



# 2024 | Green Bond Impact Report



# Executive Summary

The Conservation Fund (TCF) broke new ground in 2019 by issuing \$150 million in Taxable Green Bonds, representing a historic breakthrough in forest conservation in the United States. This bold initiative redefined our Working Forest Fund® (WFF) program, empowering us to protect at-risk forestlands on an unprecedented scale. With forests playing a critical role in supporting rural livelihoods, combating climate change, and fostering vibrant, livable cities, innovative solutions for conserving America's most essential natural resource are more critical than ever.

Fast forward to today, and the results achieved through the Green Bonds speak for themselves, from conserving vast expanses of working forestland to safeguarding ecosystems that sustain our environment and economy. This report highlights stories and metrics showcasing how we've successfully harnessed this innovative financing tool, thinking big and acting boldly to ensure forests remain a cornerstone of a sustainable future for communities, environmental health, wildlife and climate resilience. Together, we're not just conserving forests — we're investing in a thriving planet and the communities that depend on it.



Ten Mile  
River Forest  
NEW YORK

# Green Bonds & the Working Forest Fund<sup>®</sup>

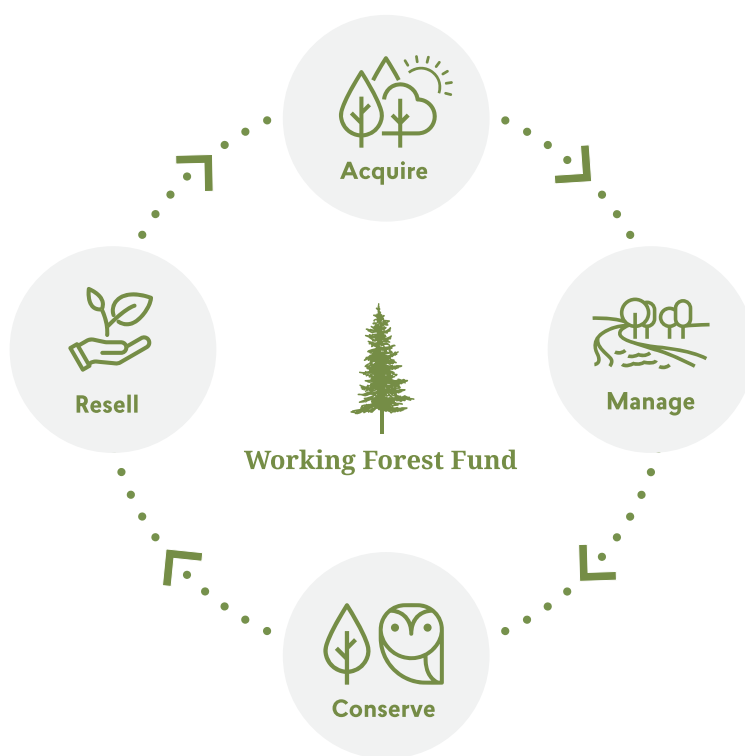
The U.S. is projected to lose 13 million acres of forestland by 2050, driven largely by the fragmentation and development of working forests.<sup>1</sup> The resulting loss of rural livelihoods, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, water quality and carbon sequestration could be devastating.

## Reducing Forest Loss in America

The Conservation Fund's Working Forest Fund is a pioneering program launched in 2009 to prevent forest loss before it happens. WFF's financially sustainable model allows us to acquire and permanently conserve the most critical forests, keeping these vital landscapes intact to safeguard clean water, wildlife habitat, rural jobs and climate benefits.

Green Bonds help make WFF's success possible by providing a critical source of flexible, patient capital. This innovative financing has dramatically expanded our reach and speed, enabling us to meet the accelerating threats facing America's forests. Without it, our impact would be a fraction of what it is today.

