In West Virginia, we create on-the-ground solutions by helping to engage diverse constituencies and achieve strong conservation, community, and economic development outcomes. Our focus is on strengthening rural communities: places defined by landscapes and natural resources—farming, forestry, ranching, renewable energy, rural manufacturing, recreational destinations, and the gateway communities to our great parks, forests, and other public and private resource lands.

**LAND**

- **Conservation Acquisitions:** Since 1985, The Fund has protected over 73,000 acres of land with a fair market value of over $82 million, including 14,500 acres for the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge (Tucker County) that adjoins the Monongahela National Forest.

- **Green Infrastructure Planning:** Our Strategic Conservation Planning team developed a set of recommendations to conserve the green infrastructure of Jefferson County in far eastern WV, providing a tool to help guide the pattern of future growth and development by incorporating green infrastructure into land use planning to provide a framework for sustainable development.

- **Working Forest Conservation Easements:** The Fund prepared the original Forest Legacy Assessment of Need for West Virginia, which enabled the state to establish a program and receive federal Forest Legacy funds to protect privately owned working forests. The Wally Moore tract acquired by the Fund in Morgan County was the first property in West Virginia to be federally funded for a Forest Legacy conservation easement.

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**OUR NUMBERS**

- **73K** Acres of land protected since 1985 with a fair market value of over $82M

- **32K** Acres of fee and easement lands as part of the elk reintroduction effort

- **$15.5M** Loans deployed to 98 companies and farms as of the end of 2017
WATER

- **Riverfront Protection**: Our Conservation Acquisitions team acquired 3,800 acres that is now part of the Cheat Canyon Wildlife Management Area that secured the entire 7-mile stretch of Cheat Canyon in north-central West Virginia (Preston County) now used for commercial white-water rafting.

- **Aquaculture Research and Technology**: Our Freshwater Institute facilities are based in WV and specialize in the production technology and design of aquaculture systems; and in solutions to the water quality constraints and impacts presented by farms and communities. Our new Aquaculture Research Lab will focus on sustainable feed development and advance fish culture technology for trout and salmon.

- **Nonpoint Source Pollution Reduction**: Freshwater Institute staff worked with the WV Department of Environmental Protection on the Potomac Tributary Strategy and Implementation Plan to produce maps and other documentation for decision makers to craft strategies to substantially reduce the flow of nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) and sediment into the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

WILDLIFE

- **Elk Reintroduction**: The Working Forest Fund acquired 32,000 acres in Logan, Lincoln, and Mingo counties as part of the elk reintroduction effort that is serving as an economic driver through related tourism and wildlife-related recreation in a historic coal mining region. The lands were sold to the WV Division of Natural Resources or encumbered by state-held conservation/recreation easements.

- **Species Diversity**: Our Strategic Conservation Planning team worked with the WV Division of Natural Resources to develop a decision support framework to conserve species diversity called the WV Conservation Action Plan. The Fund identified priority habitats and utilized Green Infrastructure Principles to identify the resources necessary to support species diversity at a landscape scale.

- **Species Mitigation**: In partnership with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (DNR), The Fund administers grants for the conservation of forest habitat to mitigate the impacts of natural gas pipeline projects to forest interior wildlife. Funding comes from corporations developing large interstate projects and are used to protect and restore forestlands identified as important by the DNR, which reviews and approves all expenditures.
FINANCING

• **Capital for Growth:** The Natural Capital Investment Fund lends to small to mid-sized businesses, agricultural enterprises and nonprofits that have positive community, economic and environmental impacts, but cannot access traditional financing because of perceived risks. We offer flexible financing and use careful underwriting and a range of credit enhancement programs to make good loans. There is a closely associated Technical Assistance program that provides business advisory services to markets including main street redevelopment, energy efficiency, forest products, production agriculture, consumer products/services, local foods/value added agriculture, and ecotourism/heritage tourism.

• **Conservation Loans:** The Conservation Loan Program offers flexible financing as well as sustained and expert technical assistance to land trusts and other organizations aiming to protect key properties in their communities, increase access to green and open-space, recover natural habitats, provide conservation education programs, and help people connect with nature. The Fund provided a loan to the Potomac Conservancy for the acquisition of a 1,700-acre Whitehorse Mountain tract in northeastern WV (Hampshire County) that will become a wildlife management area.

