

THE
CONSERVATION FUND

Impacts Across the Map

Cultivating a Strong Connection
Through Conservation

Americans live in bustling cities, sprawling suburbs and remote rural places. But no matter where on the map we live, the land sustains us.

AT THE CONSERVATION FUND, WE ARE working every day to ensure the lands that keep our communities and economies going strong are protected, whether they are forested mountains, coastal marshes or great plains.

Our lands are truly our greatest natural resource, but keeping nature safe is an ongoing battle. Every 30 seconds, a football field worth of America's natural areas disappears to roads, houses and other development. The challenge of protecting the future of America's lands has never been clearer or more urgent.

Thanks to incredible supporters like you, we have protected nearly 9 million acres across all 50 states. But nature is still at risk — which is why we partner with communities across the country to identify land conservation projects that will have an outsized impact. No single cookie-cutter solution resolves every issue, so we focus on finding innovative approaches to conservation and community-led partnerships.

Together, we are creating nature-based solutions that drive action for climate protection, sustainable economies and vibrant communities. The featured projects here, along with hundreds more, are ensuring a more sustainable future for Americans and our many beautiful landscapes.

Help us continue to make positive impacts and build stronger connections across the map.

Cover photo: Mount Tom, Colorado
©Marc Bergreen



Natural Solutions for a Changing Climate



THE BEAUTIFUL PAJARO RIVER IN CENTRAL

California flows through a valley of valuable farmland and out into the world-famous

Monterey Bay. This area is renowned for its ability to produce high-value crops like strawberries and artichokes. However, this verdant landscape — and the communities that farm it — felt the impacts of climate change in early 2023.

Intense rainstorms produced by atmospheric rivers pummeled California's coastline in March, affecting many cities and towns. During this extreme weather, a levee broke on the Pajaro River, sending millions of gallons of water downstream, flooding the valley and the small farming communities below. These communities are made up mostly of migrant farmworkers, and the flood's devastation continues to affect housing availability and work opportunities.

Although efforts to improve the levee system are underway, there also are nature-based solutions that would improve the region's resilience to future weather events. Wetland restoration along the river can create a natural "sponge" of dense native plants to help slow and absorb floodwaters and even improve the water quality. For 30 years,

conservation groups have tried to build out native wetlands, but farmers were wary.

Working with local partners to find a sustainable outcome for the environment and farming, The Conservation Fund is seeking to purchase a 263-acre farm early next year along the mouth of the Pajaro River. We plan for a large portion of this property to remain under agricultural use to support local jobs. But nearly a third of the land has poor farming soil and will be restored to native wetlands. Eventually, we plan to transfer the property to our partner, the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, for conservation and sustainable local management.

This coastal area is particularly vulnerable to climate change and future flooding, and we have identified additional key properties along the river that we also are working to purchase. Building out the wetlands area as green space will help build climate resiliency and protect residents and farmland from future flooding.

TOP 3 OUTCOMES:



Climate Resilience



Wetlands Restoration

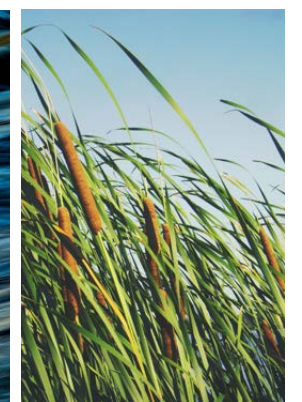
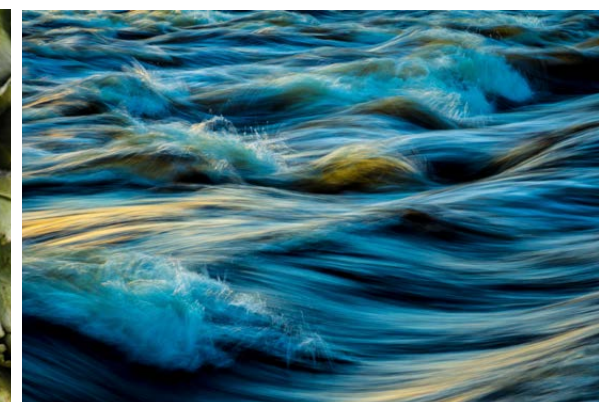


Economic Benefits & Healthy Food Systems



“This visionary project achieves a triple bottom-line. It creates space to conserve coastal habitat as sea levels rise, it restores unproductive farmland into habitat to protect productive farmland, and, combined with other similar projects in the floodplain, it reduces flood risk in the communities of Watsonville and Pajaro. The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County is thrilled to have a partner like The Conservation Fund that shares these values and can invest the resources to accomplish these goals.”

