

# We Grow Together

STORIES OF PEOPLE AND NATURE



DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND JUSTICE  
2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT

The Nature  
Conservancy 



## NATURE AND PEOPLE NEED ALLIES

As I reflect on the past year and the conversations I have had with teammates, partners, and community members around the world, it's clear that our conservation work is deeply enriched by the diversity of voices that inform our actions.

Over the past few months, I have met with First Nation partners in Canada, participated in a training session with women fire professionals, and explored TNC's Estate Little Princess Preserve in the U.S. Virgin Islands with our partners at the Society of Black Archaeologists, who are working to understand the lives of the enslaved Africans once forced to live and work on those lands. Through all of these conversations and many more, I have learned a lot about how far we have come—and how far we have to go—on our journey to fully embed diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in everything we do.

As part of that journey, I am proud to share The Nature Conservancy's first-ever Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) Annual Report. In the following pages, you will meet colleagues from across the globe contributing to this important work and read about meaningful collaborations, successes, and lessons learned. As we seek to center DEIJ values in our conservation work, we know we must also look inward to cultivate a workplace that encourages all of our colleagues to bring their unique perspectives, experiences, and history to everything we do.

Our 2030 goals are bold, and we know we cannot achieve them alone. This report features examples of the kind of authentic, intentional, and equitable partnerships we must build with diverse communities to advance our mission. For instance, you'll read about our work with the Seacoast Trust, a model for Indigenous-led conservation in Southeast Alaska; with Hunters of Color in New York, an organization working to increase BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) participation in hunting for the sake of conservation; and with Mangrove Market Meri in Papua New Guinea, a women-led initiative supporting mangrove conservation as well as economic and cultural empowerment.

The following stories are more than a recap of what we've done; this is a living document that acts as both a snapshot and a roadmap to guide us forward.

***Where we find success, we will keep growing and seek new ideas to keep evolving. Where we stumble, we will act thoughtfully and nimbly to do better. This work is a marathon, not a sprint, and I am grateful to all of you for being with us on this journey.***

**Jennifer Morris**  
Chief Executive Officer



## DIVERSE VOICES & SOLUTIONS MATTER

I am so honored to be part of The Nature Conservancy as we build up our organization to be more thoughtful, representative, equitable, and inclusive. Our global teams' hard work, meaningful collaborations, and lessons learned have brought new clarity to our collective path forward.

The strides that have been made this year—through challenges, difficulty, and burnout—are nothing short of astonishing. We have increased our investments in diversity, equity, and inclusion, developed metrics and data to find and address gaps, and pivoted when we needed to adapt or change. This could only be done with the dedication, voices, and actions of the many people, like yourselves, who've chosen to join us on this incredible journey. *Thank you.*

I am thrilled to share with you The Nature Conservancy's first-ever Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) Annual Report. This document represents more than our recent successes—it grounds us as we appreciate our people and communities and recognize we have more work to do to be better. Our TNC teams worldwide give me so much hope in our future as we strive to achieve our 2030 goals while listening and learning from one another. In this report, you will find stories from our staff about community-based and led conservation, important partnerships internally and externally, our Employee Resource Groups, and what DEI means to individuals.

When I look at the past year—both for the things we've accomplished and the ideals we are continuously working toward—I am filled with gratitude for this team's commitment, and the advancements we're making to address climate change and the world's complex environmental problems. Together, we will continue to grow and evolve our cultural competencies, face challenges head on, and create a welcoming workplace based on dignity and respect.

***Special thank you to those who shared their stories in this report and to you for reading and learning with us. Only as One Conservancy can we truly live our values and meet our ambitious internal and external goals.***

**James E. Page, Jr.**  
Chief Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer

# In Our Own Words

*We are so grateful to everyone who contributed stories, interviews, information gathering, and careful review for TNC's first-ever DEIJ Annual Report.*

We started with an ambitious goal: To magnify the people and groups advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) in TNC conservation and operations projects worldwide. Recognizing that TNC is often U.S.-centered, we asked for stories from our entire global community. **And you delivered.**

We were humbled by submissions from colleagues in Africa, Asia Pacific, Australia, Europe, and Latin America that embody our values and core competencies. The contributors described triumphs and challenges with a passion that only comes from people who understand our mission and its need for diverse perspectives, partners, and solutions.

This meaningful collaboration models *Together We Find a Way* and inspires our report's theme of growing together. As you read through these pages, you will first hear stories from colleagues actively infusing DEIJ values at TNC. Then, you will move on to learn how we partner on important conservation and operation initiatives worldwide.

We offer this report in appreciation and respect for our global communities, in keeping with living our values, and in celebration of the deeper understanding and action yet to come. **Thank you for joining us on this learning journey.**

**Please note:** Some report links are internal/TNC staff only.



*“On behalf of TNC’s Global Board of Directors, I want to thank everyone who is contributing to the work TNC is doing to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion internally and externally. Since we launched Living Our Values in 2019, I have seen incredible progress being made to improve TNC’s workplace wellbeing, community, and staff engagement. This effort is helping us to accomplish our 2030 Goals across the globe. Thank you to all the teams who have championed this work and live our values every day.”*

— Fran Ulmer, Chair, TNC Global Board of Directors

## LOOK FOR THESE CALLOUTS



### HOW WE COLLABORATE

See how TNC groups work together in important partnerships and initiatives.



Learn about staff’s DEI experiences at TNC and beyond.

### EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVES

Hear thoughts from the Executive Leadership Team.

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# Employee Resource Groups at TNC

© TNC Scene from ERG welcome video (2021)



Our TNC Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) play a vital role in keeping our workforce engaged, supported, and heard. These voluntary, organized groups of employees offer unique experiences for professional and personal growth, and they provide a space and network for staff to meet, interact, and learn with one another. Recently, they have helped employees find connection and community during the Covid-19 pandemic and racially charged events across the globe.

Over the past year, TNC has increased strategic guidance and operational support for the ERGs. As the new ERG Strategist, I'm honored to work with our dedicated, passionate, and thoughtful employees worldwide to ensure we are building on TNC's culture to be more inclusive and equitable. Thank you, ERG leaders, for your innovation, contributions, and your friendships. I am looking forward to our continued journey as allies for one another.

As you read more about each of our ERGs, I encourage staff to reach out and join any and all of these amazing groups!

**Lyzel Krebs**  
Employee Resource Group Strategist, TNC Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Want to learn more about our ERGs? [Watch this video.](#)

## GRASSROOTS EFFORT INSPIRES NEW ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER ERG

Following the Race and Racism Caucuses of 2020, a group of TNC colleagues began gathering to create a sense of community and solidarity among staff who identify as Asian and Pacific Islander. They planned Conservancy-wide events to celebrate Asian Pacific Islander Heritage month in May 2021 and the Mid-Autumn Festival in September 2021.

What started as an informal network evolved into a volunteer-led effort to create TNC's first Asian and Pacific Islander (API) ERG. With the primary goal to be inclusive of all Asian and Pacific Islander identities, organizers worked collaboratively for more than a year, engaging colleagues globally for intentional planning sessions.

Today, the group is excited to have filled key steering committee and co-lead positions with staff from across the globe, and its new leadership is now working to create a name, charter, and vision that would promote our diverse API cultures, provide support for our API colleagues, and promote API leaders within TNC.

### FOUNDING ERG MEMBER PERSPECTIVES



**“I am excited to amplify the large diaspora of API voices and cultures at TNC. With more mentorship and support, I would love to see API staff taking a larger seat at the table.”**

— Grace Kim, eLearning Designer, TNC Technology Learning Center



**“I'm blessed to have worked in many regions as a Vietnamese Canadian currently living in the United States. I hope to bring awareness, inclusiveness, diversity, and intersectionality to this ERG.”**

— Lucia Pham, Finance Lead, TNC Foundations

**“Since starting my career at TNC, and more recently amid the pandemic and rising anti-Asian violence, I've shared the desire to create a community and sense of belonging.”**

— Kathy Nguyen, Business Process Specialist, TNC Chief Conservation Office



**“No role is so big that you cannot learn from others, nor is any role so small that you cannot share with others.”**

— Martha Fransisca, HR Manager, TNC Asia Pacific



**“I joined the API ERG to help create a community where we can share our cultures broadly across the organization while learning from others.”**

— Maricar Boyle, Senior Associate Director of Philanthropy, TNC Asia Pacific



© TNC Comertown Prairie Pothole Preserve

## EVERGREEN HELPS COLLEAGUES REFRAME RETIREMENT PLANNING

Honoring longevity, cross-generational learning, and lifespan relevancy for successful post-career transitions | [evergreen@tnc.org](mailto:evergreen@tnc.org)



**EVERGREEN**  
Employee Resource Group

Deciding when and how to retire is complicated. Timing often hinges on finances, family needs, and relocation concerns—as well as increasingly intertwined personal-professional identities. The latter is especially true for TNC colleagues deeply committed to the Conservancy’s mission.

For these reasons and more, people are working longer, and in many cases putting off “cold turkey” retirement by transitioning to part-time work late in their career. With 15 percent of TNC staff now over the age of 56, EverGreen ERG is more committed than ever to helping colleagues find innovative, One Conservancy approaches to retirement planning that keep personal growth front and center.

*“I have worked with TNC for more than 25 years. Several years ago, I floated the idea of potentially scaling back, but I did not push for a real discussion until the death of my father last year. That brought home that none of us knows how long we have with the people we love—and to take the leap now of asking for what is meaningful to us in our lives.”*

— Newly part-time TNC employee

To learn more about EverGreen’s work, search these topics on the TNC Connect page:

- **Coda Program**
- **Flexible Staffing Resource Center**
- **Retirement Planning at TNC**

For its most recent initiative, EverGreen checked in with near- and post-retirement TNC staffers. Their resulting research, [Retire or Rewire? Thinking Through Your Personal Work Transition](#), features questions for long tenure employees contemplating eventual retirement:

- How long do I want to work, given my personal circumstances?
- Do I want to remain in my present position until I retire?
- Would I be interested in a different challenge for some period of time?
- Could I see myself working part time or even seasonally?
- What skills am I known for?
- What skills do I enjoy using most?
- What programs or projects would my skills most benefit?
- Would I like to work, remotely or in person, in a different region or business unit?

EverGreen’s research also inspired organizational-level questions for TNC leaders:

- Are position descriptions written to allow an interested, qualified person to transition?
- Do we manage benefits for part-time and seasonal workers with appropriate flexibility?
- Are we transparent and inclusive in offering transition opportunities to all employees?
- Are supervisors trained to respond appropriately to transition inquiries or suggestions?
- Do our policies for transitioning roles incorporate best practices?



### HOW WE COLLABORATE

Through flexible staffing, the **Coda Program** and its well-known Coda Fellowships feature allows TNC to move people, capacity, and expertise within the organization to anywhere in the world they are needed. Coda Fellowships allow any TNC program—and sometimes our key partners—to utilize the knowledge and time of TNC staff to get work done, while also providing valuable hands-on learning and professional development for those involved. Coda Fellowships and other flexible staffing arrangements truly embody the One Conservancy spirit and allow for greater collaboration across program and geographic boundaries.

EverGreen invites TNC staff at any stage of employment to reach out with questions and other feedback at [evergreen@tnc.org](mailto:evergreen@tnc.org).



*“I found the word ‘retirement’ difficult to embrace at first. I thought of it more as leaving TNC and going on to the next thing. My friends and colleagues, however, chimed in and said, ‘Dude, you’re retiring—embrace it!’ And I have.”*

— Recent TNC retiree

# LEAD DEMONSTRATES THE POWER OF BLACK VOICES AT TNC

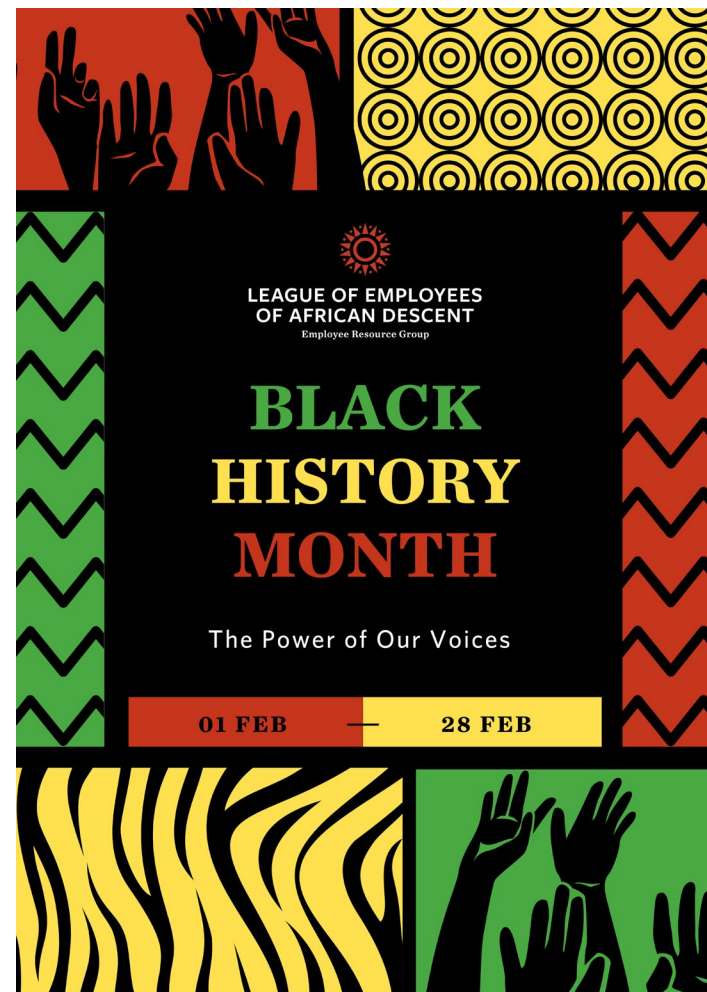
Engaging the talents and leadership potential of employees of African descent | [lead@tnc.org](mailto:lead@tnc.org)



After completing work with GDEI for the *TNC 2021 Race & Racism Caucuses Report*, the League of Employees of African Descent (LEAD) ERG renewed its focus on an identified need for TNC:

**To increase efforts to engage, uplift, and empower the voices of staff of African descent.**

To that end, LEAD kicked off 2022 with organization-wide celebrations of Black History Month. These events drew more than 700 participants, with constituent and ally interaction that resulted in LEAD adding five new steering committee members in the following months.



© TNC LEAD Black History Month poster (2022)

## FILM FRIDAYS

Throughout the month, LEAD highlighted Black contributions to global cinema with weekly watch parties showcasing films by directors of African descent.

- **Dreaming Whilst Black** – Adjani Salmon, Jamaica
- **Flight** – Kia Moses, Jamaica
- **Mango Wars** – Kyle Chin, Jamaica
- **Barroso** – Naira Soares, Brazil
- **Geruzinho** – Juliana Teixeira, Brazil



**“With new Steering Committee members joining LEAD, I’m excited by the direction, the global reach, and the potential of our team.**

**While each ERG maintains a unique focus, LEAD is dedicated to the interests of employees who self-identify as Black, African, African American, Caribbean, and/or of African descent. We realize that being Black is perceived and felt differently worldwide, and LEAD is here to support, learn, and share voices from all of our colleagues of African descent across the organization.”**

— Shawneece Hennighan, LEAD Co-lead and Talent & Development Manager, TNC Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

## LEADER OF COLOR SPEAKER SERIES

This series invited two renowned speakers to share lessons and discuss how their conservation journeys have evolved over time.

- **Thérèse N. Yarde, Ph.D.** is a Barbadian environmental engineer and freelance consultant whose broad-ranging work focuses on human relationships with environment. She assists with policy development, capacity building, project management, and planning for multinational groups including the UN Food and Agriculture Organization.
- **Cassander Titley-O’Neal** is an environmental consultant with a demonstrated history of assisting developers in the British Virgin Islands. Titley-O’Neal currently serves as Director of the National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands.

## BALANCING YOUR HEALTH

This hour-long session featured presentations and Q&A from leading clinical psychologists from Kingston, Jamaica-based **CENTRED**. Chalani Stiebel Lawton and Jessica Thompson work to enhance their clients’ psychological growth, social and emotional wellbeing, and overall potential.

**“As a tenured TNC staff person and one of the founding members of LEAD, I felt it was vital that Black employees have a strong voice within the organization. However, LEAD is more than an employee resource group—LEAD is family. In addition to helping the organization navigate the complexities of Black employees, LEAD is the place where I connect with individuals who look like me, understand my concerns, have walked my walk, and will look past my faults to see my needs. LEAD is inspiring, dedicated, and always ready to get things done. It doesn’t get any better than that!”**



— Regina Jackson, LEAD Advisor and Director of Office Management, TNC Arlington Office

Moving forward in 2022 and beyond, LEAD will continue engaging employees of African descent through ongoing events, inviting Black colleagues at TNC to share their conservation journeys and advice for reflecting, reconnecting, and recognizing ourselves in nature.



## EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVES

**“LEAD’s advocacy for the importance of Juneteenth, a holiday TNC now officially recognizes in the U.S., means a lot personally to me. I am grateful to all ERGs for their ongoing leadership in DEI and commitment to keeping staff supported, engaged, and informed. Together, we will continue to share knowledge and resources to ensure TNC is amplifying underrepresented voices and to build a more inclusive workplace.”**

**James Page, TNC Chief Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer**



© CHAD WIGGINS TNC works with the lineal and cultural descendants of the lands and waters of Kōhola on the Hawai'i Island's Kona coast. This work embodies many Indigenous biocultural principles and represents a strong resources management partnership in this iconic preserve connecting land and sea.

## NATIVE NETWORK EXPANDS TO HAWAIIAN COLLEAGUES AT TNC

Elevating TNC as a place where diverse cultures thrive for the good of the planet | [merg@tnc.org](mailto:merg@tnc.org)



**MULTICULTURAL**  
Employee Resource Group

The Multicultural ERG introduced the Native Network as a virtual gathering space to encourage connections between Indigenous staff at TNC. In 2021, the Hawai'i and Palmyra business units collaborated to replicate this effort with a specific focus on celebrating the unique history and biocultural significance of the Hawaiian Islands.

The Hawai'i and Palmyra Native Network builds TNC's capacity for engaging and integrating cultural context, history, knowledge, values, and practices in all aspects of conservation work. The group's stated *Guiding Principles* articulate its vision for a realignment of human activities and place in a relationship of reciprocal care that results in the co-prosperity of 'āina (land) and kānaka (people).