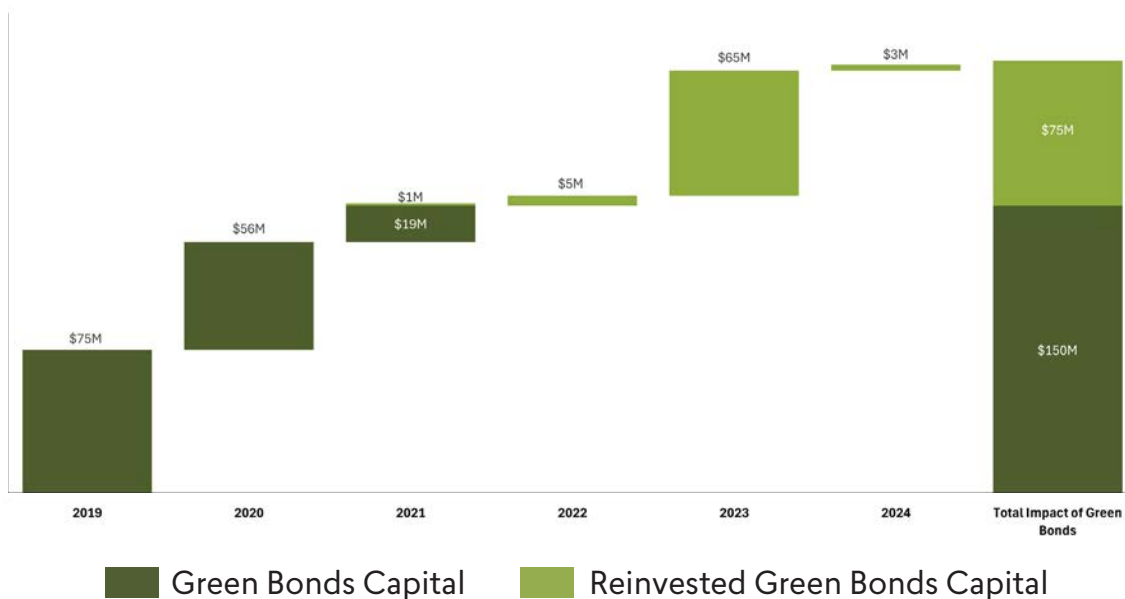
Now, we are setting an ambitious goal of conserving five million acres of forest by 2040, ensuring these landscapes continue to serve people, communities and the planet for generations to come.



## Increasing Impact via Leveraged Investment

WFF's regenerative business model allows us to leverage the Green Bonds in two ways. First, we can use the funds they generate more than once during their 10-year term, allowing us to acquire additional at-risk forests. Since the initial use of the bonds, TCF has reinvested \$75 million into additional projects, bringing the total area of forests secured through the Green Bond proceeds to over 530,000 acres.

Second, TCF leverages bond proceeds to catalyze additional mission-aligned investments from philanthropic partners and public and private investors. Combined with this additional financing, the Green Bond proceeds have secured forestlands valued at three times the original bond offering, impacting forests valued at over \$675 million in 11 states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Minnesota, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.



## Prioritizing Community Benefits

To date, Working Forest Fund projects utilizing Green Bonds have generated an estimated \$378 million in annual economic impact. In addition, the forests secured using Green Bond proceeds store an estimated 134 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, strengthening climate resilience. We implement permanent conservation solutions that ensure these forests remain working forests, benefiting nearby communities and local economies by maintaining roughly 3,100 forestry jobs and providing new and continued recreational access. Green Bond proceeds also help maintain biological diversity in each of these vibrant ecosystems by connecting conserved lands and maintaining wildlife migration corridors that support ecological health and aid wildlife adaptation to changing environmental conditions.



# A Vital Solution For A Brighter Future



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## Supporting Rural Communities

Forests play a crucial role in driving local economies. U.S. working forests sustain 2.9 million jobs in forestry and wood product manufacturing, contributing \$128.1 billion related to annual payroll.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, outdoor recreation on forest lands open to the public supports more than 205,000 jobs each year and generates over \$13 billion for the national economy.<sup>3</sup>

Recognizing the vital economic contribution forests provide, we seek to integrate economic objectives into every WFF project we undertake, strengthening communities dependent on jobs anchored by our natural resources. As natural resource depletion accelerates nationwide, coordinated and collaborative conservation efforts are more critical than ever — to protect landscapes that sustain jobs, inspire future careers in natural resources and revitalize rural communities.