— Sarah Newkirk, Executive Director, Land Trust Santa Cruz County



DID YOU KNOW? This unique landscape encompasses two rare types of land: the largest freshwater wetlands in the country and farmland in the Mediterranean climate zone, which makes up only 2% of the world's farm lands.



Ensuring the Cliffs Stand Tall for Generations



IMAGINE A BALD EAGLE SWOOPING DOWN

over the Rappahannock River in Eastern Virginia. It scoops up a blueback herring and then soars above the 100-foot sandstone Fones Cliffs. This moment could easily be happening now in 2023 or back in the 17th century when the Rappahannock Tribe's villages dotted the cliffs and riverbanks.

Remarkably, the cliffs have remained relatively unchanged for centuries, but plans to place housing developments and a golf course atop these majestic cliffs have loomed for decades. Stretching 4 miles long, Fones Cliffs has one of the highest concentrations of bald eagles on the East Coast and is a site of special significance to the Rappahannock Tribe because they were once home to three Rappahannock towns: Wecuppom, Matchopick and Pissacoack. Development of this area would erase history and destroy unique wildlife habitat.

Over the years, there were many failed attempts to permanently protect the cliffs; but in 2019, The Conservation Fund stepped in and successfully negotiated the purchase of a 252-acre cliffside property. We transferred that property to the existing Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge and began working closely with

the Rappahannock Tribe to protect even more land. This past year we purchased the remaining 964 acres, which along with our local partner's conservation efforts will complete protection on the four miles of cliffs.

Next year, we will transfer the 964 acres back to the Rappahannock Tribe, greatly expanding ownership along the Tribe's ancestral lands and protecting old growth forests. The Tribe will work closely with the neighboring refuge to sustainably manage the entire cliffside area. The Tribe plans to eventually expand public access and open a visitor and educational center to share its history. This land also will support the Rappahannock Tribe's Return to the River program, which connects younger tribal members with their roots through traditional fishing and crafts stemming from the river.

It may have taken many years to ensure this future, but Fones Cliffs will continue to stand tall for generations to come.

TOP 3 OUTCOMES:

- Wildlife Habitat
- Cultural Lands Protected
- Public Access



“With the help of The Conservation Fund and other partners, this transaction is of utmost importance for the Rappahannocks to be able to return to the lands of our ancestors. It's incredibly healing for our Tribe today, and to know that it will be preserved perpetually for future generations ensures stability in the hearts of our elders for tomorrow.”

— **Chief Anne Richardson**, Rappahannock Tribe



DID YOU KNOW? During Captain John Smith's exploration of the Chesapeake Bay watershed in 1608, he was ambushed at this point on the river. Rappahannock Tribe members atop these cliffs signaled to their warriors in the marshes below, who then emerged and ambushed Smith and his crew.



Protecting Denver's Wild Side



DENVER'S SKYLINE MIGHT BE ONE OF THE most spectacular in the world, with the snowcapped Rocky Mountains rising behind the city's skyscrapers. The area's incredible natural beauty and countless recreational opportunities have driven Denver's population growth, which has outpaced the national average for decades. The Denver metropolitan area's current population is 3 million, and that is expected to grow to 3.6 million by 2030. As the region continues to grow, it's important to think strategically about the community's connection to the land in order to foster a sustainable future for Denver's lands, people and wildlife.

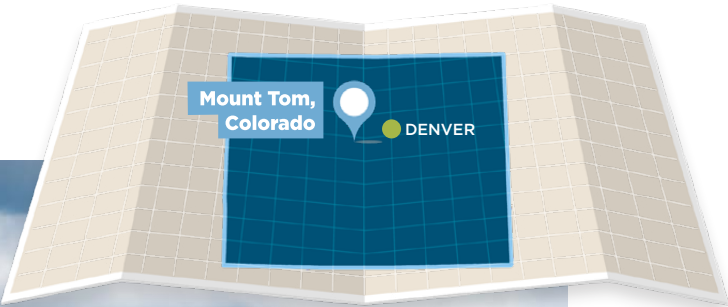
Only 25 miles outside of Denver and rising well over 9,700 feet, Mount Tom is home to some of Colorado's most recognizable species: moose, elk, black bear and mountain lion. But being so near the city, this beautiful landscape was at serious risk of development. Recognizing the importance of the landscape, The Conservation Fund spent the past several years working to purchase privately owned parcels along the mountain, and while it's rare to protect landscapes of this size so close to a major city, we have successfully protected 2,000 acres with our local partners!

