

The Nature
Conservancy



Idaho

2023 IMPACT REPORT



Director's Desk

MARK MENLOVE
Idaho State Director



I recently hiked to a favorite place in the Pioneer Mountains overlooking both the ruggedly beautiful Craters of the Moon landscape and the picturesque aspen, conifer and meadow lands of the Pioneer foothills. This area has been a focal point of The Nature Conservancy for over a decade in our effort to maintain the integrity of more than 2 million acres for the plant, animal and human communities that depend on them. Thanks to our partners, including ranching and farming families, we are close to reaching our goal of protecting 100,000 acres of privately owned working lands.

When I consider landscape-wide projects like this, and our mission at The Nature Conservancy, I feel a sense of profound responsibility and opportunity. We must be good stewards of our lands and waters, and care for each other and future generations, by taking far bolder action than ever before. Together, with solutions backed by science and local wisdom, we can drive transformational change and conserve the beautiful and vital systems that make our state a special place to live.

This year, with your support, we've accomplished lasting conservation outcomes that help us address our greatest threats—the interconnected crises of climate change and loss of natural diversity—while laying the foundation for even more ambitious solutions on the horizon. From restoring habitat for salmon, to ensuring that public funding reaches local landscapes, to leading a new chapter in potato farming, to mapping a pathway to our clean energy future, TNC is making a real difference across Idaho.

The challenges before us are urgent, and the opportunities for impact are abundant. Your support enables TNC to do bold, innovative and immediate work today. Thank you for your partnership in meeting this moment.

Your friend in conservation,





The Nature Conservancy in Idaho

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The Nature Conservancy acknowledges that the lands and waters of this place we know as Idaho are the ancestral homelands of many Indigenous peoples. Today they are represented by the Coeur d'Alene, the Kootenai, the Nez Perce, the Shoshone-Bannock and the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes. We are deeply grateful to these Indigenous peoples, past and present, who have stewarded these lands and waters since time immemorial. We affirm our responsibility to honor Tribal sovereignty, culture and heritage, and to work in allyship to ensure a future where all people and nature thrive.

Protecting Habitat in North Idaho

In the northern reaches of Idaho, Canada lynx, grizzly bears, wolverines and other wildlife depend on unique forest habitat, unobstructed migration pathways and abundant water to survive and flourish. These same lands and waters are under extraordinary pressure from intense population growth and unchecked development. Building on decades of work to keep this landscape intact, The Nature Conservancy assisted the Idaho Department of Lands to complete the first phase of a project that will secure the permanent protection of more than 4,600 acres of climate-resilient forest lands that are critical to wildlife and people.

In this area, known as the Moyie River Corridor project, TNC and partners are overseeing conservation easements that safeguard working forests, connected wildlife habitat and water quality by preventing the development of private lands that sit within a patchwork of federal lands. Utilizing public funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund under the Forest Legacy Program, TNC was able to leverage donor support to work at a greater scale than would be possible through private funding alone.

84%

of Idaho voters polled said that protecting important fish and wildlife habitat should be a top priority.¹

WHAT ARE CONSERVATION EASEMENTS?

One of the most powerful tools available for conservation of private lands, conservation easements are a voluntary, legally binding agreement that prevents most development from taking place on the land in perpetuity.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Land and Water Conservation



Enhancing Resiliency at Silver Creek Preserve

After three years of planning and implementation, the Stalker Creek restoration project at Silver Creek Preserve will be completed this winter, thanks to the dedicated efforts of staff, partners and supporters like you. The project will restore one mile of Stalker Creek to maintain better streamflow, improve 50 acres of habitat for fish and wildlife, enhance wetlands and transform nearby fallowed fields back to native meadows. These outcomes benefit the entire watershed and will help build the resilience of the Silver Creek system as our climate changes. Fish and other aquatic species can now take refuge in cooler, deeper pools along this restored section of creek during periods of drought or heat.



Learn more about our land and water work at [nature.org/idahoconservation](https://www.nature.org/idahoconservation)

Remembering Marilynne

A tribute to our late colleague by Robyn Miller

The most enduring conservation is often the least visible—a family ranch that stays in production, a forest that remains intact and a river that keeps flowing—and so are many of the heroes who make it possible. For nearly 19 years, Marilynne Manguba quietly worked behind the scenes to conserve Idaho’s lands and waters. Her legacy spans more than 150,000 acres and touches down in every geography across the state.

