

# Conservation Working For America

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Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park  
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## CONNECTING PEOPLE AND NATURE

### Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park expanded by 2,500 acres!

In 1853, while searching for a railroad route through the Rocky Mountains, explorer and Army officer John W. Gunnison came across a landscape in western Colorado he called “the roughest, most hilly and most cut up” he had ever seen. The Black Canyon is every bit as formidable as Gunnison first described, with the whitewater of the river that now bears his name surging through vertical canyon walls so deep that the base of the canyon sees little daylight, exposing dramatic spires and unique rock formations built over millions of years.

Much of this rugged landscape is part of Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, which gives the public access to the canyon’s incomparable recreation opportunities and awe-inspiring views. Last year alone, more than 300,000 people visited the park, which is not surprising in light of the \$28 billion contribution made to Colorado’s economy from outdoor recreation each year.

The Conservation Fund recently partnered with the National Park Service (NPS) to acquire 2,500 acres near the park’s visitor center and along the South Rim of the canyon. Those additional acres will better preserve the viewshed, increase access for additional recreation opportunities and create potential utility improvements in the park.

Better access to the canyon amplifies the experience and gives visitors a better understanding of the true magnitude of this intense landscape and its history. In Colorado and across the country, we all have a stake in our public lands, and we are working to ensure current and future generations of Americans can enjoy them.

*See interview with project lead on p.2*



Black Canyon of the Gunnison  
National Park  
© National Park Service

Want to hike at the rim of our nation's third deepest canyon? Ask Christine about new access at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park.



**Christine Quinlan**  
Western Field Representative

Photo © Dave Roberts, NPS

**Q. Is the protection of lands at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park important for public recreation?**

**A.** Absolutely! Not only is the park outstanding for scenery and geology, but for a wide range of recreational activities that draw visitors from near and far. It's best known for wilderness hiking, white-water boating, world-class fly fishing and rock climbing. The additional 2,500 acres along the canyon's rim are less extreme and will accommodate a wider population—satisfying visitors' desire for more gentle trails.

**Q. Federal funding through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was critical to this project. How so?**

**A.** This effort to protect America's third deepest canyon could not have happened without LWCF, which has served as our country's premier conservation program for 53 years. Without LWCF we would not have been able to partner with the NPS to acquire this property inside the park boundary. LWCF used a portion of federal offshore energy revenue to fund conservation at no cost to taxpayers. It's been a driver for our nation's thriving outdoor recreation economy—an industry that, in Colorado alone, generates \$28 billion in consumer spending while producing 229,000 direct jobs and \$9.7 billion in wages. The U.S. Congressional delegation for Colorado is helping lead a bipartisan effort to reauthorize and fully fund LWCF as soon as possible to reinstate this critical conservation funding source.

**Q. What is a personal reflection about this project you would like to share?**

**A.** I've been working with the NPS to protect portions of this National Park since the late 1990s. One highlight was working with the Sanburg family. Ranchers are often the stewards of critically important lands that provide for their livelihood, while also benefiting wildlife and the public. The Sanburg family was no exception, as they managed this property for three generations. When the time came to sell, the family chose to work with The Conservation Fund to see their property conserved.

## Investing in the vitality of the Northern Forest economy by protecting working forests

Never before have we experienced such a rapid loss of our large working forests; over the past 15 years, more than 20 million acres have been lost. And when we lose our forests, we lose more than the trees. Our forests provide a means of livelihood for loggers and mill workers, as well as clean water to drink, clean air to breathe, habitat for wildlife and limitless outdoor recreation opportunities. To address this challenge, we're actively working across the country to protect some of our most precious and dwindling forests.

Last fall, as part of our national effort to prevent the fragmentation and potential conversion of America's last large intact working forests, The Conservation Fund purchased the 23,000-acre Cowee Forest, made up of several parcels of what was privately owned forestland along the borders where New York, Vermont and Massachusetts meet. The forest is home to critical wildlife habitat and rich recreation opportunities for the public, such as hiking, biking, fishing, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing. As a working forest, it also provides more than 300 forestry-related jobs, serving as a key driver of economic vitality in the region. The Conservation Fund will sustainably manage the land over the next several years, raising funds and buying time to determine the best conservation strategies that support both recreational access and local economies.

Tom Duffus, Vice President and Northeast Representative for The Conservation Fund, says it best: "The purchase of Cowee Forest is an investment in the vitality of the region's forest economy, which is the largest natural resource-based economic sector in the state of New York. Our goal is to protect forestland of community- and state-wide importance, and we look forward to implementing conservation solutions at Cowee Forest that meet the needs of people, protect wildlife habitat and provide economic benefits."

The purchase of Cowee Forest is a win-win, addressing the loss of our last large working forests, while marking a tremendous save for local communities, helping the rural economies not just survive, but thrive.



