

Conservation Working For America

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2 *ECONOMIC VITALITY*

3 *VIBRANT COMMUNITIES*

LAND, WATER AND WILDLIFE

4 *HOW YOU CAN HELP*



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CONNECTING PEOPLE AND NATURE

Protecting Critical Military Buffer Land At Camp Williams

Approximately 25 miles south of Salt Lake City, Utah, the western portion of the Traverse Mountains creates a unique habitat that serves as a critical migration corridor, breeding ground and winter range for thousands of mule deer every year. This rugged landscape also simulates those found in many foreign areas where our nation's military is currently engaged, making it an ideal location for Camp Williams, a National Guard training site.

Rapidly expanding urban sprawl in Utah threatens wildlife habitat, military readiness and the quality of life of West Traverse communities. To keep the landscape intact, The Conservation Fund and the National Guard Bureau have entered into a Cooperative Agreement to help preserve key parcels of land around Camp Williams. The protection of the 662-acre "GSF Farms" is the initial conservation easement acquisition associated with the effort, which will benefit wildlife and plant species in the area, while limiting encroachment that constrains Camp Williams' training activities.

Through two federal programs—Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) and Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI), as well as support from a growing coalition called the West Traverse Community Partnership, diverse partners come together to redefine conservation and achieve common goals.



© CAMP WILLIAMS

The Military And Conservationists Have More In Common Than Meets The Eye.

Ask Colonel Tyler Smith.



Colonel Tyler Smith
Utah Army National Guard

Q. When people think of the Department of Defense, conservation probably isn't the first thing that comes to mind. Can you tell us about recent conservation initiatives?

A. The Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) and the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) programs provide funding to reduce incompatible development such as high density single and multifamily homes near bases through the preservation of working and natural lands. Establishing buffer areas around Army installations protects the viability of training operations, while simultaneously guiding community growth, sustains the environmental and economic health of the region and protects public health and safety.

Q. How are partnerships making this work a success?

A. We reach out to partners like The Conservation Fund and community stakeholders like the West Traverse Community Partnership to identify mutual objectives of land conservation and to manage development of critical open areas. The U.S. Army can contribute funds to the purchase of easements or properties from willing landowners. Herriman City, Utah, which abuts the north border of Camp Williams, has a strategic interest in preserving open spaces along the ridges to their south. With ACUB and REPI funds, the city plans to turn the areas into recreational trails that will serve the community and provide additional firebreaks.

Q. Would you say you are redefining conservation? How so?

A. We are trying to create win-win scenarios for the land and for people, because as citizen soldiers, National Guard soldiers and airmen, we reside in the communities we serve. We want to preserve our ability to train at these locations and ensure that we preserve open spaces and natural habitats so that everyone can enjoy the beautiful landscapes we adore and value in Utah.

Balancing Nature And Commerce In Rural Areas

Across the country, many rural communities that are surrounded by natural resources and public lands often struggle to jump-start slowed economies. Sometimes this is because once-booming industries change; in other cases, communities struggle to capitalize on the natural assets that surround them in a sustainable way. While many of these areas face similar challenges to economic development, every community has its own set of goals and solutions, stakeholders and interests, and tools needed to help address their unique issues so that community collaboration and action is possible. From community members and local officials to business owners and public lands managers, positive outcomes are made when all parties are in the room and at the table together.

And that's exactly what our Balancing Nature and Commerce workshop does. We work with towns and regions to help them find common ground to achieve strong conservation solutions that not only protect America's treasured natural resources, but also create vibrant, sustainable, thriving economies. In short, we serve as a catalyst for change for those communities that are ready for it.

For example, Pennsylvania's South Mountain Fruit Belt region is rich with history, culture and agriculture. Generations of growers have farmed the land, producing fruit such as peaches, apples and cherries for more than a century. But capitalizing on this rich farming heritage so that the region's economy and communities thrive just like its orchards has proved more difficult. More than seven years ago, a group representing the region attended our national Balancing Nature and Commerce workshop and came out with a clear vision and action plan. Since then, group members have branded their landscape with distinctive signage, created an interpretive gateway project that highlights their history and culture and marketed themselves as a destination for many of the millions of visitors who come to the adjacent Gettysburg National Military Park each year. Now visitors are spending more time in downtowns, exploring the region and spending more dollars in local shops, farms and restaurants—multiplying dollars across the region and sustaining jobs and businesses.

They also have quantified the importance of agriculture in the region and the state; a new economic assessment values the fruit belt's local impact at \$580 million annually, supporting 8,500 jobs, while creating a statewide impact two to four times greater. Group members also have created branding around the region as "America's Orchard" (chances are, you've probably tasted some of their fruit). Most importantly, they have built community support around promoting the fruit belt. And momentum continues to grow. That's what Balancing Nature and Commerce is all about. Bringing the right people together, and asking the right questions, to help communities shape a future where nature and the economy both thrive.