**“After participating in a few meetings of the Global Native Network and getting to share more deeply with our far-flung Indigenous TNC staff, we tried the model more locally, with the significant portion of native Hawaiian staff of the Hawai'i and Palmyra BU. It quickly revealed our shared ideas on how Indigenous knowledge, values, and practices might enhance our work here.”**

— Samuel M. 'Ohukani'ōhi'a Gon III, Ph.D.,  
MERG Steering Committee Member and  
Senior Scientist Cultural Advisor, TNC Hawai'i



### WE RECOGNIZE...

- The richness of Hawaiian culture, in all its tangible and intangible aspects, as a direct result of our biological and ecological richness.
- Hawai'i as the host culture and Hawaiian biocultural knowledge as the major focus of the group, while being inclusive of the value that all local community knowledge and traditions bring to conservation in Hawai'i.
- The great value of place-based cultural information built into our assessments, and the importance of creating technical systems to document sources of traditional and biocultural knowledge in the places we work.
- That cultural knowledge from one island, moku/ahupua'a, may not apply to others.



### WE SEEK...

- To have the greatest impact we can for aligning biocultural approaches with communities and partners, and for messaging with supporters and broader audiences.
- To shed researcher/expert classification biases and embrace Indigenous knowledge by including cultural knowledge-holders in the places we work.
- Community sources of local traditional knowledge everywhere we work.
- To join existing knowledge networks as a participating and contributing member to the benefit of the entire network, as we have in our marine programs, to come closer to the ancient knowledge networks of the konohiki.



### WE WORK...

- To avoid generalizations and be as specific as possible about place-based knowledge.
- To integrate TNC's science-driven focus with Indigenous knowledge.
- To protect sensitive traditional knowledge from appropriation and abuse and recognize intellectual knowledge property rights.
- To build and encourage building 'ōlelo (language) competency and fluency in our work and communications.
- To incorporate the context of the ahupua'a/moku, from summit into the sea, and build on its foundation of traditional knowledge in the places we work.
- To ensure the concentric concept of 'āina means our small-scale work is not to be ignored; it is the most powerful way to connect people to place and to the living elements of place.
- To expand collaborative management of terrestrial ecosystems in the same essence as we pursue marine collaborative management models (e.g., Hā'ena, Ka'ūpūlehu, and Mo'omomi).

© JIM PETRUZZI Healthy reefs like this one on Maui are more resilient to the effects of climate change.





© TNC Early morning over Montrose, Colorado, site of a TNC-Pepsico partner tour demonstrating forest and fire management and irrigation efficiency projects.

## NATURE'S PRIDE PARTNERS FOR LGBTQ+ PEOPLE GLOBALLY

Embracing inclusivity at TNC with respect to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression | [naturespride@tnc.org](mailto:naturespride@tnc.org)

It's no secret that celebrating Pride looks very different from place to place. For example, there is a sharp contrast between freedoms enjoyed by colleagues in the United States and those in parts of Asia Pacific, where LGBTQ+ identities are especially vulnerable to stigma, discrimination, and criminal prosecution.

To help level this field, TNC provides equitable benefits for all LGBTQ+ staff living, working, and traveling worldwide. These include same sex/same gender domestic partner health insurance stipends and guidelines for reporting harmful interactions. Until recently, these benefits were not always well-communicated, and at times have conflicted with local laws.



**“As a nonbinary person, it was daunting starting at a new organization and not knowing what to expect, but thanks to Nature's Pride I have found such a wonderful community of passionate LGBTQ+ people where I have learned to be confident in myself and my identity. It is my hope to be able to repay that gift by offering the same opportunity to all my fellow LGBTQ+ colleagues.”**

— August Walters, Nature's Pride Co-lead and TNC Senior Marketing Data Analyst

In 2021, Nature's Pride began partnering with the Asia Pacific Gender and Equity team to centralize and codify TNC's equitable supports for LGBTQ+ colleagues. Working collaboratively with the People, Legal, and Safety teams, the group created a living guidebook called [Addressing Equity, Privacy, and Safety for LGBTQ+ and Ally Staff](#), which:

- Defines the equity gap between TNC values and local laws
- Consolidates the principles outlined in TNC's LGBTQ+ Global Equity & Safety and International Travel Assistance handbooks
- Highlights equitable benefits and resources available to TNC employees
- Connects employees in need with appropriate channels for support

Representing the first effort of its kind for TNC, Nature's Pride will periodically review and update the [Addressing Equity, Privacy, and Safety for LGBTQ+ and Ally Staff](#) document as new information becomes available. In the meantime, staff are encouraged to share questions, suggestions, and other input by reaching out to [naturespride@tnc.org](mailto:naturespride@tnc.org).



© CHERYL MILLETT Outreach and Volunteer Specialist Ginny Hamilton celebrates at the Polk Pride Festival and the 50th anniversary of Tiger Creek Preserve.



**KATE BISHOP (she/her)**  
TNC IT Manager, Western U.S. and Canada

Kate Bishop is a former co-lead of the Nature's Pride Employee Resource Group, where she served for three years. Her work at TNC gives her the opportunity to explore ways her interests, including human rights, psychology, and the environment, intersect—and how DEI efforts impact them all.

[Click here](#) to watch an interview with Kate.

**Q: What most excites you in your work right now?**

**A: I am leading a project team for Nature's Pride to implement a global LGBTQ+ Ally Network. We work to foster a culture of inclusion within TNC, so employees can feel safe coming out or talking about their LGBTQ+ family members—even if they live and work in a less accepting area of the world.**

**Q: What excites you outside of TNC?**

**A: I've started to work towards a degree in psychology. I feel a strong kinship with Carl Rogers, who taught unconditional positive regard, authenticity, and respect for others in all interactions. A lot of DEI is allyship, which I've always felt comes down to curiosity mixed with empathy (not sympathy). Communication is a core part of this work, so I am always seeking to understand different perspectives and create meaningful dialogue. We all have a unique story to tell, and I'm eager to continue learning in my classes, at work, and from everyone I meet.**



# STIGMAFREE RAISES DIALOG TO EXPLORE ACCESSIBILITY ON TNC LANDS

Recognizing the value that people with all abilities bring to conservation | [stigmafree@tnc.org](mailto:stigmafree@tnc.org)



**STIGMAFREE**  
Employee Resource Group

In March, StigmaFree ERG partnered with TNC Legal and Leveraging Our Lands to host a two-day panel discussion entitled “Expanding Accessibility On Our Lands,” which focused on the importance of creating inclusive and accessible public spaces.

The virtual event drew 184 attendees and featured speakers from throughout TNC and partner organizations who explored topics related to installing accessibility features on TNC preserves, engaging with the disability community, and legal accessibility requirements for areas open to the public.

Organizers responded to community interest in bringing these topics to the forefront, with an overarching goal of enabling learning and collaboration across TNC. Through guided small-group conversations and breakout sessions, participants were able to connect deeply with other participants, speakers, hosts, and panelists.



© JERRY MONKMAN/ECOPHOTOGRAPHY Max Morelli of Opportunity Networks enjoying the All Persons Trail with his clients, Drew and Kevin.

The first day of the webinar covered significant ground, with presentations focused on how accessibility laws apply to TNC preserves, offices, and conservation easement properties. Presentations and independent research resources targeted questions including:

- **What is TNC doing to assess compliance?**
- **What laws apply to TNC preserves, offices, conservation easements, and public areas?**
- **What requirements apply in trails, picnic areas, campsites, and other outdoor spaces?**
- **When must wheelchairs and other power-driven mobility devices be permitted?**
- **What are the rules governing service animals?**
- **When must sign language interpreters and other auxiliary aids and services be provided?**



© ROBERT FINDLING/TNC Guided nature hike in the Santa Fe Canyon Preserve.

On day two, attendees heard strategies for engaging people with disabilities to address barriers to nature and conservation access. Throughout the series, presenters shared personal challenges and unique solutions uncovered in their accessibility work at Raven Ridge Natural Area, Santa Fe Canyon, Nag’s Head Woods, and other TNC preserves.

**“Stigma Free was delighted to have identified accessibility to our preserves as an important issue for our organization and to have gathered a diverse team of colleagues to design and facilitate the two-day workshop. It was inspiring to see the level of enthusiasm and commitment from TNC staff to making our lands and waters more accessible.”**

— Terry Sullivan, StigmaFree Executive Sponsor and TNC New Mexico State Director



## EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVES

“I am especially grateful to our Employee Resource Groups who are bringing together staff from across the organization to support our TNC community. This report features some of the wonderful work these groups and others are doing across programs and geographies to learn from one another and share ideas and resources for building an inclusive workplace.”

**Jennifer Morris**, TNC Chief Executive Officer



© VINS/TNC Ana Jimenez-Omana (TNC Kansas), Christina Wayne (TNC Gulf of Mexico), Melissa Wahl (The SAVE Farm), Kelley Hamrick (TNC Climate Policy), Amanda Perron (TNC Palmyra), Erik Oberg (TNC California), Stephanie Koder (TNC Bezos Earth Fund)

## VINS SUPPORTS VETERAN OPPORTUNITIES TO SAVE FARMS AND THE PLANET

*Celebrating the unique skills, experiences, and contributions of global veterans, their families, and allies at TNC | [vins@tnc.org](mailto:vins@tnc.org)*

Sustainable farming benefits the entire planet, and it holds special value for some military veterans. Learning farming skills like growing wheat, raising cattle, tending beehives, cultivating orchards helps veterans gain valuable opportunities to grow in their careers, earn income, and heal from physical and mental trauma that sometimes result from military service.

That's one mission behind [Servicemember Agricultural Vocation Education \(SAVE\) Farm](#), a nonprofit organization that extends agriculture training and other services to veterans and their families at its 308-acre training site near Fort Riley, Kansas. Twice annually, SAVE farm convenes a student cohort for its 440-hour certification program. Curriculum ranges from classroom learning to hands-on training, with therapy, rehabilitation, and peer support features designed specifically for veterans.



**VETERANS  
IN NATURE'S SERVICE**  
Employee Resource Group

Kansas State Director and Veterans In Nature's Service (VINS) ERG Executive Sponsor Rob Manes, along with TNC staff in Kansas and Nebraska, saw the value in backing SAVE's mission to support veterans in regenerative agriculture. In 2020, TNC staff learned that the owners of SAVE's leased training site planned to sell the land. Recognizing the improvements SAVE had made to the land, as well as the importance of having a stable training site, TNC partnered with The Conservation Fund to allow SAVE to purchase the property.



© DANIEL J. VIDETICH Ross Wahl, Co-manager, SAVE Farm

With the training facilities secure, TNC now works in partnership with SAVE to advance their mission and provide training in regenerative agriculture, water conservation techniques, and efficient fertilizer application geared toward building healthy soils and reducing water pollution.

*“Coming from a farming background and being a veteran myself, it's wonderful to see the work SAVE Farm is doing to help servicemembers transition into sustainable farming careers.”*



— Erik Oberg, VINS Steering Committee Member and IT Manager, TNC California

### UNITED IN DEFENSE OF OUR PLANET

All over the world, veterans and military personnel are trained and centered around environmental objectives. Yet these individuals often struggle to connect meaningfully with conservation work. VINS strives to bridge this gap by honoring and elevating veteran contributions worldwide, while working locally to attract, retain, and leverage their unique skills and perspectives in conservation.



*“I served as a Leading Seaman Naval Police Coxswain with the Royal Australian Navy from 1988 to 1995. As a veteran, I recognize and appreciate the immense value that military service people bring to global organizations like TNC.”*

— Alison Rowe, VINS Executive Sponsor and Managing Director, TNC Australia



# WIN EVENTS AND PROGRAMS COMBAT WORKPLACE GENDER BIAS

Advocating for systems change to further gender equity and create opportunities for women worldwide | [win@tnc.org](mailto:win@tnc.org)



*“Being a WINner means we are part of a supportive network of women and allies that recognizes and stand up for everyone who identifies as a woman, understanding*

*all intersectionalities and different realities, impacts, proportions, and needs. It means having the privilege of working side by side with women you admire and who inspire you every day, shaping the equitable and inclusive future we want to see in our global workplace. Being a WINner means knowing that together we are stronger. Go WINners!”*

— Karina Vega Parra, WIN Co-lead and TNC Donor Relations Manager



## WOMEN IN NATURE

Employee Resource Group

On March 7th and 8th, TNC colleagues from across the conservancy joined Women In Nature (WIN) ERG for Break the Bias, a two-day observance of [International Women's Day](#) that featured presentations on gender bias in the workplace. Women speakers shared personal stories to raise awareness, while highlighting the importance of allyship and other tools and resources for overcoming bias.

All TNC staff members are encouraged to access recordings and information from this event via the [WIN Connect page](#), with highlights that include:

- [International Women's Day Resources](#) for planning internal meetings, events, and gatherings at TNC.
- [Blog post](#) featuring a personal story of overcoming bias from WIN Steering Committee Member Sarah Gammage.
- [Video series](#) highlighting personal stories from Julie Robinson, Balj Batjargal, Grace McMurry, and Samuel Barreto.
- [Article](#) co-authored by Meg Bresnahan and Robyn James, which examines the role of pervasive global violence against women in conservation and offers practical guidance for providing survivor-centered, trauma-informed support.

© IAN PATTERSON/ TNC Molly Payne Wynne wants her young daughter to see women in science positions. “I want her to know she can be anything she wants to be.”



© JENNA ALEXANDER



### MEN AS ALLIES (MAA)

Marking TNC's 70th anniversary in October, WIN partnered with MAA to present [The Early Influencers: Celebrating Pivotal Women in TNC History](#) for more than 280 global colleagues.



### INSPIRATIONAL STORIES

The Mexico and Northern Central America (MNCA) Local Women in Nature (L-WIN) has compiled [inspirational stories about women](#) leading the way for a more sustainable planet.



### A LEADER FOR HER COMMUNITY

[Habiba Tadicha](#) was the first woman elected chair of a Northern Rangelands Trust-member conservancy and is now the vice chair of NRT's Council of Elders. “I became a leader because I saw that women are being left behind.”



### INVOLVING WOMEN IN CONSERVATION

Robyn James, Gender Advisor for TNC in Asia Pacific, [helps increase capacity for rural women](#) making conservation decisions that impact their lives and their communities.



© WIN/TNC During an April 2022 visit to Pará State, Brazil, TNC CEO Jen Morris met with local staff, L-WIN Brazil members, and other women leaders at the Amazon Iconic Place. Morris spoke about the important social impact of TNC's work with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities. L-WIN Brazil will apply that knowledge to its daily work in the field via a Gender Diagnosis series of learning sessions.



© YEP/TNC Staff members meet for the YEP Virtual Storytelling Workshop.

## YEP STORYTELLING WORKSHOP INSPIRES CAREER GROWTH

**Leveraging the potential of future generations by creating a culture that enables them to feel heard, accepted, and valued | [yep@tnc.org](mailto:yep@tnc.org)**

In October, the Young and Emerging Professionals (YEP) ERG at TNC held an interactive two-day workshop, “Enhancing Your Personal Brand Through Storytelling.” This event was the first in a new skills development series geared toward providing relevant training, resources, and guidance to support employees in their career journey.

Approximately 25 attendees took part in the event, engaging in presentations, self-reflection exercises, break-out groups, and Q&A sessions developed and facilitated by YEP allies, Francisco Matos and Bronwen Bulter, and YEP Steering Committee members, Alyssa Melone and Amrita Mahabir.

Find recordings from the two-day workshop [here](#) and [here](#).



**“Personal branding is an ongoing process of taking the time to understand and communicate your authentic self and capabilities. Sharing stories can bring your unique brand to life in a fun, relatable, and engaging way. The fusion of professional branding and storytelling was therefore an interesting and perfect fit for this workshop.”**

— Amrita Mahabir, YEP Steering Committee Member and Conservation Community Specialist and Networking Officer, TNC Eastern Caribbean

The goal of the event was two-fold:

- 1 Share knowledge and content with attendees to sharpen storytelling acumen and uncover their personal brand by deep-diving into their values, strengths, traits, and personal stories.**
- 2 Provide valuable tools for articulating and presenting authentic self through memorable, high-impact stories to consciously shape professional reputation and image.**

Organizers intentionally chose a small-group format to encourage deeper sharing and community building. In addition to enabling professional and career development, organizers hope the series will strengthen a sense of community Conservancy-wide that allows all YEPs to feel more connected and genuinely supported.

**The group is currently reviewing feedback, and new events are in the works with possible themes that include:**

- Overcoming Imposter Syndrome
- Eliminating Self-doubt & Building Confidence
- Navigating Challenging Work Relationships
- The Art of Networking and Building Professional Rapport
- Crafting the Perfect Résumé and Cover Letter
- Fighting Burnout with Focus
- Planning & Prioritizing to Boost Productivity
- Career Mentorship and Coaching

### ATTENDEE REACTIONS

**“I really enjoyed the interactive nature of the workshop, the engaging and important content, and the overall atmosphere created by the YEP leads and presenters.”**

**“Thank you for hosting. Storytelling is such an important part of our work at TNC and something donors and trustees ask about all the time—now we can apply them to help tell our stories.”**

**“This was one of my first events as a new employee. The presentations were great, and it was good to see colleagues around the world actively participating.”**



© YEP/TNC Members attend a retreat at TNC’s Hart Prairie Preserve (2019).



# Building an Inclusive Workplace

© TNC Scene from ERG welcome video (2021)



As we look ahead and work together to achieve our ambitious 2030 Goals, we know our future work will thrive because of our teams, our diverse backgrounds and perspectives, and our focus on an equitable workplace of inclusion and wellbeing. Our goal is for TNC to be an organization where our staff can bring their whole authentic self to work each day, and we celebrate and learn from our differences.

At TNC, we are committed to creating a workplace culture where people feel a real sense of belonging and mutual respect during each interaction. I believe that meaningful, intentional work with our colleagues in a diverse, supportive, and safe environment contributes to a fulfilling life, promotes higher employee engagement, and provides an overall positive experience for every employee.

We continue moving our work forward thanks to the dedication of each of our employees and community members. We acknowledge that our staff have increased motivation to do great work when their contributions are recognized and valued. I am fully committed to supporting our employees and strengthening a workplace culture of trust, respect, and appreciation for all people.