These 2,000 acres have experienced very little human activity, so a careful study of the site will inform how and where to best incorporate public access and recreation in the future. This protected land links more than 20,000 acres now known as the Mount Tom Conservation Corridor, which includes existing conserved areas like Golden Gate Canyon State Park. The corridor also secures a key watershed, including the headwaters of Van Bibber Creek, which flows down into Denver's suburbs, ultimately running into the South Platte River. Protecting this watershed is an important step in building climate resiliency for Colorado communities.

To further secure a sustainable future for this land, we transferred the 2,000 acres to Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Jefferson County Open Space. Helping our local partners protect and become stewards of this land is crucial to securing Denver's wild and rugged character into the future.

TOP 3 OUTCOMES:

-  Wildlife Habitat
-  Public Access
-  Climate Resilience



“The Conservation Fund led a complicated land conservation project in our county that included three funders, five conservation organizations and three landowners. Their tireless, graceful and strategic efforts resulted in preserving over 2,000 acres of land for wildlife habitat, ranching, scenic views and public access. They were absolutely the key to accomplishing this acquisition that has been one of our top priorities for several decades.”

— **Tom Hoby**, Director, Jefferson County Open Space



DID YOU KNOW? Mount Tom is also known as Ladybug Peak because it is a prime breeding habitat for ladybugs; in June and July reports claim the ground is covered in red and orange insects as they hatch!



Farming With the Future in Mind



EVERY DAY, ACRES OF AGRICULTURAL LANDS are paved over in the U.S. The loss of these farmlands drives up the prices of remaining farmland, making it difficult for many aspiring farmers to purchase land, especially those living near metro areas. Despite these challenges, Rahul Anand, a first-generation American, recognized that his passion for growing things could help fulfill his community's need for fresh and local produce.

Over 10 years ago, he bought a 2.5-acre farm near Atlanta, and his business flourished. Named Snapfinger Farm, it is now well known in the Atlanta region for its produce, flowers and baked goods. Over the years, it became clear that the size of his farm was limiting his vision for growth, but Rahul knew that expanding his organic operation would be a big step. Luckily, our Farms Fund program is designed to assist farmers just like Rahul and his fiancé, Carson White.

We acquire at-risk farmland facing the threat of development, match farmers with farms, build agricultural partnerships, and help plan a long-term pathway to farmer ownership and land protection through conservation easements. This model is helping a new and diverse generation of farmers access land, while strengthening local food systems and protecting valuable farmland

from development. Partnering with Rahul, we identified and bought a 197-acre farm that expands Snapfinger Farm's capabilities and protects floodplains and key wildlife habitat near Atlanta.

While cold days are a natural part of any growing cycle, more extreme temperatures stemming from climate change will continue to present new challenges, especially for farmers just starting out. Last December, Rahul's winter crops were lost during Atlanta's coldest weather in decades. Our Farms Fund was able to be flexible during this emergency to support Snapfinger Farm's expansion while the farm recovered from the devastating loss of crops and the ensuing financial hit.

Building stronger local food systems is critical to creating healthier and more resilient communities in the face of climate change. We now partner with farmers in the Atlanta and Chicago areas, and we are excited to announce that we plan to expand the Farms Fund program into Charlotte, North Carolina, later this year.

TOP 3 OUTCOMES:

- Equitable Farmland Access
- Food Security
- Climate Resilience



“As a farm business significantly expanding our production, the Farms Fund program offered us flexibility in an emergency to ensure we could continue growing the farm while recovering from the devastating storm.”
 — **Rahul Anand**, Snapfinger Farm Owner



DID YOU KNOW? Snapfinger Farm is scaling its production to meet wholesale demand of aggregators like The Common Market — a key partner of the Farms Fund program — that partners with the Georgia Department of Agriculture to supply locally grown food to Georgia's Community Food Banks.



Safeguarding America's Stories and Lands



N NORTHWESTERN ARKANSAS, NEAR THE

Missouri border, rolling green hills turn into the forested peaks of the Ozark Mountain range.

Home to amazing wildlife and spectacular scenery, this region is full of stories from America's past, including the Trail of Tears and the Civil War. Recognizing both the ecological and historical significance of the region, we protected a 140-acre property near the town of Pea Ridge.

The old Telegraph Road — part of the route used during the Trail of Tears — goes through the northeast corner of the property. Thousands of Cherokee people and other Native Americans traveled across this land and camped in nearby fields during their forced removal from their ancestral homelands in southeastern states in the winter of 1838-39. The property also contains sites from the Battle of Pea Ridge, a key Civil War battle on March 7-8, 1862. This was a significant victory for the Union army allowing it to secure Missouri, which was strategically important because it gave the Union control of movement and resources along the Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio Rivers.

