



YEAR IN REVIEW FOR FOOD AND FRESHWATER SYSTEMS

PROVIDE FOOD & WATER GLOBAL PRIORITY

2023

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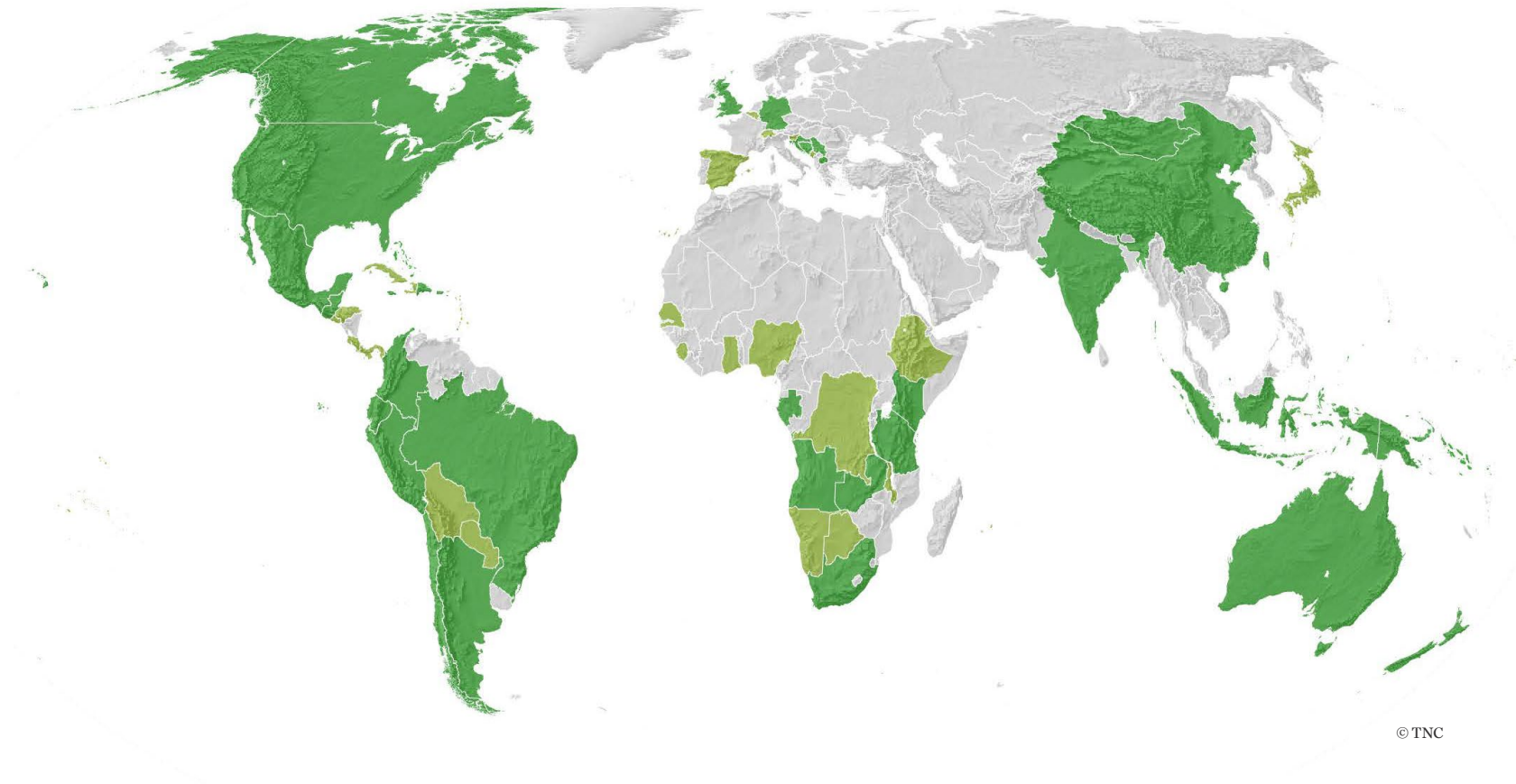
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Together,
we find a way.



THE NATURE CONSERVANCY is a global environmental nonprofit on a mission to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. Our vision is a world where the diversity of life thrives, and people act to conserve nature for its own sake as well as its ability to fulfill our needs and enrich our lives. With a history of partnership, innovation and results, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is working to make a lasting difference in 79 countries and territories: **37 by direct conservation impact** and **42 through partners**. Learn more at [nature.org](https://www.nature.org)

A bridge to a better 2030

Our planet faces the interconnected crises of rapid climate change and biodiversity loss. We have years, not decades, to address these threats. At TNC, we're working with partners, communities and decision-makers across the globe to help bridge the gap during this defining decade. **We know that the best way forward is together.** Grounded in science, our 2030 Goals and the pathways to achieve them represent how TNC can contribute to what the world needs most during these critical years. These are our 2030 Goals and achieving them helps us build a bridge to a better future:

3B

Avoid or sequester 3 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually—the same as taking 650 million cars off the road every year.

4B

Conserve 4 billion hectares of marine habitat—more than 10% of the world's oceans—through protected areas, sustainable fishing, and more.

30M

Conserve 1 million kilometers of river waterways—enough to stretch 25 times around the globe—plus 30 million hectares of lakes and wetlands.

650M

Conserve 650 million hectares—a land area twice the size of India—of biodiverse habitats such as forests, grasslands, and desert.