**Sheryl Trim**  
Director, TNC Employee Relations and Engagement

## DATA STORIES DRIVE ONE CONSERVANCY VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The facts that shape our world often appear as news stories, gathered, written, and shared by outlets around the globe. TNC's Global HR Systems and Data team are reporters in their own right, capturing, organizing, analyzing, and sharing a vast amount of self-reported data every day. These data paint a picture of DEI—who we are in age, experience level, socioeconomic background, race, country of origin, sexual orientation, neurocapability, and much more.

In other words, the data stories that emerge can give us a reliable means for anticipating our needs across geographic boundaries and providing conscientious support at every career level.

Given the volume, sensitivity, and progressively changing nature of these types of data, reporting and analysis require a deeply collaborative approach. IT's Data Services team partnered with GDEI and HR Systems and Data to understand the nuances of how these data are collected and defined. While ensuring the protective handling of all personal data, Data Services compiled a robust data model enhanced with a layer of business intelligence, as well as an extensive dashboard informed by business definitions and calculated measures. Most especially when working with data that are so personal, quantitative reports only represent part of the story when evaluating change over time. For these reasons and more, the data team works closely with a range of internal partners, sharing knowledge and best practices at every phase.

By embracing data storytelling in this collaborative way, TNC gains not only reliable benchmarks for monitoring current progress and performance against other global organizations, but a nuanced picture we can use to remain transparent, accountable, and DEI-focused as we scale unprecedented growth for the future.



**“Data is meant to be actionable, and the ultimate impact is using the data at our fingertips to make informed decisions in a meaningful**

**and efficient way. Collaborating with our many internal partners has been a great exercise in knowledge sharing and automating processes behind the scenes to produce reliable DEI dashboards.”**

— Sofia Hayauddin, Senior Manager, TNC Global HR Systems and Data



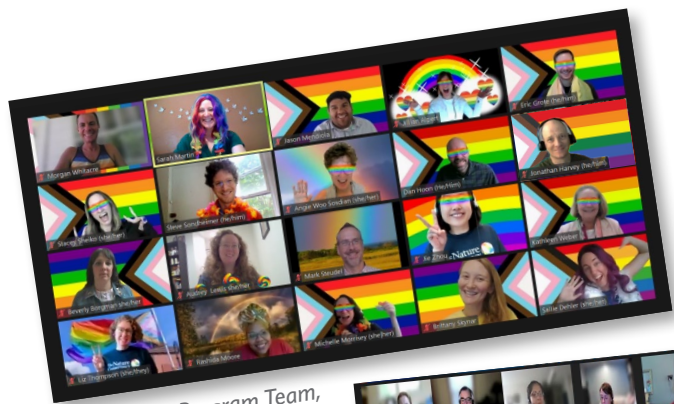
### EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVES

**“**TNC's People Team is dedicated to listening to our staff and responding with intention across internal teams. We are using and developing our Human Resource tools and trainings to better support and retain staff, while also engaging within diverse candidate pools that reflect the communities where we work. Our goal is to build a culture of appreciation, commitment, and wellbeing at TNC.”

**Michael Tetreault,**  
TNC Chief People Officer

**“Learning the business context for any data can be invaluable in deciding how to visualize and present the information in the most clear and accessible way. The collaboration and iteration on this project ultimately resulted in a stronger end-product fit for the objective of advancing transparency and accountability in how TNC shapes and manages the workforce.”**

— Ashley Craighill, Associate Director, TNC Business Intelligence and Analytics



Loyal Donor Program Team,  
TNC Gift Planning



ERG Communications Call



Drag Bingo hosted by Nature's Pride ERG (2022)

## CELEBRATING WITH PRIDE



Each June, people across the world gather to celebrate Pride, which recognizes the struggles and contributions of LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and all the other gender identities and sexual orientations used by members of the community) people to making our world—and conservation—more inclusive for all.

Guided by our Nature's Pride ERG and many colleagues across TNC, we want to use our voice to celebrate the strength that diversity brings to the mission of protecting the lands and waters on which ALL life depends.

For our organization, this means including more diverse perspectives with different backgrounds at the decision-making table earlier and more often. It means pausing to listen and learn from the communities we serve as we are working to solve urgent problems facing our planet. It means denouncing homophobic practices and policies that harm and compromise the identities and rights of LGBTQ+ peoples. At TNC, we recognize we have more to do and understand to better embody our values, and we thank the LGBTQ+ community for advocating for and modeling diversity, equity, and inclusion.

TNC is proud to work with and support LGBTQ+ community members, colleagues, and partners. Together, we are working with respect and integrity to be allies to people from all backgrounds and communities, so our organization and conservation efforts can be more inclusive of all.



## CULTURAL AWARENESS PROMPTS NEW DEI ACTION PLAN FOR BRAZIL

Fifty-six percent of Brazil's population identifies as Black or mixed race, yet those demographics are reflected in only three percent of TNC Brazil staff. In response to this disparity, business unit leaders secured funding from GDEI to develop a two-phase DEI Action Plan, which specifically targets increased racial diversity as the first step in a larger awareness journey.

### PHASE 1


Organizers hosted a series of workshops, gathering demographic data and stakeholder input to better understand cultural makeup and DEI opportunities. A need soon emerged to revamp recruiting and hiring to focus efforts more intentionally within Black and mixed-race candidate communities.

### PHASE 2

In addition to developing a long-term DEI Action Plan, Brazil leaders enlisted a trusted local consulting firm to plan events and actions for increased staff engagement and cultural awareness:

 **Webinar featuring staff presentations for Brazilian Day of People with Disabilities**

 **Staff-wide DEI Survey**

 **Monthly newsletters and other sharable materials that celebrate diverse holidays and observances, employee milestones, and more**

 **Unconscious Bias Workshop**

 **Employee-led Rainbow Hour networking session in celebration of Pride Month (see below)**

*“Since starting this work, the Black population at TNC has increased 20 percent. In order to achieve our global expectations around DEI, the work and change needs to begin in our own backyard. When people start their learning journey in their country/community with their people, it's easier to reflect and shift the way they do things. Starting with small actions and working as a collective can have a huge impact.”*



— Caroline K. Caggiani, Regional DEI Project Manager, TNC Latin America



### EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVES

“As a relatively new member of TNC, I am committed to finding diverse talent pools to bring into our teams and drive progress towards our 2030 goals. Our impact investing, carbon markets, and corporate engagement teams all present interesting opportunities for folks in business schools, finance programs, and traditional science programs to do innovative work. We have started and will remain focused on tapping networks of historically Black, Native American, Hispanic, Asian, and economically challenged communities that can join our team and make us better informed and more effective. That is my commitment.”

**Matthew Arnold**, Global Head, TNC Impact Finance and Markets



Colorado Business Unit DEI Initiative Team

## LIVING OUR VALUES COLLABORATION SPARKS LASTING DEI IMPACT

In 2019, TNC launched Living Our Values (LOV), an internal initiative that focused on shifting priorities, so that how we work together is as important as what we do. Turning intentions into action around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) emerged as one top priority of the effort.

With the ultimate goal of bringing meaningful progress in DEI integration, LOV paired two business units and challenged them to work collaboratively to uncover and name barriers to success. In total, eight units opted into this pilot mentorship program, with four units—Rhode Island/Connecticut and Colorado/Oregon—completing an in-depth partnership.

**“The Colorado business unit has been involved in DEI work for many years, particularly through our cities work, conservation efforts with Tribal Nations, and partnerships with organizations focused on inspiring future conservation leaders. Having the Oregon business unit serve as our mentor for the Living Our Values partnership gave our DEI work deeper roots. We are thankful to the Oregon staff for their partnership, as it helped catalyze our DEI efforts in new and exciting ways.”**

— Carlos Fernandez, Colorado State Director

Colorado was eager to learn and build on the DEI framework their Oregon counterparts established prior to entering the pilot program. Oregon’s journey included forming a DEI Working Group in 2016 and creating DEI Action Plans for **FY19** and **FY20-21**. The team is finalizing their next action plan for FY22-25, in tandem with Oregon’s most recent strategic plan.

Initially, Oregon was to serve as Colorado’s mentor, but it was soon clear the partnership would be a true and mutually beneficial exchange. Staff and trustees from both programs convened regularly throughout the yearlong partnership, holding learning sessions on a variety of conservation-related topics. The range of combined perspectives helped both teams form relationships they will continue to rely on in learning and problem-solving for years to come.

Following the partnership, both teams quickly began building on exciting takeaways. In one immediate outcome, Oregon’s areas of focus and **Action Plan blueprint** guided efforts by Colorado to engage 80% of staff and launch its first-ever DEI Action Plan in January 2021.

The Colorado DEI Action Plan’s ambitious goals and strategies will elevate the values of diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice across the business unit, and have in turn shaped and inspired Oregon’s approach to creating its next DEI Action Plan.

**Watch** as members of the Colorado and Oregon DEI Initiative teams reflect on their year-long and continuing partnership.

**“Working with our colleagues in Colorado was a great experience, as always. Although we entered into this partnership with the expectation that Oregon would be mentoring the Colorado business unit, we ended up mutually benefiting in ways we hadn’t anticipated. It was especially powerful for our board members to speak with each other. Inspired by Colorado’s Building the Board of the Future, our board has now adopted and implemented one as well.”**

— Jim Desmond, TNC Oregon State Director

### DEI AREAS OF FOCUS

-  Conservation
-  Invest & Inspire
-  Procurement
-  Staff Engagement & Inclusion
-  Volunteer Leadership



Oregon Business Unit DEI Initiative Team



## WO DEVELOPMENT EXPANDS ORGANIZATIONAL DEI FOCUS

Last year, WO Development made exciting strides toward cultivating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive fundraising environment for our colleagues, volunteers, and donors at all levels.

These efforts are anchored in the Living Our Values (LOV) internal initiative that TNC launched in 2019, with initial steps that included developing a Fundraiser Bill of Rights. Among the first such documents in conservation, the bill of rights reaffirms an organizational commitment to providing a workplace and culture where people feel safe, respected, and empowered in carrying out TNC's mission.

**Since gathering feedback and insight from colleagues across TNC, leaders designated Discrimination and Harassment Task Forces and began creating a DEI Action Plan that centers on these building blocks:**



**Recruiting, hiring, and onboarding**



**Creating a culture of trust and inclusion**



**Diversifying volunteer and donor engagement**



**Improving support for colleagues who experience harassment and discrimination**



**“My hope is that through our DEI work, we learn to have honest, open communications with one another. We won't have meaningful change until we all feel safe expressing ourselves knowing that we will be truly heard and treated with respect and dignity.”**

— Jennifer Franer, Trust and Inclusion Task Force Member and Grant Administrator, TNC WO Development

### THOMAS BRACKEEN (he/him) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Lead, TNC WO Development

Thomas Brackeen joined TNC in 2012 and plays an instrumental role in the WO Development DEI Action Plan. Thomas is passionate about faith-based conservation and currently oversees TNC's partnership with Green the Church, an initiative that educates primarily African American congregations in underserved communities about environmental justice, climate change, and sustainable conservation practices.

[Click here](#) to watch an interview with Thomas.

**Q: What do you appreciate about this project?**

**A: I personally have been inspired by this project's collaborative efforts. It's not just about Arlington Office Development; this project has involved many diverse chapters, as well as partners from outside the organization. We are collectively thinking about DEI in all different aspects and seeing the impact we can make together.**

**Q: What is one area of improvement for the DEI Action Plan?**

**A: One challenge is this work takes a lot of time, but we don't want to take over 20 years to plan. We want to see change sooner rather than later, and that requires being more intentional in our approach and making sure we're thinking about and preparing for 2030 and beyond.**



## EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVES

**“**This is just the beginning. We have accomplished a great deal—yet we recognize that we have much more to do to make TNC more equitable, inclusive, safe, and people-focused. It's inspiring to be a part of the progress led by our Discrimination and Harassment Task Forces, and I look forward to working with our colleagues across the globe to ensure we truly live our values.”

**Tom Neises, TNC Chief Development Officer**

## TNC SUPPORTS GEORGIA ANTI-HATE CRIMES LEGISLATION

In 2020, Georgia was one of the few states in the country without a hate crimes law. The racially motivated murder of Ahmaud Arbery in coastal Georgia heightened awareness and discussion of hate crimes, creating an opportunity to secure bipartisan support to enact a hate crimes law.

Through DEI discussions within the TNC Georgia chapter, BIPOC staff and volunteers shared that the threat of bias violence factored into their decisions about venturing into forests, parks, and other natural areas. Although taking a position on a hate crimes law was an unusual step for TNC, the Georgia chapter saw their statement aligning with TNC's values and mission. Today, [this statement](#) continues influencing other TNC chapters to consider similar commitments and conversations.



© MARK GODFREY/TNC Longleaf pine near Ft. Benning



## HOW WE COLLABORATE

Teammates from **Ethics, Compliance, and Privacy (ECP), the People Team, Employee Engagement, GDEI, and Legal** participate in a weekly call that is focused on improving and understanding TNC's culture. This meeting provides an opportunity for each team to share knowledge and identify trends that are starting to surface across the organization, and to benefit from the perspectives of other functional experts in considering how to handle them. In addition, this group collaborates on joint initiatives such as the Microbehavior Awareness campaign in early FY22.

If you'd like to suggest a topic to this group, please send your ideas to [GDEI@TNC.org](mailto:GDEI@TNC.org).

**“As a global team, ECP provides inclusive support and guidance by serving as a partner to all colleagues from all backgrounds around the world. My team and I are committed to upholding our shared values of diversity, equity, and inclusion as part of our work toward a culture of integrity and a place of belonging for everyone at TNC and beyond.”**



— Damaris Kilaka, Ethics, Compliance, and Privacy Director, TNC Africa and India



# OFFICE OF INVESTMENTS WORKS TO DIVERSIFY TNC ENDOWMENT

It's an uncomfortable truth for organizations of every scope and size: Women and People of Color are dramatically underrepresented in the investment management industry.

In fact, [research by the Knight Foundation](#) shows women- and minority-owned firms each manage only 0.7 percent of capital across the asset management industry at large. Meanwhile, results from the Investment Company Institute/McLagan U.S. Asset Management [Diversity and Inclusion Survey](#) found that while women comprise 42 percent of the asset management industry's workforce:

**Only 25%** of executive-level employees **are women**

**Non-white individuals** comprise **31%** of the asset management industry as a whole, **and only 16% of executives**

The Office of Investments (OOI) at TNC stands out as a rare exception. This group has made important strides in recent years to ensure representation at every level—from analytics to the C-suite—and these measures are just the beginning.



**“Diversity is core not only to everything we do, but to who we are. Collectively, our team has lived on four distinct continents, and many of us were born on a continent other than North America. This allows us to bring critical diversity of thought to our decision-making and management of TNC’s endowment and other long-term assets.”**

— Bola Olusanya, TNC Chief Investment Officer

## DEI VALUES AT THE CORE OF TOP-DOWN ADVANCEMENT

The OOI is responsible for managing TNC’s long-term investments and endowment pools totaling more than \$3.7 billion (figure as of March 31, 2022). Since insourcing investment functions beginning in 2020, the OOI has focused on diversifying TNC’s investment portfolio with dramatic and inclusive changes to policies and process, as well as due diligence in hiring and promotion.

In February 2022, with oversight from the TNC Global Board Investment Committee, the OOI added DEI language to TNC’s governing investment document, known as the *Investment Policy Statement*, or IPS. The IPS now includes formal guidelines for defining underrepresented communities and promoting women and non-white males via TNC’s investments, with practices that include:



**Intentionally hiring investment managers with diverse ownership, defined as firms with 33% or more of the equity held by women, non-white males, and/or underrepresented minorities.**



**Encouraging investment managers to hire, train, and mentor women, non-white males, and/or underrepresented minorities, especially on their investment teams thereby increasing the pipeline of diverse junior investment talent.**



**Investing in strategies that seek to empower underrepresented minorities with the tools, resources, and financial capital to “vote their wallets.”**



© ALEX SNYDER Office of Investments Team (2022)

## DIVERSITY ASSESSMENT DRIVES STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Moving forward, the OOI will also continually seek firms with diverse senior leadership, as well as those working to empower underrepresented minorities. Due diligence in this effort will entail surveying senior firm leadership with diversity-related questions.

“Not only does this signal the importance of diversity for asset allocators like the OOI,” said TNC Chief Investment Officer and native Nigerian Bola Olusanya. “It allows the OOI to draw conclusions on the thoughtfulness of an investment manager with regards to diversity, tracking efforts, and expectations over time.”

To ensure accountability, the OOI will onboard a dedicated DEI-tracking platform in the coming months to evaluate all current TNC portfolio investment managers through the lens of diversity. Resulting data will allow the OOI to make informed portfolio decisions and increase investment diversity on behalf of TNC.

“These measures are designed to diversify TNC’s investment portfolio, but it doesn’t end there,” Olusanya notes. “We intend to share the collected information, as well as our goals and progress. For TNC, our goal is to ensure that our investment portfolio is reflective of the communities we serve. Ultimately, we are targeting increased diversity across the asset management industry at large.”



## EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVES

“Creating a culture of DEI has to be driven from the top of any organization, and I approached this challenge by developing a leadership team that embraces the value that diverse backgrounds, cultures, lifestyles, experiences, and education bring to creating impactful solutions for the broader TNC team that we serve. Each department leader within Global Finance and IT has incorporated DEI as part of their strategies and as a result, this organization is vastly different from when I joined in 2018.”

**Leonard Williams, TNC Chief Finance and Administrative Officer**



## OHIO DONORS EXEMPLIFY DIVERSE GIVING OPTIONS

Jeff Chaddock and his husband Mark Morrow are two Ohio-based philanthropists who have found a unique way to maximize their charitable giving for diverse causes. Inspired by their dual commitments to equitable conservation and the Appalachian region, the pair recently hosted TNC and supporters at their home. Later, they pledged a legacy gift of \$1,000,000 to both TNC's Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion program and the Appalachia Program. Mark and Jeff are inspired by the great work that TNC is forging at the intersection of equity and inclusion for people, and particularly in Appalachia, where global issues like climate change and water access disproportionately impact communities.

**“The Nature Conservancy is, no question, the most critical and profound initiative we could support at this juncture of our giving. Without it, all else may not be possible, and therefore we are very pleased to prioritize TNC and their Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives in our current and planned giving.”**

— Statement from Mark and Jeff



Jeff Chaddock and Mark Morrow

**RUPA DATTA (she/her)**  
*Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice, TNC Northeast Division, USA*

Rupa Datta was a member of the original Living Our Values team at TNC and was a primary author of that team's report, which now serves as a guide for the worldwide organization.