© EZRA GREGG



© SOUTH MOUNTAIN FRUIT BELT

ECONOMIC VITALITY



© DAGNY LEONARD



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Securing A Sustainable Seafood Future

As U.S. consumers increasingly demand a safe, local and cost-competitive animal protein supply, it is more important than ever to develop sustainable seafood production methods that can meet consumer demand without harming the environment. Our Freshwater Institute's partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has made this a priority. Over three decades, the USDA Agricultural Research Service has supported our innovative research on recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS), a technology that makes it possible to farm fish on land, in closed-containment tanks, in a way that recycles water and repurposes waste to be used as fertilizer. Even better, these systems can be used anywhere—bringing seafood production to regions where it previously was unimaginable. Through our USDA research projects, we are developing and evaluating solutions to major challenges facing the RAS industry—improving efficiencies of scale, reducing water quality constraints and improving fish growth—to make sure this aquaculture technology, which is poised to revolutionize seafood production in the United States, is economically and environmentally viable.

The new, state-of-the-art research laboratory, completed this year, will allow the Freshwater Institute to expand its research capacity to conduct replicated studies and accelerate advancements in aquaculture and water quality solutions that will improve domestic seafood production, safeguard our oceans and create new market opportunities for local economies. With our new facility, we look forward to continuing our research and innovation around aquaculture technology. And with the help of important partners like the USDA, we are working for a future where all U.S. consumers have access to fresh, sustainable and local seafood.

LAND, WATER AND WILDLIFE

Colorado

Within the heart of one of the most popular year-round recreational destinations in Colorado, Hardscrabble Ranch has been a working ranch since the late 1800s. While much of the surrounding Vail Valley area has been developed for resort and residential use, the 1,540-acre ranch is untouched and contains 2.5 miles of the Salt and Brush Creeks, the latter a healthy cold water trout stream that flows into the Eagle River before it joins the Colorado River. In July, the Fund purchased the ranch with financial contributions from Eagle County, Great Outdoors Colorado, and other local partners, securing the property for continued ranching and future recreational access under Eagle County's management. This project culminates a 30-year conservation effort in the Brush Creek Valley by the Fund and its partners, including the 1999 addition of 1,782 acres to Sylvan Lake State Park—up-valley from Hardscrabble Ranch.

Missouri

The sizable Mark Twain National Forest stretches across 29 counties in southern and central Missouri and encompasses 1.5 million acres. With abundant caves, rocky barren glades, forested hills, old volcanic mountains and pristine streams, Missouri's only national forest is an outdoor lover's dream, featuring over 750 miles of trails for hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking and motorized use. The Fund has focused its conservation efforts here on the protection of land along a 16-mile stretch of the Current River. With support from the Land and Water Conservation Fund and mitigation funds made available by Enbridge Pipelines from the Flanagan South Pipeline construction, we protected a key 185-acre property along the river near Doniphan.

Pennsylvania

Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge was established in part to ensure the protection of the federally threatened bog turtle, which can be found in wetlands throughout the Lehigh Valley. The refuge is also within a globally significant fall migration flyway used by tens of thousands of raptors and vultures and millions of songbirds. The Fund is working with federal, state and local partners to establish a core protected area for the refuge and preserve more than 5 miles of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. More than a quarter of the 4,662-acre property has been secured, and the remaining lands will depend on the Land and Water Conservation Fund and additional private and public support.

Vermont

The Taconic Mountain Range is a distinct and profound gateway into Vermont from New York, with ridges that rise dramatically to elevations of more than 2,000 feet. When a large, unfragmented parcel of 2,800 acres went on the market near the iconic Bird Mountain, the Fund recognized the importance of the land to the surrounding communities. We purchased the property and held it for the state for three years, while working with partners to finalize funding. This spring we transferred the property to the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, enhancing protection at the newly named Birdseye Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and completing the largest addition to a Vermont WMA in more than a decade.

THE CONSERVATION FUND

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HOW YOU CAN HELP

Partnership: The Foundation Of Conservation Success

One of the founding tenets of The Conservation Fund is partnership. From the very beginning we recognized that we could accomplish much more by working with communities and with other organizations. Leveraging funding from multiple sources also meant bringing more money to the highest priority projects around the country. And ensuring that every partner was publicly acknowledged for contributing would build long-lasting relationships.

We have always viewed our donors as partners in our work. You are the very cornerstone of our success. That is why we created the Cornerstone Society in 2006 to recognize our loyal donors who make very generous gifts to us for more than five years. Since we launched the Society, it has grown tenfold, and today we have more than 500 members dedicated to sustaining the Fund’s on-the-ground results.

Last year, our donors, new and long-term, gave to more than 100 projects across the country—protecting forests in New England, saving vital lands along the Gulf Coast, protecting fragile wildlife habitat like caves for the Indiana bat, empowering grassroots organizations through training, and lending to small, green businesses. Our donors also generously support our general operations, which enables us to do the front-end work of conservation, like meeting with communities to assess their needs, and creates a pool of ready capital so that when important lands come on the marketplace we can act quickly to protect them.

You have always trusted us to focus on results and put contributions to use wisely. In turn, we have always viewed you as our essential partners in this work. Together, we continue to build a healthy tomorrow—one project, community and generation at a time.

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