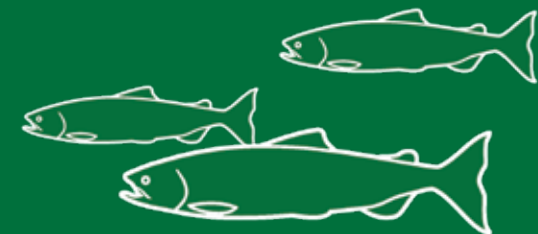
The next time you see a Yellowstone cutthroat swimming in Henry’s Fork, hear of a grizzly bear meandering down Boundary Creek after a long winter’s sleep, or see a sharp-tailed grouse dancing in west Idaho, please think of Marilynne. She was a beloved friend and inspirational colleague whom we lost too soon, but she will forever remain a hero to us and to Idaho.



Salmon are integrally tied to the health of our natural systems, our local economies and our way of life across the Pacific Northwest.

For two decades, TNC has worked with partners to catalyze large-scale restoration and protection on more than 15,000 acres of tributary habitat for salmon and steelhead in Central Idaho. Projects are underway that will protect an additional 1,863 acres and up to 12 miles of stream and river habitat. However, habitat is only one piece of the extraordinarily complex puzzle of salmon recovery, with contributing factors beyond Idaho, and these iconic species remain perilously close to extinction.

Recognizing that we must work collectively to address the issues, TNC staff in Idaho, Washington, Oregon and Montana are moving a shared vision and plan forward that supports an Indigenous-led pathway to salmon and river recovery across the Columbia River Basin.





STRATEGIC PRIORITY
Climate Action



ONLINE
Learn more about climate action at
nature.org/idahoclimate

Supporting Youth Conservation Leaders

Empowering youth climate action is key to expanding the conservation movement. This year, The Nature Conservancy helped support the next generation of conservationists through opportunities like Project Scientia at Boise State University. Project Scientia is a student-led initiative to increase access to climate science in the Latinx community using resources like the Spanish translations of the Idaho Climate-Economy Impacts Assessment that TNC helped create. By using the Spanish translations as an engagement tool, students are helping raise awareness of climate change impacts and solutions with Latinx Idahoans while developing their own leadership skills.

The Youth Climate Summit at Capital High School in Boise presented another opportunity to share the importance of climate work with young people. Organized by local youth leaders, the event brought together 120 students, plus teachers and organizations—including TNC—to connect students to examples of local climate action. These opportunities help young people gain the knowledge, resources and support to become the next conservation leaders and voices for Idaho's future.

Growing Boise's Urban Forest

Since 2020, more than 15,000 urban trees and 174,000 forest seedlings have been planted as part of the Elaine Clegg City of Trees Challenge, a collaborative effort led by TNC, the Treasure Valley Canopy Network and City of Boise. These trees provide a plethora of benefits—from addressing climate change through carbon storage to improving human and ecosystem health through shade and clean air.

Studies show that communities with greater access to trees have improved health and lower average temperatures—but tree canopy is unequally distributed in U.S. cities, with low-income neighborhoods generally having less tree coverage. In Boise, some neighborhoods have more than 40 percent tree coverage while other areas have less than 5 percent coverage. This year's urban tree planting efforts focused on addressing this inequity.



25,000

seedlings planted in Boise National Forest this spring.

WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL OF REFORESTATION?

Forests cover 21.5 million acres, about 40 percent of Idaho's land area. The potential for storing carbon through reforestation is high, and reforestation provides many benefits for plant, animal and human communities.

Accelerating Reforestation

Leaning on our strength as a convener of partners, TNC hosted a “reforestation roundtable” in Coeur d’Alene for 25 forestry professionals to facilitate dialogue on reforestation and its potential in Idaho. Reforestation is a natural climate solution that can reduce carbon pollution, improve forest health, support local economies and provide clean water and wildlife habitat, among other benefits. However, there is a need for greater coordination across public and private land managers to scale up reforestation to its fullest potential. The roundtable successfully provided a forum for participants to explore strategies and resulted in recommendations that can guide future partnerships to accelerate reforestation in Idaho.

With thoughtful planning, we can successfully achieve a clean energy future.

Idaho stands on the cusp of a clean energy future that could benefit all Idahoans. Thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Idahoans are already seeing the benefits of clean energy in their communities—like the school districts in McCall and North Idaho that will soon upgrade to pollution-free electric buses for their students.

With more energy projects on the horizon, TNC has a unique opportunity to use our conservation expertise to influence smart renewable energy policies and infrastructure. There is a need to thoughtfully develop energy projects to ensure positive outcomes for people and nature while making ambitious climate progress. Teams at TNC’s local and regional levels are developing strategies to meet these goals and accelerate affordable and abundant clean energy in the West.





STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Healthy Soil, Resilient Waters



Leading a Better Way to Grow Potatoes

For generations, Idaho farmers have led the nation as the top producer of potatoes. Yet Idaho's most famous crop is also famously challenging to grow with regenerative farming practices. That's because potatoes are one of the most heavily tilled crops that require significant water, fertilizer and pesticides, making it difficult to implement nature-based practices that improve soil health. In southeastern Idaho, fourth-generation farmer Ladd Wahlen is leading another way of growing Idaho's signature crop.

On his farm, Ladd reduced tillage and implemented a system of extended crop rotations to put nutrients back in the soil. He also added cover crops, companion crops and pollinator strips. These practices—previously considered impossible for potatoes—build healthy soil, enhance biodiversity and minimize pests and weeds. In partnership with The Nature Conservancy, Ladd has designated 45 acres as a demonstration farm to share these successful approaches with other potato growers. "I want to build more resilient, robust soil that can withstand climate fluctuations," says Ladd. "My hope is to create a farm that has been sustainable and helped capture carbon, increased soil health and produced better crops to pass along to my kids if they choose to farm."

Regenerative farming practices are one of our smartest environmental and economic investments.

TNC partnered with the University of Idaho to secure a \$55-million grant—the largest in the university's history—from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to expand "climate-smart" agriculture in Idaho. Given our track record with regenerative agriculture, TNC was invited to partner on projects to help farmers transition to practices that reduce pollution and increase carbon storage in Idaho's soils.

Over the next five years, we will support Idaho farmers, provide technical and financial assistance and share localized information about regenerative farming practices through field days at demonstration farms. With an investment on this scale, the grant opens exciting opportunities to grow a climate-resilient future for agriculture in Idaho.



ONLINE

Learn more about regenerative agriculture at nature.org/idahoagriculture

Lending a Hand—and Equipment

A key part of TNC's agriculture program is offering practical assistance to farmers as they shift to farming practices that improve soil health. This includes providing access to specialized equipment that may not yet be part of a farm's regular operation. This spring, TNC and the Idaho Dairymen's Association co-purchased an inter-seeder, an agricultural machine used to sow cover crops between row crops.

An inter-seeder enables farmers to diversify their fields with multiple crops, which has above- and below-ground benefits for soil health and biodiversity. The inter-seeder has already been used throughout the Magic Valley to help farmers plant cover crops.

Advancing Outcomes in the Teton Valley

Following the 2022 acquisition of several properties in the Teton Valley, TNC is continuing to achieve conservation and community benefits under the Teton Creek Land and Water project. TNC has transitioned one parcel to the City of Driggs, which will allow the city to expand their wastewater system and better meet the needs of a rapidly growing community.

TNC was also awarded grants by the Natural Resources Conservation Service to protect two agricultural parcels through easements that will safeguard open space, wildlife habitat and migration corridors while maintaining working lands. The team will also work with local organizations to explore opportunities to extend the regional trail network on the lands under easement.

103,000

acres proposed for transition to regenerative agriculture practices in Idaho under the "climate-smart" USDA grant.

WHAT IS REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE?

Regenerative agriculture is an approach to growing food that seeks to restore nature and create more resilient agriculture economies. For instance, farmers may reduce tillage, add cover crops or grow multiple crops on the same field.



Stories of Impact from 2023

Securing Funding for Idaho Forests

The U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program helps conserve privately owned forests by providing economic incentives to landowners through conservation easements. The program has many benefits for nature and communities, from maintaining wildlife habitat to supporting recreation opportunities and rural economies.

The Nature Conservancy was instrumental in tripling the state's capacity for the Forest Legacy Program over the last two years. This increased capacity will be critical to ensuring a portion of \$700 million in new funding under the Inflation Reduction Act reaches Idaho and is leveraged to achieve larger scale projects.



Restoring Wildlife Habitat

TNC is leading a collaborative project to restore stream health and habitat for sage grouse and other wildlife at our 4,510-acre Crooked Creek Ranch.

In addition to enhancing wildlife habitat, improving water quality and creating climate-resilient watersheds, restoring native sagebrush steppe also reduces invasive weeds and threats from wildfire.



Hands on the Land

TNC could not accomplish our mission without the generous support of volunteers who work alongside our staff and partners to care for nature.

At Silver Creek Preserve, volunteer docents at the Conservation and Education Center serve between 8,000 to 10,000 visitors annually, creating an inviting and enriching experience to learn about Silver Creek's remarkable freshwater ecosystem and the work of TNC around the world.



Helping Salmon

A proven tool for conservation, fish screens prevent fish from being stranded in irrigation canals or farm fields as they migrate. TNC works with partners in the Upper Salmon Basin to identify actions to recover salmon, such as addressing unscreened irrigation diversions. This helps ensure safe passage of juvenile and adult fish to contribute to salmon recovery.