Rupa is also currently one of the 30 Equity Leadership Fellows selected by the Rhode Island Foundation and a Board Member for the Rhode Island Environmental Education Association.

**Q: What most excites you in your work right now?**

**A: This is a new position that is unique to not just the division but also to the global organization. With this comes the excitement of learning new things as well as the challenges of shaping the role. My focus is building relationships across the region and across functions including GDEI; Ethics, Compliance, and Privacy; and the People Team.**

**I strongly believe in building meaningful relationships to make this work a success. I thrive on serving others to be successful and creating a brave community. This job allows me to serve staff and build them up to be brave and courageous while being compassionate to each other.**

**Being on this learning journey with leaders and staff—creating a more diverse and equitable organization—it is all very exciting. TNC's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice makes me hopeful even though I know the road may be difficult and messy.**



## TRUSTEES FIND NEW WAYS TO TURN VISION INTO ACTION

TNC's dedicated network of over 1,500 volunteer leaders truly embodies our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. As TNC trustees, these leaders offer unique perspectives that shape and build on our collective vision and mission for a sustainable future. Through proactive collaboration, trustees move our mission forward with individual strides and cumulative impact.

As our trustees continue to bring their expertise and energy to our local, regional, and global efforts, these individuals match TNC goals with ever-increasing dedication. We are incredibly grateful for their support.

**Brandi Morris**  
*Associate Director, TNC Trustee Program*

**“By applying an intersectional approach to conservancy and environmentalism, we can work to repair the impact traditional conservancy has had on aboriginal/native populations. We must work to become as inclusive as possible in any and all TNC initiatives.”**

— Pedro Altagracia, Trustee, TNC New Hampshire

**“We must deliberately include marginalized voices in all phases of TNC's work—from internal processes to external projects. It's the only way to evaluate whether we are making meaningful progress toward our DEI goals.”**

— Lynn Bondurant, Trustee, TNC Vermont

**“Through a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, TNC has the opportunity to deepen relationships in the communities where we work, engage with new partners, and achieve greater conservation outcomes for the natural world that we all share.”**

— Nancy Hamill Winter, Trustee, TNC Illinois

**“Our best conservation work is achieved when we honor the reciprocity of life between people and nature, and between all people. To honor our host Hawaiian culture: I ola 'oe, i ola au - When you live, I live.”**

— Board of Trustees, DEI Working Group, TNC Hawai'i and Palmyra

**“In our overall work, TNC needs to be more intentional about pursuing conservation strategies that protect and promote the needs of BIPOC communities, with a primary focus on addressing the root causes of the climate crisis and adapting to a new normal.”**

— Board of Trustees, TNC Maryland/DC

**“As trustees, we are responsible for creating the sustainable and equitable learning opportunities today's children need to tackle the most urgent and important nature conservation issues of our time and to drive real progress in our community and for our planet.”**

— Jennifer Yu Cheng, Council Member, TNC Asia Pacific

# Partnering for Equitable Stewardship

© ROSHNI LODHIA One year after the removal of sickle bush from the Randilen Wildlife Management Area, a zebra walks in new grass.



TNC is committed to authentic partnerships with the communities we serve worldwide. Because of this, we are better positioned to achieve our conservation mission and 2030 goals. Listening, learning, adapting, and building trust with local stakeholders and rightsholders is integral to how we work and how we engage with one another.

The interconnected components of racial and environmental justice, Indigenous rights, and equitable conservation reaffirm that TNC must bring all related voices to the forefront in making decisions about how we will achieve and advance healthy natural systems. As an organization, we have reinforced inequities at times, and we must own those missteps with integrity beyond reproach to better protect the people and natural systems we care about and respect.

Recognizing and repairing past wrongs, transforming practices, and codifying our values are essential for how TNC moves forward. That's why I'm proud of the path we are on and acknowledging the work that needs to be done around the world to amplify Indigenous and community voices, choices, and actions. I admire and commend our TNC colleagues and teams who are making meaningful connections with local communities, leadership, and traditional stewards that catalyze action. *Quyana*—thank you!

This has been a year of significant learning and accomplishments, and so much more is already underway. Here are some of the highlights from our global TNC teams.

**Andrea Akall'eq Burgess**  
Global Director, TNC Conservation In Partnership with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC)



## HOW WE COLLABORATE

TNC's new **Racial Equity Partnerships and Intentional Repair (REPAIR)** pilot initiative aims to support Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities in the U.S. that are working to repair environmental impacts stemming from systemic racism.

As a first step, this pilot initiative will engage a trusted external consultant to explore opportunities with existing and potential BIPOC partners, while the team investigates systemic and scalable funding models for learning from BIPOC conservation leaders and supporting their efforts when invited to do so. An external advisory committee of community leaders will provide guidance and structure for the initiative from their lived and professional experiences in BIPOC communities. Meanwhile, a cross-functional internal support team will include representatives from TNC's Chief Executive Office and the Conservation, Marketing and Communications, External Affairs, and DEI teams.

In addition, organizers are thinking beyond the U.S., looking to global models for enabling institutional and donor support for BIPOC groups worldwide.



**“Racial inequities in the conservation movement and beyond are a threat to durable outcomes for biodiversity and climate. The REPAIR Initiative will open the door to acknowledging the harm those inequities have caused, a first step toward meaningful actions and partnerships. We're excited to get started!”**

— Meera Bhat, Director, TNC Equitable Conservation



**ALPHONCE BLASS MALLYA (he/him)**  
Program Director, TNC Northern Tanzania

More than 10 years ago, Alphonse Blass Mallya helped establish TNC's first African office in Northern Tanzania, where he was promoted to Program Director in 2021. With a keen interest in the intersection of tourism and conservation, Alphonse works to rally conservation partners, landowners, government officials, donors, and the general public to achieve conservation goals in the region.

**Q: What does diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) mean to you?**

**A: It means recognizing, acknowledging, and engaging people from many diverse cultures and backgrounds with common understanding to work together towards achieving conservation goals that are beneficial to all.**

**Q: How has that shown up in your work?**

**A: I work in a landscape where women, girls, and other youth could traditionally be marginalized. Part of my work is to promote their involvement in a way that ensures transparency and equal participation in key positions and decisions that impact livelihoods. Setting this example for equity and inclusion gives us additional opportunities to make a positive, sustainable impact in the communities we serve.**

# SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION IN AFRICA

Africa's population is on pace to double by 2050, putting unprecedented pressure on natural resources its people rely on for survival. It is more critical than ever for TNC to continue helping to secure the permanent protection and durable community-led conservation of Indigenous and communal lands, which occupy and/or remain at the heart of Africa's 55 million acres.

In 2021, the Africa region saw exciting milestone developments in the three main areas of DEI focus for TNC's [Indigenous Lands Strategy](#).

## FOCUS 1: SECURING OWNERSHIP RIGHTS

- Legally **recognized community conservancies** now make up roughly 11% of all lands in Kenya, thanks in part to TNC-led advocacy at the national level. Separately, the 2021 Kenya National Wildlife Census Report included a Leaders' Pledge for Nature commitment to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030.

## FOCUS 2: BUILDING LEADERSHIP CAPACITIES

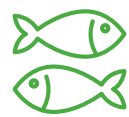
- The [Africa Conservation Leadership Network](#) (ACLN) is a mentorship and training program that TNC co-created and convenes in partnership with [Maliasili](#). By July 2021, the ACLN held three training cohorts with top African grassroots conservation leaders from five different countries and 24 organizations. A fourth cohort is now underway, with adaptive features for the virtual learning landscape.

2021 marked the 10th anniversary for TNC's [Tuungane Project](#), a partnership with Pathfinder International that has driven countless tangible outcomes across Africa that include:

**726** Women empowered economically  
33 village savings and loan associations created \$201,000 in savings



**12,015** Hectares of fish reserves protected



**180,170** Requests for reproductive health resources met



- The 10-member **Community Resource Board for the Mujimanzovu Chiefdom in Zambia** looked very different in 2021: Half of its seats are now held by women. This transformation was made possible in part by a gender advocacy campaign that TNC scaled in partnership with Senior Chief Mujimanzovu.
- In response to decimation of **Northern Tanzania Grasslands**, TNC launched a pilot program in partnership with USAID-funded Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group to give locals tools, education, and financial support to clear the invasive species and monitor regrowth. Since September 2021, the program has:
  - Uprooted 1,300 acres in Selela, Lemooti, Terrat, and Randilen Wildlife Management Area**
  - Trained 17 villages on rangeland management, with the villages of Makame, Lemooti, Mbaashi, and Terrat uprooting roughly 120 acres of invasive species since completing the training**
  - Planned additional phases using data from satellite imagery**

## FOCUS 3: INCREASING REVENUE STREAMS

- In 2021, the [Mtangawanda Women's Association](#) grew from 15 to 30 members and continued planting mangrove propagules and transplanting saplings and nursery-raised seedlings to degraded parts of Lamu County, Kenya. With support from TNC, this women-led initiative provides income opportunities and education for local residents around vital mangrove restoration.

**“We knew loggers cut mangroves to get money but didn't realize they are destroying mangroves in the process. Before, our perceptions were that mangroves are self-generating. We didn't have that knowledge then. These organizations helped us to understand a lot about mangroves.”**

— Zulfa Hassan, Mtangawanda Women's Association Founder, known locally as “Mama Mikoko” or “Mother Mangrove”

- In the first year after TNC took measures to improve soil health for more than 130 **farms in Southern Tanzania**, participating farmers saw an average 32% crop yield increase. Now, TNC is offering training on these and techniques to meet food and income needs without pressure to convert more habitat.



© ROSHNI LODHIA A Mtangawanda Women's Association member harvests mangrove propagules.



© AMI VITALE/TNC Samburu women in Kenya make traditional crafts as a way to diversify their income and ease pressure on natural resources.

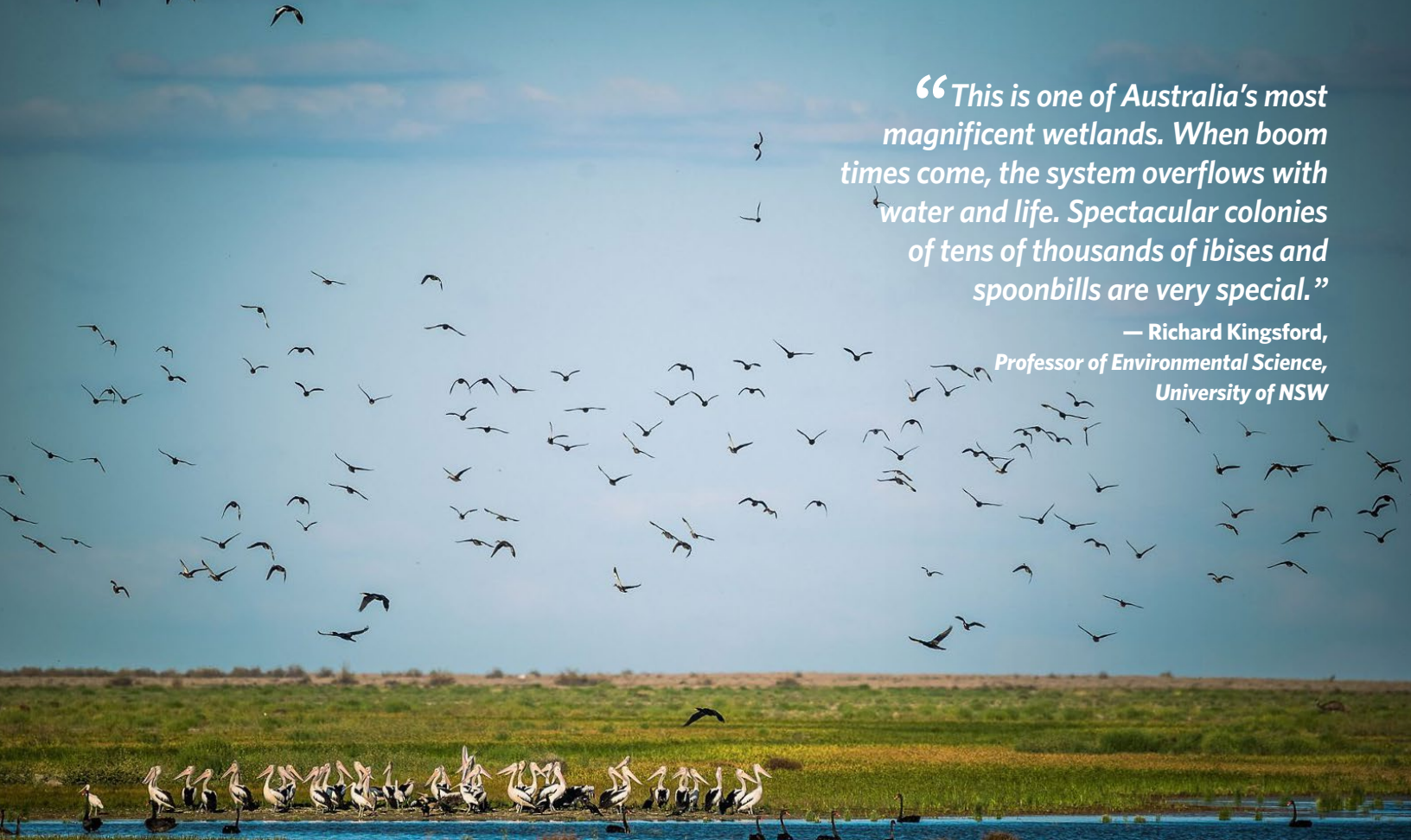
**4,469,565** Trees planted with 86% first-year survival rate



**500,000** Metric tons of CO2e sequestered annually through a community carbon project



**20,477** Farmers trained in climate-smart agricultural practices



“This is one of Australia’s most magnificent wetlands. When boom times come, the system overflows with water and life. Spectacular colonies of tens of thousands of ibises and spoonbills are very special.”

— Richard Kingsford,  
Professor of Environmental Science,  
University of NSW

© ANNETTE RUZICKA Pacific black ducks, great cormorants, black swans, and Australian pelicans

## REPAIRING INJUSTICE AND RESTORING LANDS IN GAYINI

Deep in the Murray-Darling Basin in southwest New South Wales (NSW), TNC and its partners—the [Nari Nari Tribal Council](#), Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group, and University of NSW—are demonstrating land and freshwater management that respects the cultural rights and heritage of its Indigenous owners.

Much of this work focuses on Gayini, a vast 87,816-hectare property whose name is the Nari Nari word for water. This land is now owned and managed by the Nari Nari Tribal Council (NNTC), which represents the people who have stewarded Gayini for 50,000 years. Like many parts of Australia, Gayini has had a challenging history, but the future is now bright.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the partnership between TNC, the Nari Nari Tribal Council, and Murray-Darling Wetlands Working Group.



### EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVES

“Over the last year, working closely with folks on my team, we have invested in the development and integration of more tools and guidance around equitable conservation. From the [Human Rights Guide](#) to the [Social Safeguards Framework](#), there is a dedicated effort to mainstream this approach into our everyday conservation work.”

**David Banks,**  
TNC Chief Conservation Officer

## In the 1700s

European colonizers began removing the Aboriginal people from their ancestral lands, installing towns and agricultural infrastructure as part of Australia’s development.



© ANITA PAYNE Australia is blessed with 10 native species of kingfishers.

## In 2019

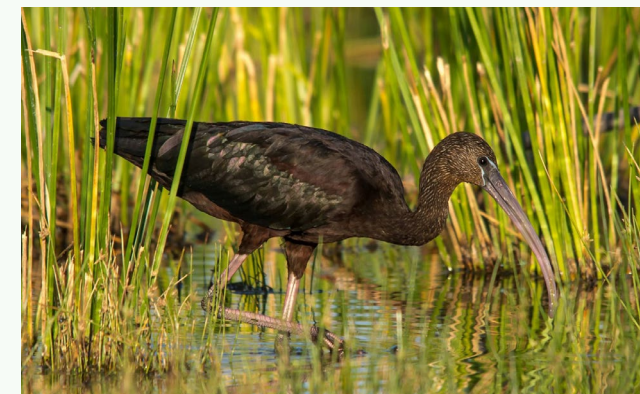
After submitting a successful response to the NSW government’s request for proposals to manage Gayini the year prior, TNC facilitated the legal transfer of the land back to the Nari Nari Tribal Council.

## Today

TNC continues working collaboratively with the Nari Nari Tribal Council to secure sustainable financing models and support Healthy Country Planning development and implementation projects in Gayini.



© ANNETTE RUZICKA NARI NARI elders Mabel Fitzpatrick (left) and Kerrie Parker, at Gayini



© MARK LETHLEAN A glossy ibis searches in the shallows for tasty invertebrates.

## In 2012

Amid centuries of widespread development and over-allocation of water, in 2012 the Australian and NSW governments commenced implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. Water recovery targets saw 19 properties within Gayini secured and associated water rights transferred to the Commonwealth for future environmental watering.

## Since then


The Nari Nari have assessed and maintained roads and infrastructure, protected culture and heritage sites, and removed large numbers of feral pests. They have also reinstated a more natural flooding regime across the property and laid almost 400 kilometers of irrigation to deliver water to livestock.

“Our people managed this area for 50,000 years and left their footprints on the Country. Now it’s our turn to protect, maintain, and enhance our culture and Country and leave our footprints once again.”

— Ian and Rene Woods, Nari Nari Traditional Custodians

# GENDER EQUITY INITIATIVES DRIVE CONSERVATION IMPACT FOR ASIA PACIFIC REGION

In a newly released Annual Impact Report, [Conservation In a Defining Decade](#), the TNC Asia Pacific region highlights a number of exciting developments for 2021. Among topline regional developments, the report notes:

 **7.6** million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e avoided or sequestered annually

 **98** million hectares of land  and **25.2** million hectares of oceans now protected or under improved management

 **Direct impact for good** in the lives of more than **45,000** people

Leaders attribute this success in no small part to the network of TNC staff across the Asia Pacific region who are working to make both their workplaces and conservation more equitable and inclusive. Inspiring women-led initiatives demonstrate this growing focus on inclusive, people-centered conservation and aligning equitable conservation solutions with community needs and aspirations.



**“We didn’t know how much gender inequality could impact our conservation work. Now that we do, it’s our responsibility to share this information and make sure our teams are prepared.”**

— Gertie Tang, Director of Human Resources, TNC China



© NICK HALL In Toson Hulstai Nature Reserve, herding families live in traditional Mongolian “gers,” or tents—transportable dwellings framed with local hardwood and covered by wool felt.



