recreation and conserving crucial habitats for local wildlife.

In October, the Greenseams program reached a major milestone: the protection of 4,000 acres of flood-prone land throughout greater Milwaukee. The 190-acre North Branch Woods Preserve property was essential in reaching this landmark.

Located within a Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) primary environmental corridor and part of a 175-acre SEWRPC Natural Area known as the North Branch Woods, the property connects a variety of agricultural and recreational land, including fields, wetlands, woodlands, floodplains, residential lots and over half a mile of North Branch Milwaukee River front to be preserved as public open space for stormwater management.

The acquisition of the North Branch Woods Preserve property will permanently protect the open space scenic views from the northern upland portion of the property, groundwater and surface water resources, functional wetlands and wildlife habitat. In addition, 15 acres of agricultural land will be managed with the establishment of perennial prairie vegetation to improve the wildlife habitat, buffer the North Branch Milwaukee River, and improve water quality by filtering and absorbing runoff from adjacent farm fields.

We're proud of Greenseams and the work it has done to protect these crucial lands. By combining sustainable flood and water pollution management techniques with projects that increase public outdoor space and create a sense of community, Greenseams is truly a cutting-edge model for the green infrastructure movement.



© Ivan LaBianca

ECONOMIC VITALITY

LAND, WATER AND WILDLIFE



© Stacy Funderburke

Growing the Future of Local Farming

Over the past several years, the demand for local food has increased rapidly nationwide, especially across metro regions. This requires us to plan for the future of farming in America. So how are we supporting the next generation of farmers?

In metro Atlanta, our Working Farms Fund takes an innovative approach to support young, entrepreneurial farmers who are looking to meet the growing demand for healthy, locally sourced food. Yet toward the beginning of their careers, many of these farmers don't have the capital required to purchase valuable land on their own. To help, The Conservation Fund is working with several partners to purchase small to midsize farms that are under threat of being lost to development. We then match a farmer to that site and secure the funds to purchase a conservation easement. The easement ensures that the farmland will be restricted from development and protected as a farm forever. It also lowers the ultimate purchase price for the farmer so that, together, Atlanta can grow its local food system in a way that can be a model for the rest of the country.

Development pressure on quality farmland outside cities is at an all-time high. It's critical that we support our future farmers as they expand their businesses to supply the growing demand for local and sustainable food. Our Working Farms Fund demonstrates how the conservation of working lands can bring together the best of environmental and economic interests to support thriving local communities. By working alongside farmers and partners like Emory University, we ensure that lands remain working and in sustainable management, driving economic growth into the future.

Alaska

Lake Iliamna is Alaska's largest lake. Rich with crystal clear waters and wetland ecosystems, the lake supports one of only five freshwater seal populations in the world. It is also in the heart of the Bristol Bay watershed, the largest and most valuable sockeye salmon fishery in the world. To protect these prosperous water systems, The Conservation Fund worked with Iliamna Natives Ltd., Bristol Bay Heritage Land Trust, the state of Alaska and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to place conservation easements on nearly 14,000 acres of Lake Iliamna. These efforts restrict development on an archipelago of roughly 173 islands and 283 miles of shoreline, helping permanently protect the lake for future generations of fish and fishermen to enjoy.

California

Strawberries are one of the most challenging varieties of produce to grow naturally, and the incredibly rich farmland just south of Silicon Valley supplies nearly half of all strawberries grown in the United States. Farmland in the Golden State is expensive, and so protecting it not only supports sustainable farming and the food supply, but it's critical for local economies. Recently, we helped the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County implement a new way to protect farmland by purchasing agriculturally valuable land and reselling it with conservation easements that prohibit development. Our first project with the land trust protects 180 acres of highly productive berry fields capable of producing 20 tons of berries per acre, with approximately 100 acres certified as organic.

New Mexico

We love when conservation provides multiple benefits. In New Mexico, we worked closely with a local landowner and the U.S. Air Force to provide a practical solution that fulfilled the training needs of Cannon Air Force Base while ensuring that the surrounding privately owned land remains a working agricultural landscape, and conserving important short-grass prairie wildlife habitat. With funding from the U.S. Department of Defense's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program and the state of New Mexico, we placed a conservation easement on more than 30,000 acres surrounding the Melrose Air Force Range—a training range about 25 miles from Cannon Air Force Base—limiting development and encroachment that could negatively impact the operations and training at the base.

Virginia

Virginia's Rappahannock River traverses nearly 200 miles from the Blue Ridge Mountains to the Chesapeake Bay. East of Fredericksburg, the river passes Fones Cliffs, where three American Indian towns once were located and from which a group of Rappahannock Indians ambushed Captain John Smith and his crew during his Chesapeake exploration in 1608. The Conservation Fund helped the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acquire 252 acres along the cliffs and add them to the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge for permanent protection. This historical site is called a bald eagle "bull's eye" because it is not uncommon to see up to 400 eagles along this pristine stretch of river. Its protection will expand opportunities for hiking, bird-watching and other wildlife-dependent recreation.

THE CONSERVATION FUND

Why wait for our
next newsletter?
Find us online today!

- Read our latest news at conservationfund.org
- Sign up for our e-newsletter at conservationfund.org by subscribing on our homepage.



1655 NORTH FORT MYER DRIVE
SUITE 1300
ARLINGTON, VA 22209

NONPROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
WASHINGTON, DC
PERMIT NO. 3943

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Give to Nature All Year Long

Some donors choose to make one-time annual contributions; others give each month. Anthony Munkholm falls into the latter category, stretching his support by contributing on a recurring basis every month. We recently had the chance to learn more about what motivates Anthony to give and why giving monthly is important to him.

Anthony's memories in nature as a kid turned into a lifetime of love for the outdoors. In turn, he chooses to support causes that benefit the natural world. Anthony's father was a car salesman in Minnesota, and nearly every Sunday on his father's one day off each week, Anthony recalls fishing together on the Upper St. Croix River. "We would go out in the morning and catch smallmouth bass on topwater baits, pull over on an island to swim and grill lunch, and share stories," he recalls. "It was our place of solitude." Anthony's family spent summer vacations visiting his grandparents' home in Winona, Minnesota—a town on the Minnesota-Wisconsin border on the picturesque Mississippi River. "We would cruise along Highway 61 and go through small river towns, staring at the mighty Mississippi River the whole way," he says. "I still go back to those areas today, and I can feel the positive energy in the land."

These childhood memories ignited in Anthony a love for nature and have served as inspiration for his charitable giving as an adult. He says: "My wife and I take pride in sharing with friends and family the causes we support. We do our best to lead by example, and I hope we inspire others to give as well."

No matter what motivates you to give, you can trust that your donation to The Conservation Fund will create lasting results. We have accomplished so much, but there's more to do. Nature needs us. And we hope you will continue to support us along the way.

Contact Us:

Ainsley Pittman
Development Manager
703-908-5831
apittman@conservationfund.org