• **Southern West Virginia Tourism Initiative:** The Natural Capital Investment Fund has an existing partnership with Hatfield-McCoy Regional Recreation Authority to provide capital and business advisory services for lodging and other entrepreneurial amenities associated with motorized recreation trail in the nine trail counties in southern West Virginia.

• **Environmentally Friendly Fish Farming:** The Freshwater Institute is demonstrating how to sustainably grow healthy, clean, nutritious and safe salmon that consumers can feel good about purchasing. Proving this, in 2014, Atlantic salmon raised using our recirculating aquaculture system technology received the Best Choice ranking—the highest—by Seafood Watch, a program of the Monterey Bay Aquarium. This watchdog organization helps consumers and businesses choose seafood that is fished or farmed in ways that have minimal impact on the environment.

• **Healthy Food Distribution Initiative:** CSX and The Fund worked with the WV Extension and Mingo County Diabetes Coalition to provide coupons and vouchers to thousands of children and families to help make locally-grown fresh foods more convenient for purchase, and give them hands-on training on how to cook, store and prepare seasonal fruits and vegetables. The program has also offered financial assistance for mobile and school-based farmers markets, as well as classes on vendor recruitment, customer service and basic accounting to assist with the long-term viability of the farmers markets.

• **Value Chain Cluster Initiative (VC2):** This Natural Capital Investment Fund initiative provides hands-on business development and coaching services to strengthen expanding local food and farm businesses in five regions of West Virginia. We work with businesses in all aspects of the food chain, from field to fork and beyond, to help bolster strong regional food systems. Since 2012, technical assistance and coaching through the VC2 program in West Virginia has supported over 270 food and farm businesses to scale up and build the local food economy through the creation of over 220 new jobs and investment over $3 million in private funds.

**FOOD**

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

• **Gateway Community Technical Assistance:** Gateway communities are cities or towns in close proximity to significant natural and cultural assets, such as national parks and forests and historic places, that have opportunities to expand tourism, the arts, and other economic development opportunities. Since 2007, the Conservation Leadership Network has provided gateway communities with an array of seed grants, place-based and regional workshops, and sustainable tourism assessments. These programs help forge solutions for community, environmental, and economic development goals. We offer national and place-based workshops, resources and different types of community assessments as well as a community of practice for participating communities. The national and place-based workshops focus on the economics, community character, natural resources and partnership building skills necessary for creating sustainable communities. The workshops also facilitate livability and sustainable tourism assessments that provide evaluation and recommendations for existing and future nature-based and cultural heritage tourism opportunities.

• **Balancing Nature and Commerce Workshop Teams:** WV-based teams participating in the Balancing Nature and Commerce workshops have included the Coalfields (Mt. Hope, McDowell and Logan counties), Nicholas County, and a Tucker County team, which includes the Monongahela National Forest and Canaan Valley NWR. The Tucker County team participated in the national Balancing Nature and Commerce workshop in 2016 and developed an action plan focused on addressing economic development that preserves the county’s recreational and scenic attributes as overall development accelerates with the opening of the Corridor H freeway, with emphasis on the area in and around the towns of Davis and Thomas.

PARTNERSHIPS

• **National Conservation Training Center:** This 530-acre property in Shepherdstown is the site of the US Fish and Wildlife Service’s National Conservation Training Center (Jefferson County). The Conservation Leadership Network is based at the Center, serves as the nonprofit liaison for the facility, and offers numerous events annually including our Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities, Mitigation Banking, and Conservation Banking courses.

• **USDA Forest Service Technical Assistance:** In partnership with the National Forest Foundation, the Conservation Finance Network is hosting workshops and webinars with staff and stakeholder partners of the Monongahela National Forest to identify conservation finance opportunities for projects based on Forest Service authority. The focal area is the upper Elk River watershed where there is Natural Resources Conservation Service seed money for projects and stakeholder interest around recreation, abandoned mine land restoration, water supply protection, red spruce restoration, and trout fisheries.

• **CSX - Transporting Nutrition to Communities in Need:** CSX and the Conservation Leadership Network developed a small grants program for transporting healthy food, aimed at improving local transportation and distribution of fresh produce, perishable food to communities in need across 22 states, including West Virginia. The Fund and CSX created a school curriculum unit that teaches kids about the environment, math, science and economics through real-world freight transportation scenarios.

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