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## Sustaining Livable Cities

Our cities and forests — their health and their future — are innately connected. According to a report by the World Resources Institute and Pilot Projects, forests are vital for urban and metro area human health and well-being, climate regulation, clean and reliable water supply, and biodiversity protection.<sup>4</sup>

Forests can be a cost-effective method to help improve and stabilize city water resources; cities like New York, Boston, and San Francisco realize significant savings in water treatment from forests that naturally maintain water quality. The forests conserved using Green Bond proceeds contribute surface water to watersheds that support roughly 12 million downstream consumers. The Green Bonds portfolio includes more than 87,000 acres of wetlands and more than 1,500 stream miles with vital importance to surface drinking water.<sup>5</sup>



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## Supporting Climate Resilience

Our forests are among the most powerful and large-scale natural systems for removing carbon, making them a vital part of global climate solutions. In the U.S. alone, forests absorb between 10 and 15 percent of the country's annual greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>6</sup> Experts advise that halting forest loss and focusing on restoration could contribute over one-third of the climate change mitigation needed by 2030.<sup>7</sup>



© U.S. Forest Service

## Enhancing Wildlife Habitat

### Ensuring Habitat Connectivity | Northern Spotted Owl

TCF leveraged the Green Bonds to help conserve sensitive working timberlands in the Columbia River Gorge of Oregon and Washington, protecting vital habitat corridors for a range of wildlife — including the northern spotted owl — linking Columbia steppe ecosystems with high-elevation mixed conifer forests.