Thank You

The Nature Conservancy's accomplishments are only made possible by the many individuals, organizations, businesses and foundations that made gifts to our vital conservation programs during fiscal year 2023 (July 1, 2022—June 30, 2023). Every gift, regardless of size, plays a crucial role in our work—for people and nature. We thank you for your commitment to our mission.

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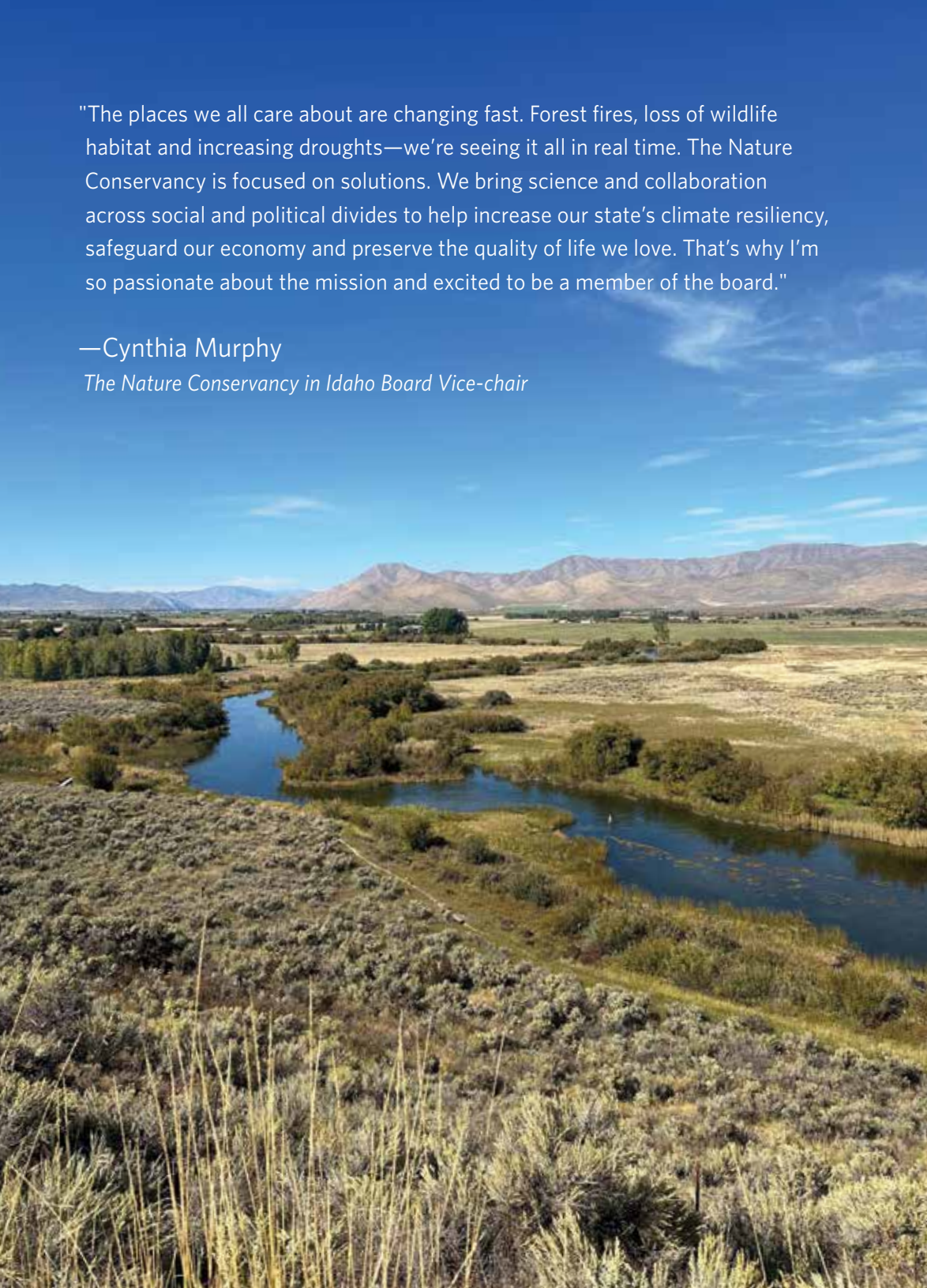
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"The places we all care about are changing fast. Forest fires, loss of wildlife habitat and increasing droughts—we're seeing it all in real time. The Nature Conservancy is focused on solutions. We bring science and collaboration across social and political divides to help increase our state's climate resiliency, safeguard our economy and preserve the quality of life we love. That's why I'm so passionate about the mission and excited to be a member of the board."

—Cynthia Murphy

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¹Poll conducted December, 2022, N = 600 Likely Voters in Idaho, Margin of Error: +/- 4.38%

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