**“For my people, our livelihood is totally dependent on the sea. But our marine resources have reduced in number and size at a very fast rate due to over-fishing, to meet the demand for food and money.”**

— Piwen Langarup, Founding MMM Member and Program Coordinator, Pihi Environment and Development Forum

© JUSTINE HAUSHEER/TNC



## PAPUA NEW GUINEA ADVANCING GENDER EQUITY IN THE FACE OF COVID

Over-harvesting presents a grave threat to one of Papua New Guinea’s (PNG) most vital natural resources. Mangroves, in addition to bolstering local food security and livelihoods, buffer coastal communities against the impact of king tides and storm surges caused by climate change.

Women in particular depend on mangroves for harvesting and selling mud crabs in order to feed their families. Men usually have access to equipment such as boats and engines needed to fish offshore, so women depend on the mangroves where they can fish and work without leaving the shore or their children. Though they are disproportionately dependent on healthy mangroves, women have historically been denied access to the tools, science training, networking, capital, and other resources they need to effectively manage them.

That paradigm began to shift in 2016, when TNC partnered with PNG residents to demonstrate the many economic benefits of mangroves. From those efforts emerged [Mangrove Market Meri](#) (MMM), a women-led initiative that works to advance dual conservation and gender equity goals through community mangrove management.

In 2021, the group’s resilience was tested amid new and rapidly evolving COVID-19 safety and travel restrictions. In response, MMM began leveraging support from TNC, CARE, and other key community partners to:

-  **Conduct training on COVID-19 and vaccination**
-  **Lead gender-based violence response training**
-  **Design, conduct, and analyze a socioeconomic survey**

COVID-19 cases are still climbing steadily, but MMM continues to reach women in rural areas across PNG. With partner support, they are working to educate and shape equitable gender-based policies around mangrove management while exploring innovative, income-generating opportunities in ecotourism and blue-carbon storage.

# CHALLENGING PATRIARCHAL SYSTEMS IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

A [March 2021 review](#) led by TNC researchers and published by Cambridge University Press revealed a sad and uncomfortable truth: Women everywhere are excluded from decisions about conservation. That has often been the reality for women living in the Arnavon Island communities, Solomon Islands' first national park and a biodiversity hotspot and home to the South Pacific's largest nesting beaches for critically endangered hawksbill turtles.

In these numerous small and remote communities, traditional gender roles shape the jobs and capacities around conservation that are available to women. But when women have a seat at the table, the outcomes are always better.

A [women-led initiative known as KAWAKI](#) is working with communities around the Arnavon Islands to expand that presence in conservation and natural resources decision making. Its members have begun speaking out against gender violence and discrimination, and in 2021, successfully charted conservation progress, held an election, and continued working to educate and mobilize younger members around ecosystem degradation, climate change, and local mining threats.

© KATE CRANNEY KAWAKI women celebrate the declaration of the Arnavons as Solomon Islands' first marine national park.



**“KAWAKI women are at the frontline of climate change and resource extraction. They risk their personal safety to ensure their communities have a say.**

***It is important that I use my unearned power and immense privilege to challenge the very systems that benefit me and, in turn, prevent local women from being safe and being heard. All of us, including men as our leaders, supervisors, and colleagues, can accelerate efforts to break down the unfair systems that exclude women all over the world from conservation.”***

— Robyn James, Gender and Equity Advisor, TNC Asia Pacific



© TIM CALVER/TNC KAWAKI members release a sea turtle with a satellite tag into the ocean in the Arnavon Islands.



**HUIDONG WANG PH.D. (he/him)**  
**Chief Conservation Officer, TNC China**

In September 2020, Huidong Wang joined TNC as Chief Conservation Officer in China. He currently oversees marketing, external affairs, and conservation strategy for TNC China's land, freshwater, climate, regenerative agriculture, and ocean teams. He also supervises field offices in Shanghai City, Shenzhen City, and Zhejiang Province.

**Q: What most excites you in your work right now?**

**A: One project I would like to share is China's equitable protection project in the TNC Elevating Impact portfolio. When we started applying for funding in late 2021, we focused on conventional conservation activities in Yunnan and Sichuan Provinces—notably, habitats for the Yunnan snub-nosed monkey and giant panda.**

**But soon after our first discussions with AP regional colleagues, we realized the need to align our field work with DEI principles that would increase capacity and support livelihood for women and local minorities, and thereby integrate people and nature. With that, we redesigned the project activities, which are now being implemented by our field team.**

**Along with our individual annual KPI setting on DEI in FY22, this project has been a breakthrough and new perspective on my work and has shown me that repositioning DEI priorities can drive project development.**



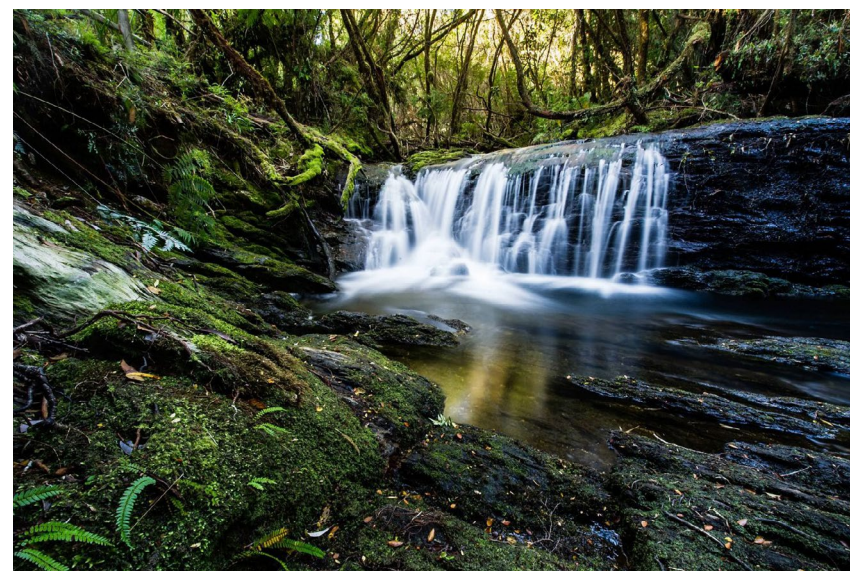
## KNOWLEDGE IS CONSERVATION IN SOUTHERN CHILE'S "OXYGEN FACTORY"

Rising from southern Chile's Valdivian coastline, one area is the key to helping change the course of our planet. Nearly two decades ago, TNC established La Reserva Costera Valdiviana (RCV) after rescuing 60,000 hectares of its ancient temperate rainforests from massive logging.

The RCV now represents 10% of the world's forest-protected temperate conservation, and new public-private agreements protect 74,000 more hectares for Chile's first forest carbon sequestration project. A team of local researchers and park rangers, led by Mapuche-Huilliche community member Danilo González Huala, works hand-in-hand with residents to apply environmental strategies that center Indigenous knowledge and pride.

"Conservation is not yet well understood as a concept or something that helps everyone," says Huala. "I call the Reserve an 'oxygen factory' because factories have one objective: to produce. We work the oxygen, the water, and even help to maintain the temperature."

Huala's mantra, "knowledge is conservation," has helped communities tackle environmental challenges since before the RCV won protected status. In 2005, a resident-led drinking water committee began restoring a vital basin that today delivers water to the communities of Chaihuín and Huiro. In 2006, women of the RCV lobbied for a tourism sector that now sees hundreds of annual visitors. And logging that was once widespread in their communities is unthinkable for residents today.



© NICK HALL Waterfalls in La Reserva Costera Valdiviana, Los Rios, Chile

**DANILO GONZÁLEZ HUALA (he/him)**  
Park Ranger Coordinator,  
TNC Valdivian Coastal Reserve Project

Joining TNC in 2006, Danilo González Huala now leads the park ranger program at the Valdivian Coastal Reserve, a focal point for TNC's climate action work in Chile. Huala is a member of the local Indigenous Mapuche-Huilliche community whose mantra, "knowledge is conservation," describes his role as an environmental educator.

**Q: What most excites you in your work right now?**

**A: I think what excites me the most is working in a healthy environment with people whose respect and passion for what we do every day is reflected in the actions of each one of us. I am grateful to work in a place where conservation is done with people, involving communities. Today, I see with pride that this work has borne fruit in other park rangers who continue to multiply the message and have made it their own. They are enriching this teaching so that future decisions can be made with as much information as possible.**

**Q: What does diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) mean to you?**

**A: For me, diversity, equity, inclusion, and, above all, justice, is the basis of good understanding. It is what we try to achieve by being the ones in charge of caring for our territory and practicing fairness with all the people who visit us or who live in the surrounding communities. One of my goals is to treat people the same way I would like to be treated.**



© ASSOCIAÇÃO DE MULHERES INDÍGENAS EM MUTIRÃO Indigenous women are prominent figures in conservation activities in the Oiapoque region of Brazil.

## GREEN PHARMACY GIVES BRAZILIAN WOMEN A VOICE IN CONSERVATION

Brazil is home to many native medicinal plants that offer pharmaceutical relief to local residents. But these plants play another important role: They give Indigenous women a voice in conservation. Indigenous women are the traditional holders of knowledge for medicinal plant gardens, and the exclusive producers of their medicinal herbs and oils. Yet they are historically underrepresented in leadership and decision-making positions.

In 2019, that began to change with support from TNC Analyst Rafaela Carvalho in partnership with Associação de Mulheres Indígenas em Mutirão. The women of Brazil's Oiapoque region created a [Green Pharmacy](#), where Carvalho meets to help with their medicinal plant exchange and discuss strategies for combating climate change and strengthening Indigenous-led conservation. The indigenous women of Oiapoque will launch a book, *Our Knowledge: Medicinal Plants and Traditional Practices*, in the second half of 2022.

The main focus of Carvalho's work is to support the empowerment of women in Oiapoque, with emphasis on influencing public policies in the region related to climate and gender equity and increasing the presence of Oiapoque women in organizational councils. These efforts have resulted in better access to decision-making functions and more economic opportunities. In fact, some women now identify as the sole income-earners in their family.



© ASSOCIAÇÃO DE MULHERES INDÍGENAS EM MUTIRÃO Indigenous women in the Oiapoque region of Brazil exchange medicinal plants.

**"When we talk about conservation, we must include Indigenous lands because they help preserve biodiversity. Indigenous women are prominent figures in these conservation activities."**

— Rafaela Carvalho, Analyst, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, TNC Brazil



# INDIGENOUS POLICY WORK IN PARÁ

In the Brazilian state of Pará, TNC Conservation Specialist Luciana Lima works to help Indigenous communities sustainably manage economic activities, while promoting policies that value forest products and resources.

One focus is to influence government policies around the production of medicinal plants and naturally derived handicrafts that are the exclusive competence of Indigenous women throughout Brazil. Lima hopes to support a sustainable source of income by helping to make these and other natural products available in public schools and government-run institutions.

In September 2021, these efforts began to pay off when TNC partnered with Amazon to launch the [Agroforestry and Restoration Accelerator](#), a carbon-storage platform for regenerative reforestation that will boost income opportunities for thousands of farmers and producers in the region.

Earlier this year, the accelerator was highlighted on TNC's updated [Voice, Choice, and Action \(VCA\) Framework](#) as an example of successful regional stakeholder dialogue and decision making.

**“Thanks to the leadership of women, Indigenous communities in Brazil are preserving nature, mitigating climate change, and strengthening their cultures for present and future generations.”**

— Luciana Lima, Conservation Specialist, TNC Brazil



© KAMIKIA KISEDJE Pará women on the waters of the Xingu River in search of Tucun fibers.



## EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVES

“On a recent trip to our Pará, part of the Amazon Iconic Place in our Latin America Program, I was extremely impressed by the systems thinking methodology our Brazil team and our Provide Team are executing. They are working on Indigenous land rights, policy reform, sustainable supply chains, carbon financing, improved land management practices, and deforestation early warning technology systems.

I have seen this previously with Indigenous conservation strategies in Australia, Mongolia, Tanzania, and Kenya, to name just a few of many great examples. But I had not seen a better example of systems thinking as I did in Pará. We need to continually keep an eye open and allow for bright spots to come from everywhere at TNC—from all countries, languages, cultures, and habitat types in our diverse and thriving global community at TNC.”

**Matthew A. Brown**, Managing Director, TNC Global Conservation



© SUSAN MIHALO The Festival de la Monarca celebrates monarch butterflies and the cultural relevance of their yearly migration to Mexico.

## MONARCH FESTIVAL SHOWCASES CONSERVATION'S CULTURAL IMPACT

Each fall as temperatures begin to drop in North America, iconic orange-and-black monarch butterflies fill the skies. They travel up to 100 miles per day as they make their way south, primarily to the oyamel fir forests of Michoacán, Mexico.

The butterflies were born in the United States and have never been to Mexico, making their 3,000-mile journey symbolic among many Mexican communities in the Midwest and eastern United States. The environmental factors that drive monarch butterflies southward also hold meaning for conservationists: Their migration is now threatened by temperature changes, drought, and other climate-change impacts.

In East Chicago, Indiana, TNC and its partners host a community event every September to commemorate this journey. [El Festival de la Monarca](#)—which also coincides with National Hispanic Heritage Month in the United States—raises awareness and unites the surrounding community through educational activities, music, art, and dance. This year marks the celebration's fifth anniversary.

**“In Mexico, even before the Spanish colonization, you could see images of butterflies through stone carvings and paintings of Indigenous groups. In some stories, they are the returning souls of loved ones. In others, butterflies are returning warriors that were killed in battle.”**

— Joel Perez-Castaneda, Project Director, TNC Indiana



**SHERRY CONSTANTINE (she/her)**  
Program Director, TNC Eastern Caribbean

Much of Sherry Constantine's career has been dedicated to marine conservation, reducing the risks of climate change for both people and nature, and developing sustainable financing programs to provide long-term financing for environmental projects in Eastern Caribbean countries.

She leverages her vast leadership experience, knowledge, and skills in science, research, teaching, and project management to engage her team in a holistic approach to each new challenge. Prior to joining TNC, Sherry was the Executive Director of the Saint Lucia Bureau of Standards, and she started her career as a biologist with the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism Secretariat.

**Q: How has DEIJ shown up in your work?**

**A: For my job at TNC, I work a lot in, with, and for communities. As a result, DEIJ principles are fundamental to how we design and implement projects. We do a lot of community consultations, engagement, and education. Also, as part of our project design processes, we consider the ideas and talents of individuals—as well as their needs—so that the persons we engage with feel welcomed, valued, and affirmed.**

**I work to ensure that persons are appreciated for their unique contributions and opinions. In my experience, this leads to more outside-of-the-box thinking resulting in more lasting results and better ways of doing things.**

**I try to lead our project teams to openly question our assumptions when making decisions so that we do not get lost in 'normal' ways of thinking or doing things.**

## SOUTHEAST EUROPE SUPPORTS COMMUNITY-LED RIVER STEWARDSHIP



© SAMANTHA SANCHEZ/TNC High waters at a TNC project site on the Zeta River, Montenegro

Southeast Europe is exceptionally rich in biodiversity and natural resources, which are still unfortunately mostly inadequately protected. The overarching goal for TNC’s Southeast Europe Programme is to ensure those shared resources are protected and sustainably used.

TNC conducts many projects, partnerships, and actions to engage local and national governments, experts, and activists in this region. The Balkans Water Project (BWP) is a current area of specific focus, which aims to develop and implement a durable freshwater protection framework for two important rivers that hold high biodiversity in the Western Balkans.

The Montenegro’s River Zeta and the Upper Neretva River in Bosnia both contain essential habitat features for endangered fish species, including the nearly extinct Zeta softmouth trout.



© SAMANTHA SANCHEZ/TNC Sweeping views near Mostnica Gorge trailhead in Slovenia

**“With support from local schools and community participants, our partners are ready and willing to facilitate direct application of the biomonitoring approach in Montenegro. We hope to build on this enthusiasm in our work, with the ultimate goal of conserving freshwater biodiversity in the region.”**

— Tamara Preininger Horvat, Program Coordinator, TNC Europe

After working with local partners to conduct a socioeconomic analysis, TNC successfully developed and implemented a regional biomonitoring protocol for Zeta River Nature Park. Now, those findings are being used to inform a forthcoming community-based management plan, with communication strategy and outreach measures designed to build trust and communication between local residents and the management authorities.

Meanwhile, in the Upper Neretva Valley, the team is working to enable a community-verified protection designation study. TNC’s Southeast Europe Programme is growing, and as it does, team members will continue exploring effective local resources protection initiatives while increasing and improving community-based management of designated protected rivers.



© JEN GUYTON On the roof of the Dom Aquaree in central Berlin, beekeeper Andreas Bauer tends to two honeybee hives on behalf of local group Stadtbienen, which promotes apiculture.

## BERLIN INNOVATES TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE

In 2021, catastrophic flooding tore through Germany and other European countries, killing more than 200 people. Since then, TNC’s Urban Greening Program has partnered with the Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf Department of Nature Conservation on efforts to address urban flooding, extreme heat, and more.

In one highly visible example, partners brought sheep to graze at the 50,000-person-capacity Wilmersdorf Stadium in Berlin last summer—part of a pilot project to enhance urban biodiversity while testing an inexpensive and low-carbon form of landscape maintenance. These efforts build on Berlin’s innovative citywide efforts. Green space currently makes up nearly a third of the German capital, and bicycling accounts for more than 13% of all traffic.



© JEN GUYTON Sheep graze on the hillside overlooking an athletics facility in Berlin.



© JEN GUYTON Marina Weis tends to the Allmende-Kontor Community Garden in Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin.

# NATURE UNITED PARTNERS TO RECENTER INDIGENOUS AUTHORITY IN CANADA



© PAT KANE Former Minister of Environment Catherine McKenna and Former Łutsël K'è Dene First Nation Chief Darryl Marlowe celebrate after signing agreements to establish Thaidene Néné.

For more than a decade, TNC's business unit in the lands now known as Canada, **Nature United**, has worked in close collaboration with Indigenous communities and partners. Underpinning this work is the recognition that traditional conservation is rooted in colonialism and the belief that Indigenous authority and stewardship is critical for healthy lands, waters, and communities.