Working with our partners at the National Park Service, we knew it was important to protect this land and share it with the public. Earlier this

summer, we transferred the property to the Park Service for incorporation into Pea Ridge National Military Park, which has a robust educational program that includes a visitor center and guided tours. Visitors can walk along a portion of the Trail of Tears and follow movements of the Battle of Pea Ridge; this is a powerful place to reflect on the long-lasting impacts of these enormous events.

In addition to highlighting history, the Park Service will sustainably manage the land and protect wildlife habitat for migratory songbirds and the northern long-eared bat, a federally threatened bat species found in the area. Additionally, fire has been part of the natural cycle for thousands of years, and carefully prescribed burns will continue to be used to reduce the risk of wildfire and remove invasive species, giving native plants a chance to grow back.

Because of conservation, this landscape's stories and biodiversity will remain for years to come.

TOP 3 OUTCOMES:



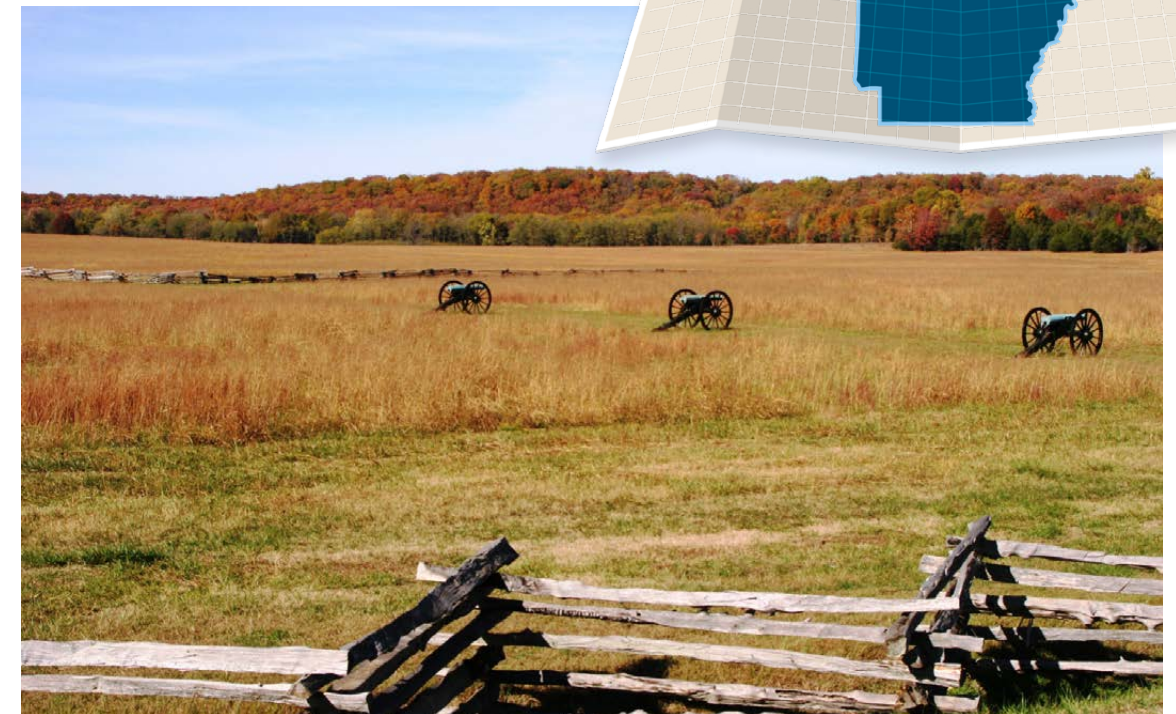
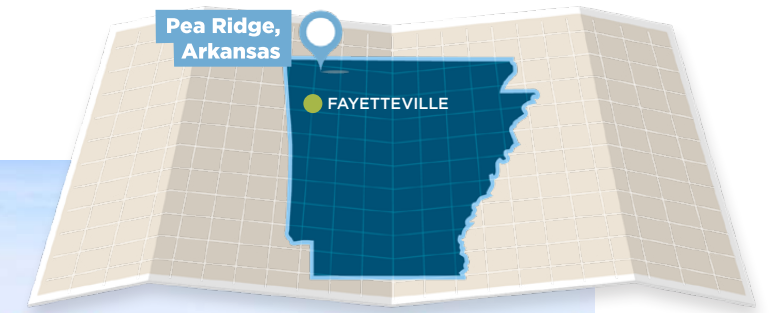
Cultural & Historic Lands



Wildlife Habitat



Public Access



“Beyond protecting a key part of this Civil War battlefield, this historic site provides habitat for rare species and preserves the memory of other historic events, including the Trail of Tears. Pea Ridge National Military Park is better for the addition of this property, and I am proud that The Conservation Fund made this addition to the Park possible. And the memories we continue to make at this Park will be all the richer for this land's conservation.”