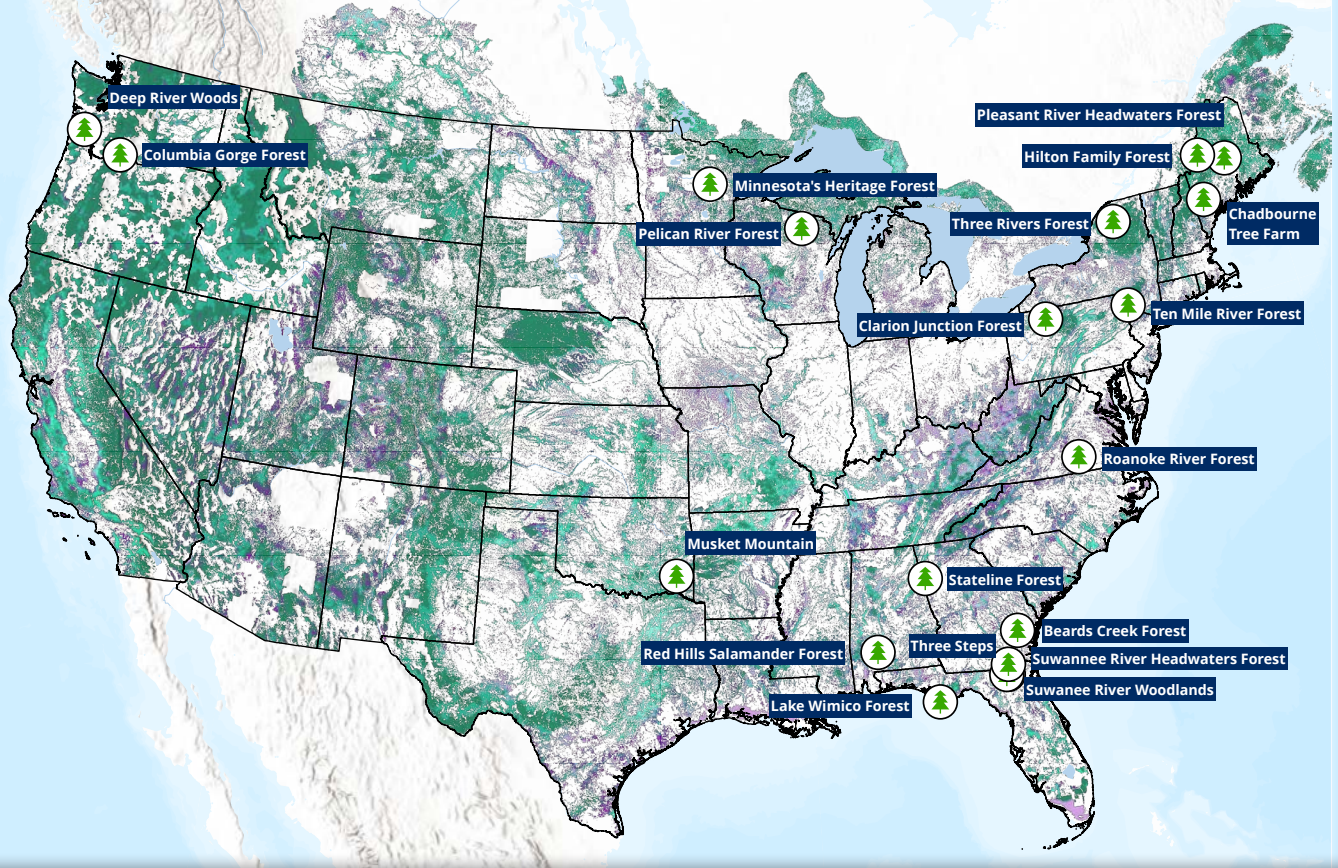
© Adam Cooner

### Ensuring Habitat Protection | Red Hills Salamander

TCF has contributed Green Bond proceeds toward securing Alabama's Red Hills Salamander Forest, the only place in the world where the federally threatened Red Hills salamander can be found. Protecting this habitat could help remove the Red Hills salamander from the endangered species list.

# Green Bond Projects to Date

## Resilient and Connected Network



## Impact Metrics\*

of all projects utilizing Green Bond proceeds



530,152

acres secured\*\*



3,141

jobs created or maintained



\$378M

annual  
economic impact



134M

metric tons of carbon dioxide  
equivalent stored



1,525

miles of streams and  
rivers protected

*\*Impact metrics were calculated using geospatial analysis, national datasets, and state-level economic modeling tailored to TCF-managed projects. This includes data from the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and economic impact factors published by the National Alliance of Forest Owners (NAFO), a policy organization representing private forest owners. Supporting methodology documentation is available upon request.*

*\*\*This represents approximately half of the forestland secured by WFF and other TCF initiatives*





## Deep River Woods

Stretching over 20,000 acres of Douglas fir, western hemlock and red alder forest, Deep River Woods is critical for wildlife and environmental health. It is also a vital part of the local forestry economy in one of the premier wood products hubs in the Pacific Northwest.

As a working forest, Deep River Woods provides jobs, economic support and revenue for local communities, with an estimated annual economic impact of more than \$9 million. Over time, Washington State will acquire this entire working forest, where state-owned lands can contribute more than one-third of a county's annual operating budget for public services, especially schools.

The forest also supports critical habitat for fish, birds and a range of threatened or endangered species. Protecting the forest delivers climate benefits, helping the state deliver on its Climate Commitment Act, a pioneering program to reduce statewide greenhouse gas emissions through strategic climate investments.



Revenue generated from Deep River Woods provides critical funding for public services like schools and local fire departments.

TCF leveraged funding from Washington State's groundbreaking Climate Commitment Act, along with Green Bond proceeds, to finance the acquisition of this critical forest.



## Pelican River Forest

Over the past few decades, much of Wisconsin's industrial forestland has been converted to non-forest uses and subdivided for development. Protecting the 70,000-acre Pelican River Forest conserves an expansive and crucial connector between county and federal conserved lands.

TCF acquired the property leveraging proceeds from our Green Bonds, ensuring that it will not be degraded or fragmented, and protecting the habitat for northern goshawks, cerulean warblers, American marten and other endangered and threatened species.

The acquisition also increases public recreational access and includes establishment of a high-quality voluntary carbon project with an estimated 19.5 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub><sup>e</sup> stored.



The 68 miles of streams, 27,000 acres of wetlands, and dozens of ponds within the forest support good water quality in the upper Great Lakes and Mississippi River watersheds, both important to surrounding community health.

Water-based recreation also contributes a significant portion of the \$8 billion outdoor recreation brings to the Wisconsin economy each year.<sup>8</sup>



## Red Hills Salamander Forest

Using capital from our Green Bonds and a generous loan from the Richard King Mellon Foundation, TCF purchased 23,000 acres of at-risk forestland in southern Alabama — a critical first step in securing as much of the property as possible for future long-term protections.