## WORKING IN RIGHT RELATIONS

In 2021, Nature United undertook an external evaluation of how they work in right relations with Indigenous Peoples. Reciprocal Consulting, an Indigenous-led research firm, led the review and shared recommendations guiding Nature United on better working in right relations and true allyship with Indigenous Peoples.

**“Given that we primarily work with Indigenous communities in advancing our conservation work, and as our team is made up of Canadian and American citizens, I believe continuing to work toward right relations with Indigenous partners is an especially important part of our DEIJ efforts.”**

— Zahra Remtulla, On the Land Program Coordinator, Nature United

## STRENGTHENING INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

In 2021, the Thaidene Néné Fund was fully capitalized and activated, supporting Łutsël K'è Dene First Nation's long-term management of a 6.5 million-acre Indigenous Protected Area. This achievement marks a significant milestone in a decade-long collaboration with TNC, Nature United, and the Łutsël K'è Dene First Nation.

**“Once the Łutsël K'è Dene First Nation solidified their vision for their ancestral lands, they realized this would only be half the battle. They would need to share that vision with the world.”**

— Tracey Williams, Northwest Territories Program Director, Nature United



© RUTH FREMSON/THE NEW YORK TIMES A boat operated by the Kitasoo Coastal Guardian Watchmen and Spirit Bear Lodge, near Klemtu, British Columbia.



© PAT KANE The Łutsël K'è Dene First Nation community participates in a round dance to mark the official protection of Thaidene Néné.

## BUILDING AND SUSTAINING INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP

The Emerging Leaders initiative features Nature United-supported programs that are designed, led, and championed by the Indigenous communities they are meant to serve. This model allows programs to reflect unique cultures and identities, respond to local challenges, and adapt to community-specific factors.

**“Conservation is not just land protection; it is the protection of living culture, local livelihoods, and a future for generations to come.”**

— Hadley Archer, Executive Director, Nature United

## ENHANCING INDIGENOUS STEWARDSHIP CAPACITY

Nature United provides technical support, networking, and other critical resources to Indigenous Guardians across Canada, who act as the eyes and ears of their territories to monitor and steward lands and waters across Canada.

**“In this job as a Guardian, I will hear the birds sing, I will feel the sun or the rain on my face, I will hear the wind and the water, and feel the energy of the forest. How could you not want to be part of it?”**

— David Cliffe, Indigenous Guardian, Wei Wei Kum First Nation

At the organizational level, Nature United is committed to co-creating an equitable culture and a workplace that is diverse, inclusive, and safe for all staff, partners, donors, and volunteers. This requires acknowledging their role in a larger society that has historically privileged many and disenfranchised and marginalized others, while also seeking partner organizations that are:



**PARTNER-CENTERED** with relationships built on trust and shared interests.



**COMMUNITY-DRIVEN** toward diverse needs, priorities, expertise, and mission.



**DIVERSE** in thought, experience, collaboration, and action.



**RECIPROCAL** sharers of mutual learning and support.



**CLEAR AND ACCOUNTABLE** communicators of expectations, roles, and responsibilities.



**FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTABLE** to diverse needs, limitations, and competing priorities.

# GREAT LAKES WHITEFISH RESTORATION PROJECT MOVES TO EXPERIMENTAL STAGE



© TNC Matt Herbert, TNC conservation scientist, holds a bowfin caught while sampling for whitefish in the Manistee River.

Native fish like the lake whitefish play a vital role in sustaining both the Great Lakes food web and the Indigenous Peoples who have stewarded its fisheries for centuries. Sadly, invasive species, historic overfishing, tributary damming, habitat loss, and climate change continue to drive species decline.

A crucial step to stabilizing and rebuilding Great Lakes fisheries involves restoring key fish populations—including lake whitefish, the most important commercial fishery in the Great Lakes. Whitefish are also culturally important to many tribes of the Upper Great Lakes, as well as coastal communities.

With that objective, TNC Michigan began partnering in 2018 with the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians (Sault Tribe), the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians to research declining whitefish populations in the Great Lakes and help inform restoration solutions.

This includes annual surveys of Lake Michigan and Lake Huron tributaries to determine whether whitefish are using rivers to spawn, as they did more than a century ago. While the team has found many species during their survey efforts, including steelhead trout and walleye, tributary-spawning whitefish have yet to be detected in Michigan’s Lower Peninsula.

As a next step toward potentially establishing new populations of these tributary-spawning whitefish, the Sault Tribe has begun incubating whitefish eggs at their hatchery. The project team plans to begin testing restoration strategies in rivers soon. If the eggs can be successfully “overwintered,” it would enable the team to get the fish into the river at an early life stage—so they can imprint on their habitat and eventually return to spawn.



© JANET LINDHOLM Two female spongy moths lay their sponge-like egg cases on a tree.



## EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVES

“My goals at TNC include raising more awareness around DEI issues among staff and implementing enhancements to our conservation project review processes to ensure the right placement of risk review. I am also a staunch supporter and member of our newly launched DEI Workgroup for the Global Legal and Enterprise Risk Teams. Our objectives include not only creating a space for intentional exchange and learning but also finding ways to ensure that DEI issues are embedded in our personal and professional development plans.”

**Nathalie Augustin,**  
TNC General Counsel



**LEIGH GREENWOOD (she/her)**  
Program Director, TNC Forest Health

In 2007, Leigh Greenwood joined TNC as an Outreach Coordinator for the Forest Health program. She now serves as Program Director, managing forest pest outreach, policy, and partnerships across the North America region. For more than 10 years, she has also led TNC’s Don’t Move Firewood public outreach campaign. Much of Leigh’s work involves mobilizing national and international stakeholders around shared goals via creative and collaborative solutions.

**Q: What excites you right now in your work?**

**A: Currently, I’m excited for our new partnership with the U.S. Forest Service to target five species of crucially pest-threatened trees for research and restoration. I’m thrilled to lead this work, which requires technological advancements at groundbreaking pace and scale.**

**Q: How has DEI shown up in your work?**

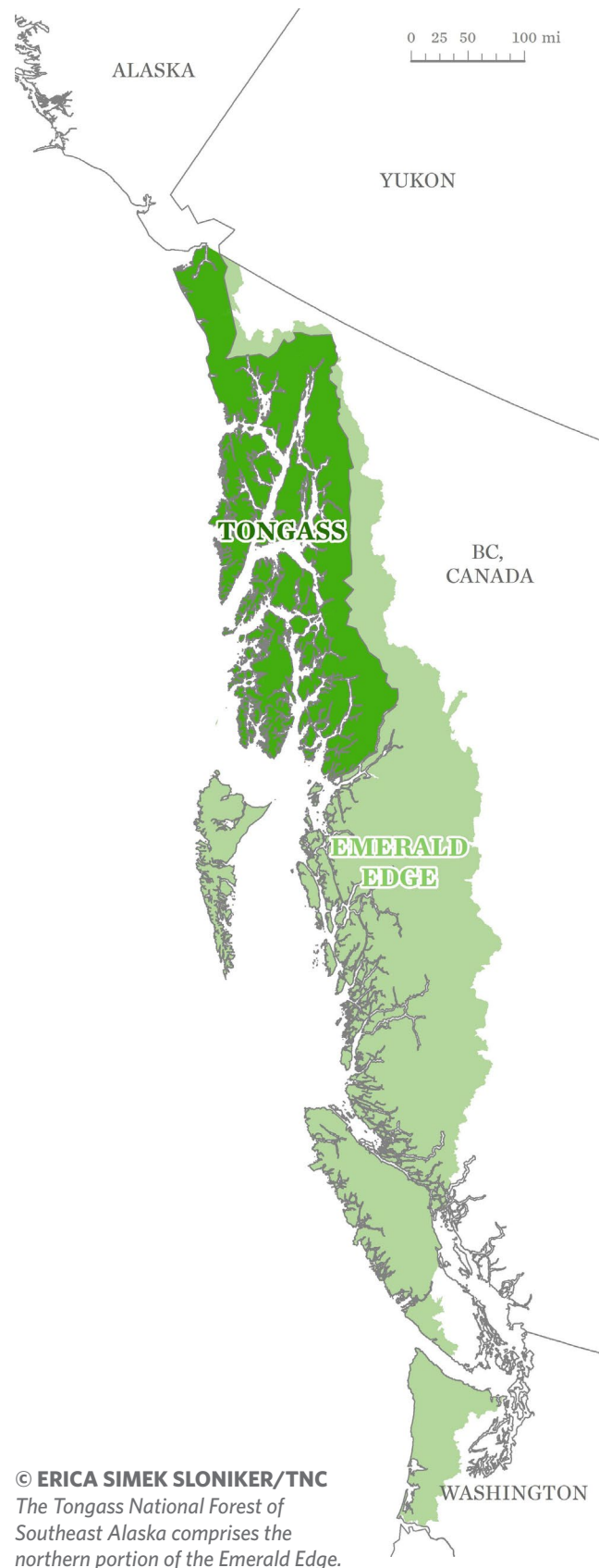
**A: In 2020, I saw a need to advocate for renaming an invasive insect in my field whose common name was an offensive ethnic slur. This insect, now officially renamed the spongy moth [pictured left], is very well known in the science of invasive species and in more than a quarter of U.S. backyards and forests. Because of that high visibility, I knew the renaming process would be incredibly complex—and it has led to some hard, important conversations.**

*The language of science matters, and I’m proud to do my part to replace terms that are racist, exclusionary, and harmful.*



© MATT HERBERT/TNC TNC staff and MDNR partners sample whitefish from the Escanaba River. (2018)

# SEACOAST TRUST IN ALASKA SHOWS MODEL FOR INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION



© ERICA SIMEK SLONIKER/TNC  
The Tongass National Forest of Southeast Alaska comprises the northern portion of the Emerald Edge.

With more biomass per acre than any other rainforest on Earth, Southeast Alaska’s Tongass National Forest has been referred to as the “Lungs of North America” and recognized as a bulwark in the fight against climate change.

This region is the ancestral home of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples, who for centuries have stewarded its lands and waters, and have relied on the timber industry as one of few viable economic opportunities for their communities. But the Tongass has long been a hotbed of environmental conflicts over giant old growth timber. These conflicts have failed to result in durable protection of these forests and have both ignored and vilified the Indigenous Peoples of this place.

## BUILDING TRUST TO HEAL A REGION

In recognition of this conflict and its devastating implications for communities and conservation, TNC has worked over the past decade with local tribes and institutions and other local partners to build trust and relationships. These efforts produced the Sustainable Southeast Partnership (SSP), whose collective-impact model aims to heal relationships in the region and make way for local Indigenous leadership and stewardship.

Building on this success, in 2021 the Tongass National Forest and Sealaska—Southeast Alaska’s largest Native corporation and largest private landowner—independently announced that both would transition away from old-growth logging in the region.

To support this transition, the SSP launched the Seacoast Trust, a permanent fund to provide for restoration and community healing projects, affordable housing, Indigenous stewardship programs, and other sustainable economic development. By prioritizing investments in community wellbeing, the region will see new opportunities to strengthen local and tribal decision-making authority in the management and conservation of local resources. Under the Seacoast Trust, roughly two million acres of Forest Service and Alaska Native corporation-owned lands will align under community authority.

With more than \$20 million already secured—including major contributions from Sealaska, TNC, and regional philanthropic foundations—and a commitment by SSP partners to grow the fund, the trust will provide a permanent funding source for community priorities and stewardship activities for generations to come.

## TAKING CARE OF THE PEOPLE WHO TAKE CARE OF NATURE

Crystal Nelson, community development specialist for TNC Alaska, is Tlingit and Indigenous to Southeast Alaska. Her work has been instrumental in furthering the vision for Indigenous-led economic and community development in the region for both TNC and the SSP.

“In my Tlingit culture, leadership is measured by how well you take care of others,” said Nelson. “In Tlingit economics, we stockpile resources, and then redistribute them in a *koo.éex*—or potlatch, in English. Thinking of the Seacoast Trust as a legacy project that will help take care of my people and this place is deeply fulfilling.”

Nelson noted that colonization severely limited Native Alaskan sovereignty over lands and waters, and the process used to dispossess Indigenous People of their title was marked by trauma that continues to this day. For this reason, collective healing work is at the center of the SSP and Seacoast Trust.

“The aftermath sets the scene for our work today,” Nelson said. “When we go to Indigenous communities still reeling from colonization, we need to allow for a holistic approach to conservation. The Seacoast Trust will invest in strengthening relationships and social capital. The greatest barrier to durable conservation in the Tongass is the conflict itself. Without healing, no other outcomes are possible.”



© ERIKA NORTEMANN/TNC Totem pole-raising ceremony in Hydaburg on Prince of Wales Island in Southeast Alaska.



© CHRIS CRISMAN Danial Frank fishes for salmon near Hydaburg, Alaska.

## SEACOAST TRUST GUIDING PRINCIPLES

-  **Respect and uphold Indigenous voices, governance, and leadership**
-  **Envision the next 100 years by planning with the next generation**
-  **Balance economic, social, and environmental wellbeing**
-  **Collaborate with empathy, generosity, and purpose**
-  **Value the integrity of all knowledge systems, including those anchored in 10,000-plus years of Indigenous history, traditions, and stewardship**



**CRYSTAL NELSON (she/her)**  
*Community Development Specialist,*  
**TNC Alaska**

Crystal Nelson is Tlingit, Raven-Coho from the Humpback Whale House in Dry Bay, Alaska. The Juneau native's experience in community and economic development spans 15 years, five of which were spent developing community-first solutions in the Tongass National Forest timber conflict. In her work for TNC's Emerald Edge Program, Crystal promotes sustainable economies, ecological stewardship capacity, healing, and racial equity for Indigenous and local communities in Southeast Alaska.

*The Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian peoples have been in Southeast Alaska and the surrounding Canadian areas since the beginning of time, and the lands and waters of the Tongass rainforest are a distinctly Native place. If you visit the ancestral lands of the Tlingit in Dry Bay, you will see landmarks from the creation stories of my people. The giant boulders of the man and dog that turned to stone when Raven flew out of the whale's belly. The valley where Raven wiped off his beak, cutting jagged angles into the mountain. Raven's footprints where he dug his feet into the sand as he pulled in the food canoe.*

*My maternal lineage comes from the Humpback Whale House in Dry Bay that was named after one of these stories in the Raven Cycle, 'Raven and the Whale.' I come from the Raven-Coho clan, but there are many clans that come from the Tongass, each one made up of extended families with stories and histories that tie them irrevocably to this land. Our conservation work should honor these connections, work to uphold Indigenous rights and increase the authority Indigenous people have in their territories.*

**SUPPORTING SELF-DETERMINING COMMUNITIES WORLDWIDE**

With projects and outcomes self-determined by the community, the Seacoast Trust represents an innovative and much-needed alternative to historic conservation financing models that impose Western conservation metrics and goals rather than centering the perspectives and needs of communities. In this critical moment for balancing conservation and community priorities, the Seacoast Trust represents a groundbreaking alliance that demonstrates what is possible when communities are engaged in determining how their lands and waters are managed.

For those seeking to mitigate climate change and support Indigenous and local communities, the mandate is clear: Heed the call from local leaders and incorporate Indigenous values, rights, and authority into the vision and path forward.

**The Seacoast Trust funds a different kind of conservation:**  
One that understands people and communities are inseparable components of a healthy environment.



**EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVES**

“The goal of incorporating equity into our conservation work is not to become a different organization; it's to become a better organization. Centering equity doesn't drift us from our mission, it makes our mission more relevant to more people. Conservation done right should be good for and celebrated by more people.”

**Jan Glendening,**  
*Regional Managing Director,*  
*TNC North America*

**SIGNIFICANT LANDS IN WASHINGTON STATE RETURNED TO THE COLVILLE TRIBE**



© JUSTIN HAUG *Scenes from Washington State's Tunk Creek Valley*

Nestled in a habitat corridor linking the Cascade Range and the Rocky Mountains, in the heart of Washington State's Tunk Creek Valley, the Colville peoples have curated their knowledge systems for time immemorial. Yet broken treaties and promises have long threatened their relationship with the land.

In 1892, an act of Congress cut the Colville's original reservation in half, which had included the Tunk Valley. Soon after, the Figlenski family acquired land in the valley and built a 9,243-acre ranch. But in recent years, as generations of the Figlenskis began to pass away, it became the family's wish to only sell the parcel if it was going to be ecologically protected and stewarded.

**Conservation Northwest**, a Washington state-based environmental nonprofit, heard about the sale and wanted to protect these lands while strengthening Indigenous relationships. With a gift of adjacent land from The Nature Conservancy and support from local donors, the Figlenski ranch was purchased and immediately **transferred to the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation**, who will use it for land-based education, traditional medicine, plant surveying, and training.

The relatively small role TNC's Washington chapter played in this land transfer demonstrates a larger commitment to supporting partners and learning Indigenous priorities around better allyship for local communities. The chapter operates under the belief that, working collaboratively, we can create a shared and lasting vision for conservation that is grounded in community wellness and vibrancy.

“When TNC was asked to join this vision, we saw immediate alignment with our interest in supporting and elevating Indigenous-led conservation. We know that by honoring and supporting the original stewards of these lands, we can achieve much more together that is meaningful for not only nature, but for people as well.”

— James Schroeder, *Conservation Director, TNC Washington State*



© JUSTIN HAUG



© TNC Volunteers gather signatures for a Washington State ballot initiative. (2018)

## SETBACKS BRING VALUABLE RESOLVE IN WASHINGTON CLIMATE POLICY ADVOCACY



© TNC Volunteers gather signatures for a Washington State ballot initiative. (2018)

Environmental equity and justice are inextricably linked to the climate crisis. In recent years, Washington state has become a case study for successful and complex climate legislation. Still, these successes have also shown that climate victories are imperfect, and that equitable climate policy requires a broader and more representative coalition of voices.

Environmental justice nonprofits, BIPOC-led community organizations, and local Tribal and labor representatives founded the Climate Alliance. In fall of 2018, the Alliance pushed for ballot initiative 1631, which proposed a fee for Washington's largest polluters and an equitable spending program to invest in clean energy protection of air and water, prioritizing the most climate-impacted communities. TNC contributed significant funding to the initiative and chaired the Climate Alliance's campaign steering committee. But despite the coalition's best efforts, oil companies squelched the measure with the largest opposition campaign to a ballot initiative in state history. Building on the trust and established relationships, TNC formally joined the Alliance, which quickly pivoted and led passage of WA's now-enacted 2019 100% Clean Energy bill—the Clean Energy Transformation Act.