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### ECONOMIC VITALITY

### LAND, WATER AND WILDLIFE



© Charles Payne



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## Strengthening Louisiana's environment, economy and culture

What does jambalaya have to do with environmental and economic health? A lot! In Louisiana, rice is a staple of many Cajun dishes, as well as a top agricultural export. It plays a key role in the economy and supports thousands of local jobs. But perhaps surprisingly, this important ingredient also is critical to the state's wildlife. Every winter, Louisiana rice farmers flood their fields in preparation for the next season's crops. These flooded fields become temporary wetlands, providing much-needed resting and feeding habitat for migrating birds and other wetland-dependent species.

With these economic and environmental benefits in mind, we are working with private landowners to protect Live Oak Farm, a 100-year-old, family-owned rice farm in Vermilion Parish, Louisiana. Rice fields have been disappearing in this parish over the past 20 years, and Live Oak Farm is one of the southernmost remaining rice farms in the state. In Louisiana, wetlands also have been suffering significant losses, largely due to sea level rise and coastal erosion. This makes Live Oak Farm, which also produces cattle, crawfish and alligator, vital to the rice farm industry and to wildlife. The farm hosts as many as 70,000 waterfowl on its flooded rice fields every winter.

Thanks to funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Gulf Coast Conservation Grants Program and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, we are developing a strategy to place a conservation easement on part of this 5,800-acre working farm, which will allow it to remain under private ownership. We're proud to play a small part in sustaining this rich cultural, economic and environmental industry.

## Maryland

Over the summer the state established the Harriet Tubman Rural Legacy Area to protect and conserve the natural, cultural and historic landscape of Harriet Tubman's life and legacy. The Rural Legacy Area encompasses the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park and Visitor Center and will bolster visitation to this area. Working in partnership with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Dorchester County, we will lead acquisition efforts to protect key historical sites and one of the last remaining examples of a 19th-century agrarian landscape that tell the story of the celebrated abolitionist's work facilitating the Underground Railroad.

## New Hampshire

We recently celebrated the completion of a decade-long effort to secure a 24,000-acre landscape of working forestland adjacent to the Appalachian National Scenic Trail in the Mahoosuc Mountains. Conservation easements on the privately owned land ensure that the forests will be sustainably managed for the production of responsibly harvested timber and will be open for diverse public outdoor recreation into the future. The forestland will continue to support local and regional jobs by providing timber to mills in New Hampshire, Maine and Canada. Through our Working Forest Fund, we are working in the Northeast and across the country to protect these ecologically and economically important forests.

## North Carolina

Elk were reintroduced into the Appalachian Mountains of western North Carolina in 2001. Since then the population has grown, and with it the need to ensure habitat for the species. We are working with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and local partners to secure elk habitat and water resources, while providing economic development opportunities to Haywood County and surrounding communities. We recently celebrated the protection of 2,030 acres at the William H. Silver Game Land, including the conservation of the Hemphill Bald Trail and tributaries of Jonathan Creek that supply drinking water to the nearby town of Maggie Valley.

## Wyoming

Immediately west of Casper, the North Platte River winds around plateaus and sagebrush near the historic pioneer trails early settlers used as they journeyed west. We recently helped the Bureau of Land Management acquire 646 acres and 1.5 miles of the river with support from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. Now part of the North Platte River Special Recreation Management Area, the newly conserved site creates opportunities for fishing and public recreation adjacent to town in an area that boasts Blue Ribbon trout fishing—with the most trout by weight per mile of any stream in Wyoming—while also securing a historic battlefield site from the Indian Wars of the northern Great Plains.

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HOW YOU CAN HELP

## Making the gift of nature a family affair

A group of summer campers ran a lemonade stand, a young girl sent in her birthday money, and a boy asked that donations be made to his favorite charity instead of gifts for his bar mitzvah. These contributions to The Conservation Fund are some of my favorites from the past year—future philanthropists in the making, doing their part to protect the places they love.

Giving as a family is a great experience. It teaches young people about the importance of generosity. In my own family, we talk about what our values are, what we care about and how we are going to put those values into action. We take on projects in our own community and research and make contributions to the charities that are doing good work for the causes that matter to us.

Kids are endlessly curious about the natural world. They love rock collecting and chasing frogs and butterflies; they'll spend hours exploring a pond or running on a sandy beach. It's easy to explain to them the importance of protecting our natural world and all of the benefits nature provides to people.

That's why The Conservation Fund works every day in communities across the country to find smart solutions that protect our country's natural resources and save the places that matter most—properties with ecological, historic and cultural significance. We have accomplished so much, conserving over 8 million acres, but we have much more to do. We hope you and your family will continue to support us along the way.

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