In addition to providing a home for the threatened Red Hills salamander, the land is a critical economic resource for the local community. Alabama's forest products industry is the second leading economic driver in the state, employing over 40,000 people.<sup>9</sup> The Red Hills Salamander Forest itself has a total economic impact of more than \$10 million.



The forest is critical for the Red Hills salamander, and protection of the land could help remove the species from the endangered species list.

During its ownership, TCF is working closely with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to provide a sanctuary for the threatened species and increase access to outdoor recreation.





## Hilton Family Forest

Hilton Family Forest, a breathtaking mountain and forest landscape along the Canadian border in northwestern Maine, is a 44,000-acre gem. This working forest features four mountain tops, waterfalls and an expansive maple sugarbush operation.

The forest is an economic cornerstone for the community and a recreation hub for hiking, biking, hunting, fishing, and snowmobiling, and it includes a segment of Maine's Interconnected Trail System. For the duration of our ownership and beyond, our vision is for this forest to sustainably support the local timber and maple sugar industries, with trees providing needed lumber and syrup for people's tables for years to come.

Beyond these important economic benefits, the land contains populations of multiple rare plant and animal species, including the golden eagle and peregrine falcon.



TCF is working with adjacent landowners, the Passamaquoddy Tribe and the State of Maine, to create lasting conservation outcomes for the community.

During our temporary ownership of the forest, TCF will explore long-term roles and opportunities for the local rural community and the Passamaquoddy Tribe.

# From Our CFO, John Gilbert

Our forests are living legacies — vital ecosystems that sustain life, nurture communities, and fortify our climate resilience. Safeguarding these natural resources requires bold, innovative action.

As America's foremost champion of land protection, The Conservation Fund is uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between conservation and economic development, ensuring that our forests continue to fuel local economies, protect biodiversity and enrich our communities.

Our Green Bonds have demonstrated the power of strategic investment in conservation, but we're just getting started. To pioneer the next era of conservation, we're deepening alliances with mission-driven partners and investors, enabling us to acquire and conserve even more at-risk forests. These collaborations not only protect our environmental treasures but also support sustainable economic growth and strengthen the social fabric of the communities that depend on them.

The urgency of our mission demands even greater support. We are calling on visionaries, philanthropists and change-makers to join us in scaling our impact. Together, we can protect the environmental integrity, economic vitality and climate stability of one of America's most crucial resources — large working forests.

This is more than conservation. It's a movement to empower communities, drive sustainable growth, and inspire a future where people and nature thrive together.



John Gilbert  
Executive Vice President and CFO

- 1 Based on the U.S. EPA Integrated Climate and Land-Use Scenarios (ICLUS) data projections
- 2 [https://nafoalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Forest2Market\\_Economic\\_Impact\\_of\\_Privately-Owned\\_Forests\\_April2019.pdf](https://nafoalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Forest2Market_Economic_Impact_of_Privately-Owned_Forests_April2019.pdf)
- 3 The Outdoor Recreation Economy: Outdoor Industry Association [https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/OIA\\_RecEconomy\\_FINAL\\_Single.pdf](https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/OIA_RecEconomy_FINAL_Single.pdf), Pg. 15
- 4 <https://publications.wri.org/better-forests-better-cities/executive-summary#findings-from-the-scientific-literature>
- 5 (Spatial Data Credit: USDA Forest Service, 2019. Forests to Faucets 2.0 Spatial Dataset; Underlying Statistics Credit: Mack, Erika; Lilja, Rebecca; Claggett, Sally; Sun, Ge; Caldwell, Peter. 2022. Forests to Faucets 2.0: connecting forests, water, and communities. Gen. Tech. Rep. WO-99. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Washington Office. 32 p. <https://doi.org/10.2737/WO-GTR-99>)
- 6 <https://www.fs.usda.gov/research/sites/default/files/2022-04/hot-topic-carbon-status.pdf>
- 7 <https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-brief/forests-and-climate-change>
- 8 [https://outdoorrecreation.wi.gov/Documents/2022WIOOR%20Economic%20and%20Impact%20Report\\_spreads%20for%20web.pdf](https://outdoorrecreation.wi.gov/Documents/2022WIOOR%20Economic%20and%20Impact%20Report_spreads%20for%20web.pdf)
- 9 <https://www.amazingalabama.com/forest-products/>



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