When the 2021 legislative session got underway, three important factors were shaping the climate policy debate: 1) COVID had limited relationship-building efforts for the Alliance at a critical moment of turnover in organizational leadership and staff; 2) Washington's political leaders were determined to leave a mark on climate legislation while Democrats held the majority in the state senate; and 3) Tribal nations were committed to meaningful climate policy as a fundamental component of upholding Tribal sovereignty and Treaty rights.

This perfect storm pitted two bills against each other: The Climate Commitment Act's cap-and-trade program proposed by the Governor and the Chair of the Senate Environment committee, and the Washington Strong carbon tax and bond initiative led by two women legislators and environmental justice leaders from the Alliance.

Recognizing an opportunity, TNC supported both bills and co-developed a set of environmental equity criteria to address concerns from overburdened communities. As it became clear that only the Climate Commitment Act would move forward, TNC shifted focus to advocate for improvements. Some BIPOC-led Alliance partners—who vehemently opposed cap-and-trade out of concerns for disproportionate frontline community impact and philosophical opposition to market mechanisms—were upset by TNC's support. Combined with turnover among leaders in Alliance organizations, this setback damaged many of the foundational relationships and trust that had once enabled consensus building.

Due to support from 19 Tribal governments and some Black- and Latino-led organizations, the Climate Commitment Act passed with key provisions to regulate air quality and address pollution burden, ensure the integrity of the emissions reduction program, and invest equitably in overburdened communities. Despite this groundbreaking step towards reconciling cap-and-trade and environmental equity, dissenting viewpoints among partners caused multiple BIPOC-led organizations to leave the Alliance.



### EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVES

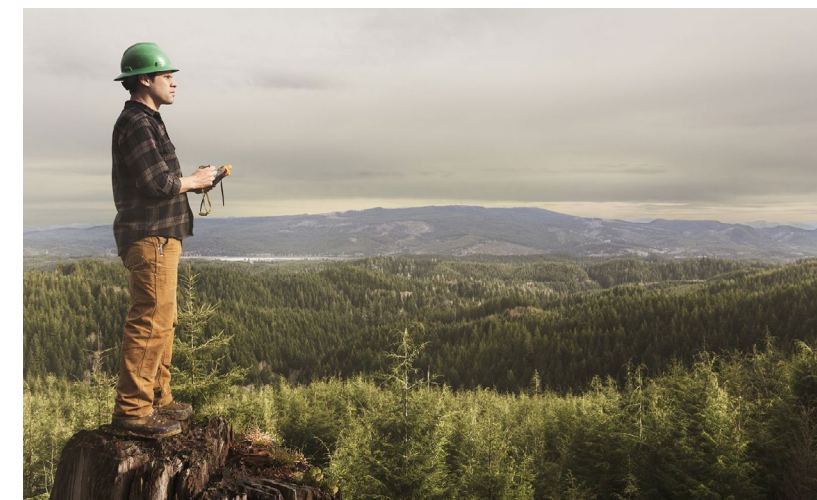
“When we see a policy proposal or design new conservation policies, we automatically ask ourselves, ‘Who wins and loses if we design a policy this way? How might these policy choices change the way communities interact with nature? Have we considered how these policies will be viewed from their perspective?’”

**Darci Vetter**, Global Head, TNC Policy and Government Relations

“We urgently need to take climate action and can expect controversy and differing opinions to arise. As states pursue climate policies, it is essential to think critically about who is disproportionately impacted or benefiting, and whose voices are not at the table.”

— TNC Washington Leadership

From these experiences, TNC Washington leadership has come to recognize that environmental equity and justice must be ingrained in our values, priorities, and climate legislation. This is our ongoing journey, and as we strive to live these values—occasionally stumbling along the way—we remain committed to taking accountability for our actions, repairing fractured relationships, following through to ensure the equitable implementation of climate policies, and working together for climate action.



© TNC The Nature Conservancy has helped to preserve more than 800,000 acres in this amazing state, and we are currently stewarding 100,000+ acres, ensuring ecological integrity and resilience.



© TOMMY COREY Hunters of Color event offers a safe and equitable place for BIPOC to hunt, harvest, and prepare white-tail deer.



© TOMMY COREY Benita Law-Diao, HOC Weekend participant

## REFLECTIONS ON A WEEKEND WITH HUNTERS OF COLOR

In November, Hunters of Color (HOC) hosted a three-day event at TNC’s Hannacroix Ravine Preserve in Upstate New York. With a field-to-table approach to hunting, participants shared crossbow skills, harvesting best practices, and white-tailed deer preparation techniques. The event was hosted in collaboration with Backcountry Hunters and Anglers and the National Deer Association, with funding provided by TNC New York’s Common Ground Fund.

Built on the dual beliefs that hunting complements conservation and modern conservation should be guided by Indigenous knowledge, the HOC program provides safe, equitable spaces for Black and Indigenous Peoples of Color (BIPOC) to learn, share, and hunt in community.

Like all HOC programming, this event was steeped in Indigenous land-stewardship values of hunting for the sake of conservation, maintaining food sovereignty, and preserving ancestral traditions. That was a major impetus for hosting the event in the Mohawk Valley, homeland of the Kanien’kehá:ka (Mohawk) of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy.

“I’ve been trying to think of the perfect words to describe this experience, so here it goes: Life-changing. I stated when I came to the event that my experience with nature seemed half incomplete. Being able to go out into the wild, with experienced hunters, to learn the way they traverse and see the woods, even just briefly, has taught me so much. The moment I got home, I was already ready to plan my next excursion. It’s addictive, enriching, and I’m so glad to have had the opportunity to be a part of this.”

— Liana George, HOC Weekend Participant

Hunters of Color is the only BIPOC-led hunting nonprofit in the United States. Hunters contribute \$1.6 billion to conservation each year, but participation has seen steady decline since the 1980s. HOC invites all to learn more and get involved at [huntersofcolor.org](http://huntersofcolor.org).



© LYDIA PARKER AND TOMMY COREY

Hunters of Color aims to dismantle barriers to entry for hunters and advance racial justice in response to a devastating reality: **97% of all hunters in the United States are white.**

“That didn’t happen on accident. In order to have hope for the future, you need to see the history—how we got to this place. First and foremost, we have the removal of Indigenous Peoples from our land. Then, we have redlining, where the USDA actually had laws to where people of color, especially Black people, could not move to certain neighborhoods. That racism and that redlining went into building our communities. And that nice property that had the access to the hunting lands wasn’t set aside for people of color. It was set aside for the people the USDA thought would make the neighborhoods appreciate more.”

— Lydia Parker, Mohawk Nation, Founder and Executive Director, HOC



### HOW WE COLLABORATE

With project manager extraordinaire Whitney Wheelless at the helm, four teams have been leading TNC’s efforts to make a One Conservancy Commitment to Equity in everything we do. This work is sponsored by the **Inclusive Communications Strategy**, which was initiated in 2021 to increase clarity, alignment, and support of equitable communications across our work. Since January, colleagues across different functions and areas of expertise have been leading on defining TNC’s **Equity Commitment**, which includes an acknowledgement, equity statement, and action plan. The Equity Commitment will help guide our work across the globe and provide the best starting point for practical action with the goal of helping to drive more equitable conservation. This collaborative project is sponsored by GDEI, Conservation, Marketing and Communications, and the People Team. The Equity Commitment team will share the final statement by December 2022.



“It is exciting to see the Equity Commitment work come to fruition. Like diversity, equity and inclusion work necessitates, we’ve been able to take our time to be clear about goals, methodologies, collaboration, reciprocity and how we engage our colleagues in this project.”

— Rocio Johnson, Equity Statement Workstream Co-Lead and Associate Director, TNC Internal DEI Communications





**SAMANTHA SANCHEZ (she/her)**  
Senior Donor Stewardship Officer,  
Donor Relations, TNC WO Development

Samantha Sanchez joined TNC in 2013 through the Illinois Chapter. She then pursued higher education donor stewardship before returning to TNC as a 'boomerang' in 2019 as a Donor Stewardship Officer supporting a portfolio of more than 30 principal gift-level individual, foundational, and corporate donors.

[Click here](#) to watch an interview with Samantha.

**Q: What most excites you about your work?**

**A: I'm thrilled to lead our current naming guidance project, which we identified as a need when we saw more campaigns and highly visible fundraising opportunities developing for TNC. The project examines preserves and other large-scale opportunities, as well as honorific naming, endowments, internships, fellowships, staff/chair funds, and programming.**

*In this work, I have the privilege to collaborate with more than a dozen business units and diverse partners from across the organization. Relying on their guidance, I drafted a document dedicated to equity in naming opportunities that will ensure we are using them appropriately, consistently, and equitably across all business units. In addition to our work, the Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities team released wide-ranging and forward-looking considerations for preserves, while the Leveraging Our Lands team is focusing on reexamining our names for North American preserves.*

## URBAN HEAT LEADERSHIP ACADEMY EMPOWERS PHOENIX RESIDENTS

Amid last summer's scorching heat, roughly 40 residents from the Phoenix Metro Area gathered virtually to learn actionable solutions for the urban heat challenges that threaten their communities.

*In Greater Phoenix, Black, Latinx, and other people of color are more likely to live in hotter and more polluted neighborhoods with less vegetation.*

On some days, even neighborhoods a mere two miles apart record temperature variances of up to 13 degrees Fahrenheit. Residents of these impacted communities are often unaware of the role nature plays in reducing heat and improving quality of life.

The cohort-based **Urban Heat Leadership Academy** represents a first-of-its-kind partnership between TNC Arizona and the Phoenix Revitalization Corporation (PRC), a Latinx-led organization that works to facilitate improvement projects and advocate for equitable housing in Central City South. This predominantly Black and Latinx community has historically been the target of disinvestment in Phoenix.

Via expert-led community discussions and interactive exercises delivered in Spanish and English, the program empowers residents to organize and advocate for cooler, greener, healthier neighborhoods. In addition, graduates are paired with mentors and are eligible for funding to support projects.

**To learn more and get involved with the Urban Heat Leadership Academy, contact:**

Anna Bettis, Healthy Cities Program Director, TNC Arizona  
[anna.bettis@tnc.org](mailto:anna.bettis@tnc.org) | (602) 322-6999

© **IVAN MARTINEZ/TNC** TNC strategies offer relief for communities hardest hit by urban heat.



© **ART WAGER** Downtown Phoenix and the surrounding urban area

Reggie Carrillo is a Greater Phoenix native and middle-school teacher. After completing the Academy's first cohort, Reggie teamed up with other graduates for a community-led shaded corridor project in Central City South Phoenix.

*“As an educator, I am a lifelong student. I joined this program to learn how to accurately teach my students and community to be engaged in environmental inequities that directly affect them.*

*Currently, we're using what we learned in the Academy to advocate for increasing greenspaces in our community. Communities of color need greenspaces and tree canopy cover for our mental and physical health. We need to address the urban heat island impact, because we are the ones most impacted by these problems.*

*That's what this program does. It brings together average residents—who are experts in their community—and gives them the knowledge and terminology to understand the issues endemic in their community so they can be empowered to say, 'I can be a changemaker in my community. I can advocate. I can think of solutions, and I can start spreading that down, talking to my family and friends within my own network.'”*

## HOW WE COLLABORATE

Since 2014, TNC has managed the **North America Cities Network** to bring together and support emerging conservation work in cities across the United States. Today, the Network features more than a dozen city programs, with 50-plus full-time regional staff collaborating closely with hundreds of community-based organizations (CBOs).

- **Foster innovation and learning through structured communication, capacity building, and best practices that can be universally shared**
- **Support the voice and vision of local communities in cities to co-develop conservation solutions focused on community-driven health and well-being outcomes**
- **Create healthy, sustainable, and equitable places to live where people and nature thrive together**

Currently, the Cities Network has embarked on a Strategic Design and Implementation Project that will produce a clear roadmap for the Network to help influence social, cultural and biological systems in and around cities that increase climate resilience, as well as achieve maximum impact for the organization's 2030 Goals.



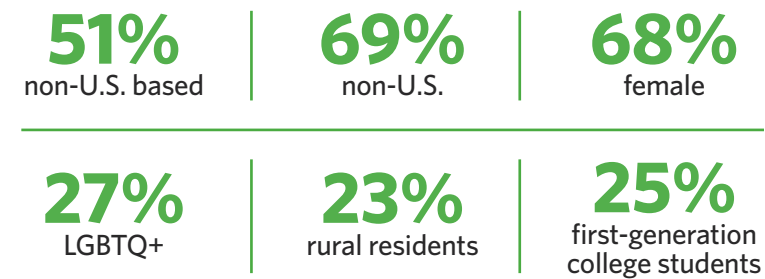
© **TNC** Regional "Reggie" Carrillo, Middle School Educator



## YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAMS ELEVATE DIVERSE VOICES

In 2021, TNC partnered with National Geographic Society to launch a virtual conservation externship program. Now gearing up for its second year, the program saw 229% growth in student applications, with three new cohorts selected to participate in 2022.

**More than 700 students from 88 countries applied for the initial cohort, which focused on marine conservation issues. From those submissions, organizers selected 100 students ages 18-25 who identified as:**



© JORDAN ROBINS/TNC 2019 TNC Photo Contest submission

**KATE IRELAND (she/her)**  
*Director, TNC Youth Engagement*

Kate Ireland is a career educator who joined TNC after more than a decade serving Washington DC Public Schools. Kate now leads the Youth Externship Program, launched in partnership with the National Geographic Society, as well as other initiatives to connect young people to nature.

[Click here](#) to watch an interview with Kate.

**Q: What would you like to share from the pilot externship program?**

**A: I'm excited about the ideas and energy coming from young people around pressing social and environmental issues. There's a depth of action and diverse voices that institutions are responding to. I've worked in education for almost 20 years, and this feels like a new and different moment.**

*The first cohort was by all accounts a tremendous success, with results that demonstrate measurable enthusiasm and demand among diverse young people. We saw a 21 percent improvement among students in this cohort who had initially said, 'I am passionate about an issue, but I haven't yet found meaningful ways to contribute. That tells us those students got the tools and the confidence they need to meet this challenge and pursue their passion for conservation.*



© GABRIELA TEJEDA Gabriela photographs a prescribed burn from a helicopter as part of her TNC-National Geographic Society externship storytelling project, Florida Everglades.

Externships are designed to last eight weeks, with students taking part in individual mentoring sessions, guest speaker events, and résumé-building workshops led by full-time teaching assistants and experts from TNC and NGS. Each student is asked to research an issue related to conservation, later creating a story map to articulate their proposed solutions. Compelling examples from the first cohort included:

- Alex:** [Slaying the Red Tide Monster](#), Virginia
- Arghadeep:** [Scarred Sundarbans](#), India
- Brigitta:** [A Tale of Bleached Cities](#), Indonesia
- Isaac:** [Nile Invasive Tilapia](#), Ghana
- Shannon:** [A Silent Threat](#), The Lionfish, Jamaica
- Mary Grace:** [Saving Seas and People: MPAs in Calapan City](#), Philippines
- Neshme:** [A Grain of Sand](#), Mexico
- Samuel:** [Untold Story about Araromi Seaside](#), Nigeria

At start of each cohort, organizers survey students to gauge their knowledge of conservation issues, their likelihood to pursue a career in conservation, and other metrics. At the close of the cohort, they conduct another survey against those benchmarks. Fall 2021 results found exciting shifts in students' perceived ability to take action.



© RACHEL HANCOCK DAVIS/TNC Volunteers plant mangroves on the Blowing Rocks Preserve shoreline as part of their field trip.



### EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVES

“We need to help TNC build relationships with more diverse constituents to shape and share in solutions and to inspire the next generation of conservationists. This year, Marketing and Communications will bring on nine interns for the summer, as we aim to create a pipeline of young diverse talent, ready to join our mission.”

**Meg Goldthwaite**, TNC Chief Marketing and Communications Officer



# Igniting Sustainable Land Management Strategies

© CHRIS HELZER/TNC Fireworker Eliza Perry ignites a prescribed burn at TNC's Caveny Tract, Platte River Prairies, Nebraska.

TNC has been working with fire since conducting our first controlled burn in 1962. Our primary focus has evolved from managing preserves for biodiversity to a more robust approach that involves developing equitable policy and funding, elevating the leadership of Indigenous fire practitioners, growing skilled and diverse fire management workforces, and helping communities develop ways to live more safely with wildfire. This section offers a look at some of the fire-related initiatives our North American units undertook and/or expanded in 2021.



## EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVES

“Diversity, equity, and inclusion are integral to our One Conservancy Science Plan. We need our science to reflect the diversity of the world we serve. I’m excited by how, over the next three years, this plan will positively impact and advance our science, our conservation, and the communities we work in and partner with across the globe.”

**Katharine Hayhoe**, TNC Chief Scientist

“Every TNC land purchase or easement protects someone’s ancestral territory, and Indigenous Peoples frequently used fire to shape those forested lands. As an organization that has supported the dominant fire culture, TNC is now realizing its responsibility to change that culture to make room for Indigenous Fire Stewardship, which supported people, fire, and all of nature in balance for millennia.”

— Mary Huffman, Ph.D., Director, TNC Indigenous Peoples Burning Network

## INDIGENOUS PEOPLES BURNING NETWORK

The forests of North America all face a common foe—climate change. As a result, many also face wildfires that are increasingly hard to control. But despite a century plus of suppression, fire itself is part of the solution: Indigenous fire practitioners are revitalizing ancient cultural practices, while renewing landscapes and meeting the challenge of climate change.

In 2021, cultural leaders and fire practitioners from the Yurok, Hoopa, and Karuk Tribes of Northern California continued to expand the Indigenous Peoples Burning Network (IPBN), which now includes tribal communities in New Mexico, Minnesota, Oregon, Texas, Maryland, and Nevada. The network, which began in 2015 with assistance from TNC, convenes fire practitioners around common goals under Indigenous fire knowledge and stewardship. It provides a supportive framework for:



**Elevating Indigenous contributions to the world’s mounting fire challenges**



**Promoting intergenerational learning**



**Training in both federal qualifications and culturally based controlled burning**



**Strategic planning for revitalizing fire culture in today’s context**

**The IPBN’s many recent significant accomplishments have included:**

### CALIFORNIA

Yurok, Hoopa, and Karuk tribal leaders conducted 16 family-led controlled burns that provide basketry materials and cultural foods, enable intergenerational learning, and reduce wildfire risk.