— **Clint Miller**, Central Midwest Regional Director, The Conservation Fund



DID YOU KNOW? In the past year, efforts to improve this property for Indiana bat and northern long-eared bat habitat management have been underway; this includes creating space for bats to fly within the forest and placing bat boxes for them to safely roost.



Securing Forests for the Future



DEVELOPMENT, SUBDIVISION AND unsustainable timber management threaten our forested landscapes. Experts anticipate losing as many as 37 million acres in the coming decades, but these large, forested landscapes are critically important because they effectively store carbon and secure wildlife habitat and recreational space, while also filtering water and air.

Our Working Forest Fund program was developed more than a decade ago to address these challenges and through sustainable forest management, which supports jobs and is a key economic driver in many rural areas. We have positively impacted nearly 1 million acres of working forestland. We work with local groups to find balanced economic and environmental outcomes — ones that foster a stronger relationship between people and nature.

Near Musket Mountain in southeastern Oklahoma, there are hills of oak, ash, and pine, along with crystal clear streams that provide incredible habitat for birds, bats, deer and fish. Only a three-hour drive from metro Dallas, the area is seeing a rising interest in second home and private hunting uses. To help keep this large landscape from being sold into smaller parcels, our Working Forest Fund identified and quickly purchased an 11,300-acre forest near the Arkansas border last spring.

We are now working with the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry to turn this property into Oklahoma's first state forest!

This is an amazing outcome for the forest, which will continue to be sustainably managed and support local jobs. Once transferred to the state, it will become public land that Oklahomans and visitors can continue to enjoy.

Nearly 1,400 miles to the northeast, in New York's Catskill Mountains, our Working Forest Fund program is focused on the Ten Mile River — a large landscape that has hosted youth programs for nearly a century through the Greater New York Councils-Boy Scouts of America. This land, just 75 miles from New York City, was at risk of private development.

We are working to secure nearly 10,000 acres of habitat and recreation land — we already have purchased more than 6,000 acres — that will become a new state forest. Under our temporary ownership, and ultimately permanent ownership by the state of New York, the property will protect wildlife habitat and water quality, including miles of the upper Delaware River, and support forest- and recreation-based jobs, as well as public recreational access.

The conservation and sustainable management of these forests will benefit ecosystem integrity, helping the forests adapt to an evolving climate and strengthening climate resilience in the region.

TOP 3 OUTCOMES:

- Climate Resilience
- Wildlife Habitat & Public Access
- Economic Benefits



“After nearly 100 years, Ten Mile River continues to be a respite from the hustle and bustle of the New York City Metro area and a home away from home for thousands of Scouts and youth from all over the country and the world seeking our comprehensive and unique outdoor leadership programming. We are thrilled that the rich history of Ten Mile River will continue and that our programs will stay intact and that the land will continue to be a special place for those seeking recreation.”

— **Saroya Friedman-Gonzalez**, Scout Executive & CEO of the Greater New York Councils-BSA

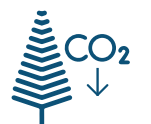


“Oklahoma's forests support an industry that annually contributes \$5.1 billion to our economy, employs a workforce of over 19,000 people, and provides the forest products we need in our daily lives. Equally as important is our forests' contribution to Oklahoma's environmental health. Oklahoma's forests' many benefits include clean water, clean air and carbon sequestration. Acquisition of this land is a great opportunity to help sustain Oklahoma's economic and environmental well-being.”

— **Mark Goeller**, State Forester and Director of Oklahoma Forestry Services



DID YOU KNOW? Forests in the U.S. sequester over a half-billion metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year, 60 times more carbon than any other natural land ecosystem.



The Conservation Fund promises to put your gift to good use. Our focus on efficiency allows us to streamline our expenses and sets us apart from other organizations. With more than 95% of our annual spending going into conservation programs, a no-frills budget, low overhead and no membership costs, you can be assured that your donation will support smart conservation.



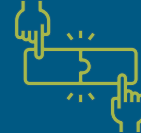
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The Conservation Fund and make an impact:**

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