### NEW MEXICO

Pueblo resource managers continued working to remove bureaucratic obstacles to tribal collaboration in controlled burning, while planting trees in the scar of the Las Conchas wildfire to prevent erosion in the Rio Grande River basin—a vital waterway that supports more than a million people.

### MINNESOTA

Indigenous leaders participated in planning a fire training exchange in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, with strategies for using controlled burns to improve northern forest habitat.

“Fire is one of the things that makes us who we are as Native people. After a period of time, they stopped shooting us, but there were laws put in place that would imprison us for trying to use fire, and those laws exist to this day. We’ve had to learn how to work with these laws and policies that govern the use of fire.

The hands-off mindset that the non-native people used as a way to manage land is very misleading. It has led to this landscape that we’re encountering today and these wildfires that are so out of control. And so, I would have to say that the fear of fire and not understanding what this land needs to be healthy were the driving factors of decrease of burning in our territories here in the U.S.”

— Yurok Tribe Member Margo Robbins, IPBN Co-founder/Co-lead and Executive Director, Cultural Fire Management Council

© KILIII YUYAN Fire practitioners in Northern California attend a training co-hosted by the Yurok Tribe and Cultural Fire Management Council. (2019)





## NEW MEXICO FIRE SUMMIT PROMOTES CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Since Long before European colonization, Indigenous Peoples in North America have used fire to reduce fuel reliance and maintain the health of their ancestral lands and waters. In turn, healthy lands support their cultural customs, supply traditional foods and medicines, and protect wildlife.

Indigenous leaders are working to revitalize the right to burn, which has been systematically stripped from these original stewards, and to promote understanding for traditional cultures in today's context. Their efforts to are gaining momentum, but there is much more work to be done.

To that end, TNC New Mexico hosted a virtual event sponsored by the Taos Ski Valley Foundation. Nearly 300 attendees listened and learned as Indigenous leaders discussed the longstanding cultural role of fire and its meaning to Indigenous livelihoods, as well as the related challenges facing their communities. The event was moderated by Lindsey Quam, who serves as Deputy Director of Forests/Forestry and Tribal Liaison for the New Mexico Forestry Division.

**“Now we have a situation at home where there's build-up of fuel and it's ready to burn. We're stuck trying to rectify issues that have been brought upon us and yet we can't. I have struggled for years to try to figure out how to work in the system. Using the term “cultural burn” takes the responsibility out of the Bureau of Indian Affairs hands, as it's a local concern, and our priority.”**

— Rene Romero, Fuels Coordinator, Division of Natural Resources, Taos Pueblo

© FORGED BY FIRE/LOR FOUNDATION Rene Romero



**LEANNE NURSE (she/her)**  
*Senior Strategic Policy Advisor,  
TNC Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice*

Leanne Nurse worked at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for more than 31 years before joining TNC. With a focus on racial justice and supporting disadvantaged communities, she leverages her work in the U.S. and internationally to gain and share a deeper perspective on peace and justice, based on her roots from Nigeria and coastal North Carolina, and her daily Buddhist practice.

[Click here](#) to watch an interview with Leanne.

**Q: What does diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) mean to you?**

**A: For TNC teams, we must challenge the organization's own origin story to clearly acknowledge who is benefiting from, and who might be harmed by, our work. Effective DEIJ public policy will enable us to meet our 2030 goals. Internally, that requires structure, metrics, and accountability—while externally we must focus on equitable collaboration with overburdened communities.**

**Q: How has that shown up in your work?**

**A: This summer our North America DEIJ Policy Steering Committee will issue its summary report and strategic recommendations to the TNC community. We have been looking at public policy awareness through a government relations DEIJ awareness survey. We've also developed a rapid response tool to help TNC choose public positions and coordinate climate justice initiatives. We will be designing a portal that will grant easy access to case studies and related tools.**



© TNC Safe Harbor Marsh Preserve, Montana

## WORKING WITH THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES

### TRADITIONAL LANDS RETURNED TO CSKT

In September 2021, TNC transferred ownership of the 132-acre Safe Harbor Marsh Preserve in Lake County, Montana, back to its ancestral stewards, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT).

**“It helps us better understand how we should be restoring those lands, and a lot of that was coming from Indigenous knowledge. These are deep partnerships that we have built with both the Blackfeet Nation and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes here in Montana, to learn from them, to partner with them, and to better understand how we can help our allies in stewarding their lands.”**

— Amy Croover, State Director, TNC Montana

The preserve, which is centered around a perennial wetland marsh on the western shore of Flathead Lake, lies entirely within the boundaries of the Flathead Reservation and is bordered on three sides by CSKT Tribal Trust Land. TNC acquired the land in 1989, with a focus at that time on biodiversity that has since shifted toward whole ecosystems, thanks in large part to Indigenous knowledge and stewardship.

This rematriation is helping fulfill a long-term vision for both the CSKT Tribal Council and TNC in Montana. It represents the largest transfer of TNC land to Indigenous nations in Montana, and plans for much larger land transfers are on the horizon.

### INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE, CHANGING MINDS

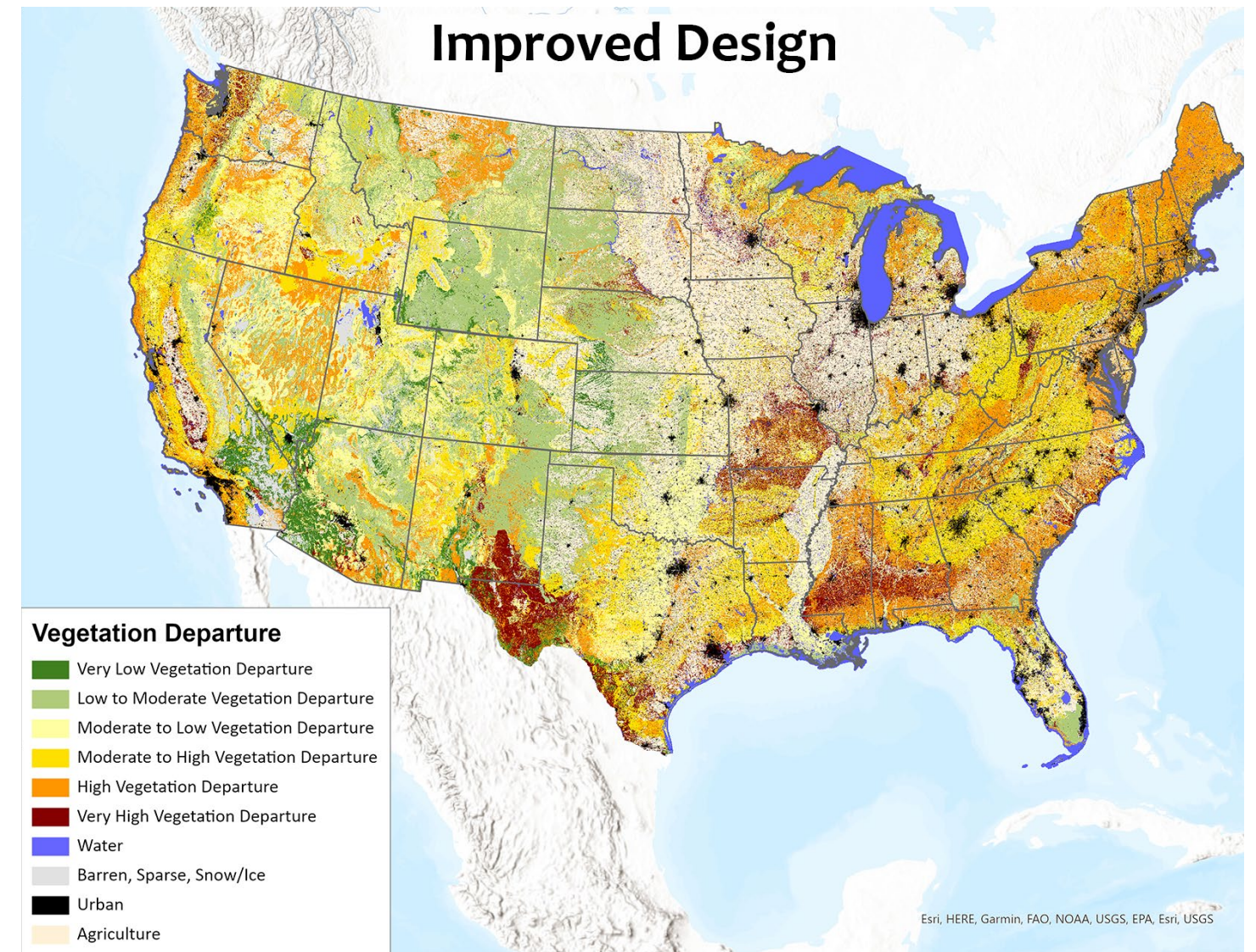
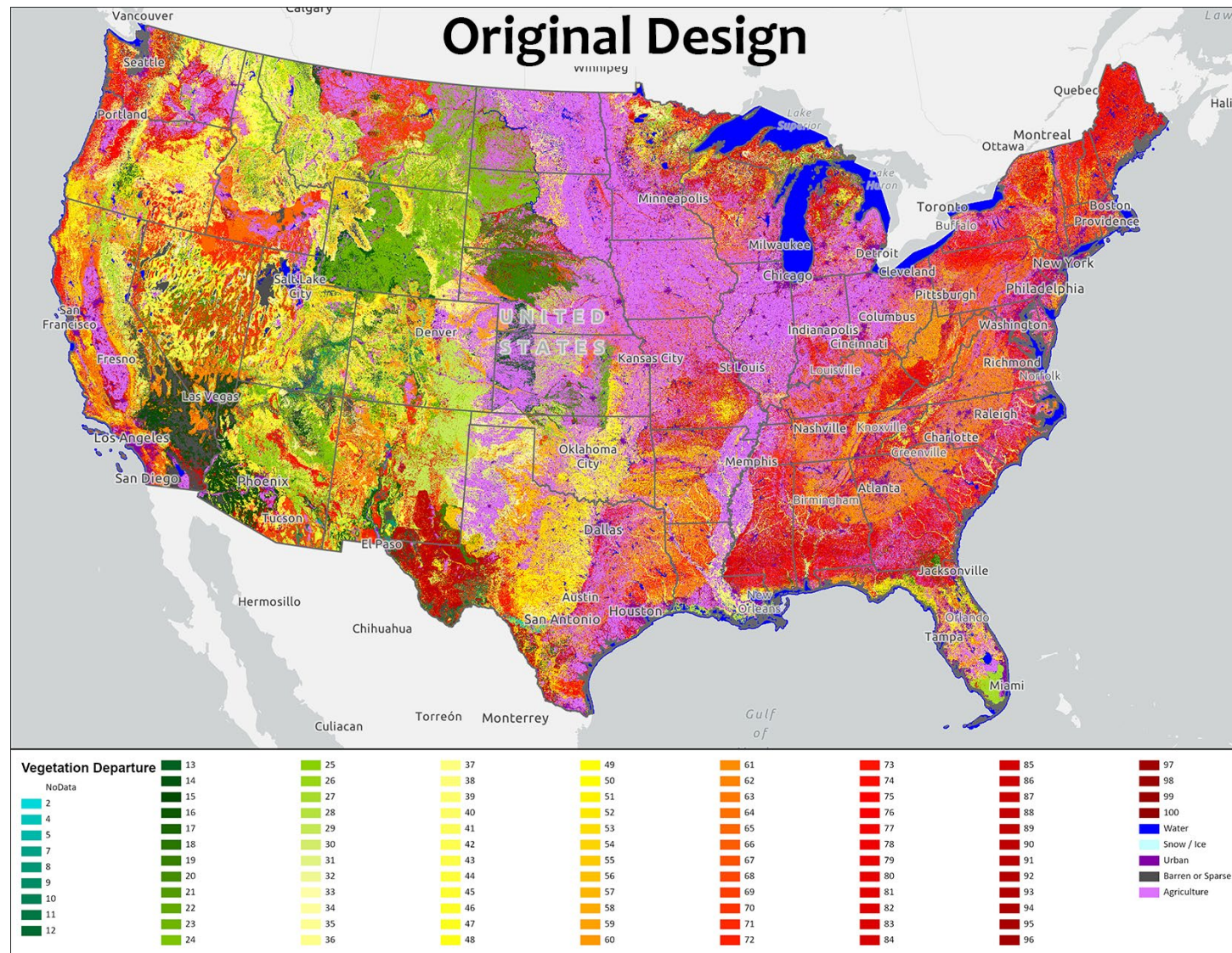
For many in the U.S., forest fires spell only danger. But perspectives on prescribed fire work are changing, thanks to measurable results from a partnership steeped in respect for Indigenous culture and knowledge. In 2015, TNC joined the CSKT and Bureau of Land Management to thin trees and apply fire where tribes retain treaty rights.

The partnership builds on the tribal practice of burning up to 6,000 acres of forest and grasslands per year in Montana's Flathead Reservation. Like their ancestors before them, the CSKT use fire in cultural observance and for vital heat, shelter, protection, hunting, and soil health for planting.

In a testament to the power of partnership essential to sustainable conservation, these efforts have resulted in healthier, more productive, more resilient forests, as well as better managed roads and recreational spaces.

**“The wisdom and generosity expressed through the return of these lands is something we hope others will see fit to follow. The rebuilding of the last of our remaining homeland has remained a key goal for our Council going back to our first Tribal Council in 1935. Our deepest thanks go out to The Nature Conservancy.”**

— Shelly R. Fyant, Chairwoman, CKST



## LANDFIRE ACCESSIBILITY MAPS

Vegetation mapping is one of the many tools and support services the TNC LANDFIRE team provides for conservation professionals. These maps help users maintain the role of fire in places where it benefits people and nature—and keep it out of places where it is destructive.

### In its efforts to make fire maps and other products accessible for all, LANDFIRE has introduced:

- Use of colorblind friendly colors
- Appropriately sized, legible fonts
- Image and text contrast correction
- Decreased clutter in map layouts

These measures are about more than ensuring accessibility compliance for TNC. In the coming weeks, LANDFIRE will expand its [YouTube learning library](#) to feature best practices for professionals creating a range of visualization tools.

**“Our small-and-mighty team has made it a priority to ensure that every visual asset we produce can be understood and appreciated by anyone. This is a ground-up process that showcases why accessibility is well within reach for any cartographer or geospatial professional. Our hope is to promote inclusivity around science communications at TNC and beyond.”**

— Megan Dettenmaier, *Communications Lead*, TNC LANDFIRE Team



### HOW WE COLLABORATE

The GDEI team launched the **DEIJ Practitioners Network** in May 2022 to connect staff members doing DEI work around the world—many of whom previously worked in isolation from each other. As part of their membership, DEI Practitioners meet monthly to elevate existing challenges, share best practices in their journeys, achieve collaborative solutions, and gain increased involvement in DEI work happening outside their region. While monthly meetings are limited to DEI Practitioners, any interested staff member across TNC can sign up for the group’s quarterly DEI Practitioners Network newsletter.



© TNC Missouri team member secures controlled burn site during Missouri DEI Workshop.

## MIDWESTERN WOMEN IN FIRE

Better fire management for long-term benefits to nature and people requires diverse thought and skills. Yet women and other underrepresented groups have historically been excluded from the realm of fire management. In fact, women only comprise roughly 10% of the federal wildland fire workforce.

TNC's Midwest business units are tackling this disparity with new programs designed specifically for groups that have been traditionally underrepresented in fire management. These programs join TNC's North America Women-in-Fire Prescribed Fire Training Exchange—which has been bringing together women and men who work with fire to learn in a supportive, positive environment since 2016—in strengthening their local workforce by fostering a pipeline of qualified women candidates for fire staff positions.

### TNC MISSOURI PRESCRIBED FIRE WORKSHOP

Prescribed fire plays an important role in promoting biodiversity across the Ozarks, Osage Prairies, and Grand River Grasslands of Missouri. Fire teams work long hours in this region, especially in the six weeks over February and March, when the burn window reaches its peak. They use controlled burning to clear woody underbrush and make way for native wildflowers and grasses.

Recognizing that this work requires close collaboration by large and diverse teams, Missouri introduced specialized training workshops for women, professionals of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, veterans, professionals under age 30, Indigenous practitioners, and other historically underrepresented groups.

Each two-week session of the program drew participants from across the country. During the first session, crew members arrived at the savanna from as far away as Minnesota, Ohio, and South Africa. Six of the 10 fire workers were women, including the two squad leaders.

Training alongside professional wildland fire experts, participants worked in teams, using drip torches to ignite burn units, patrol its containment, and secure each site before moving onto the next. Participants of the program were able to work toward qualifications and develop additional skills for their advancement in the prescribed fire world.

**“[In the fire field], just like any ecosystem, the more diversity you can get, the better the ecosystem seems to be — and more resilient.”**

— Autumn Jensen, Staff Member and Missouri Workshop Participant, TNC Minnesota

### TNC ILLINOIS WOMEN IN FIRE PROGRAM

Women in Illinois are making inroads into leadership and management of controlled burns, a traditionally male-dominated field, thanks to that business unit's Women In Fire Fellowship program.

The program, created in partnership with the United States Forest Service (USFS), extends one year of paid full-time employment training in fire management planning, preparedness, prevention, and suppression, as well as habitat and invasive species management and forest stand improvement.

In addition to increasing diversity, the Women In Fire program aims to give aspiring women firefighters the meaningful experiences they need for entry and senior-level positions in wildland fire management. In its initial year, the program introduced two fellows, Emma Ensley and Makenna Baxter. After successfully completing the program, Baxter accepted a permanent position as Interagency Habitat and Fuels Crew Member for TNC in Southern Illinois.

Over the course of the 12-month fellowship, each of these women:

 Assisted Shawnee National Forest with nearly **10,000 acres** of prescribed burning

**Gained 29 DAYS** of fire suppression experience on wildfires In Illinois, Minnesota, Montana, and California

Completed **10 nationally recognized fire trainings** through the National Wildfire Coordinating Group, FEMA, and Interagency Aviation Training 



© TNC ILLINOIS Emma Ensley

**“Having more women working fire jobs will increase the diversity of opinions and perspectives in the fire world and create a supportive atmosphere for future workers. Now, I definitely see myself continuing in fire.”**

— Emma Ensley, Women in Fire Fellow, TNC Illinois

© TNC ILLINOIS/CALEB GRANTHAM  
Forests like this one at Simpson Barrens thrive under controlled burns.





**HAVE FEEDBACK? SHARE WITH US!**

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