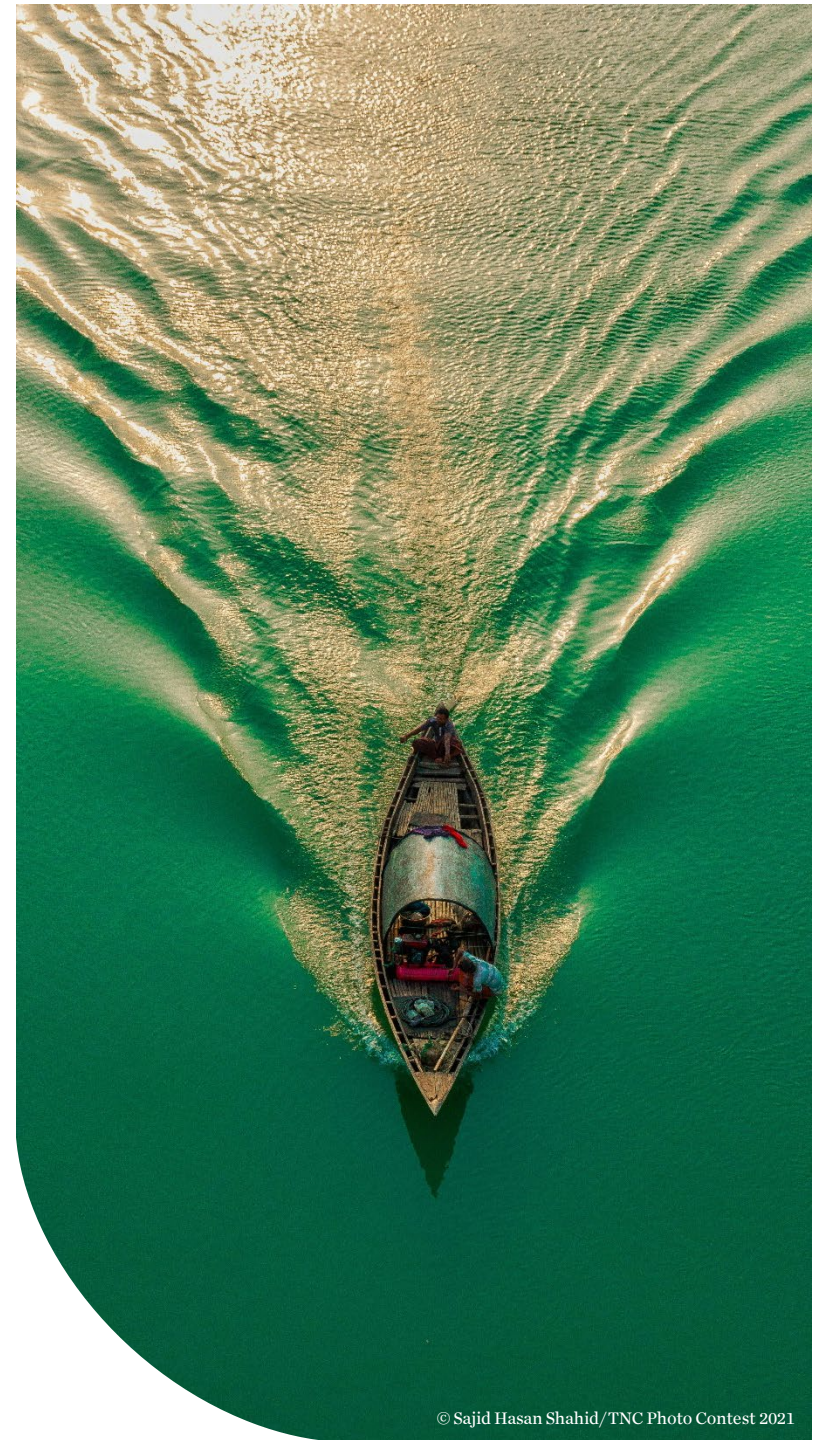
45M

Support the leadership of 45 million people from Indigenous and local communities in stewarding their environment as well as securing their rights.

100M

Help 100 million people at severe risk of climate-related emergencies by safeguarding habitats that protect communities.

Our 2030 Goals, as well as the pathways to achieve them, intersect and work together to create results that will endure far beyond 2030. By working together, we're overcoming barriers and implementing the solutions our planet needs. Learn more about [TNC's goals for 2030 at nature.org](https://www.nature.org).



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From the desk of Michael Doane

Nature brings food to our table and water to our taps. To provide for a growing world, the path ahead demands that we continue to innovate and partner for tangible, lasting conservation results. Reversing the climate and biodiversity crisis won't be easy, but we can get to scale through our grounding in science, innovative approaches to conservation and thoughtful collaboration.

In 2019, I was invited to lead a newly organized, compelling collection of conservation strategies at The Nature Conservancy focused on the way we provision nature for human needs. Since then, we have consolidated our portfolio to a smaller group of strategies where we see the opportunity to mainstream improved management activities aligned with our ambitious 2030 goals. We believe solutions exist, and TNC's unique role is to bring those solutions to scale in time to have meaningful impact. By achieving TNC's 2030 Goals across our three pathways—Resilient Freshwater, Thriving Fisheries and Regenerative Food—we will deliver on some of the most critical, time dependent and large-scale solutions necessary to reach our organizational mission.

This report is a snapshot of our progress in 2023 across our work to provide food and freshwater for people and nature around the world. It showcases the tremendous commitment, capacity and spirit of innovation that exists on this team at TNC. I am extremely proud of the work we have accomplished so far, and I look ahead with excitement about the work we will do together in the future.

Michael Doane | Global Managing Director, Food & Freshwater Systems

PROVIDE FOOD AND WATER GLOBAL PRIORITY CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS TNC'S 2030 GOALS

 **717M**

Avoid or sequester 717 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually—the same as 24% of TNC's total goal.

 **18.7M**

Help 18.7 million people at severe risk of climate-related emergencies by safeguarding habitats that protect communities—that's 19% of TNC's total goal.

 **171M**

Conserve 171 million hectares—that's 26% of TNC's total goal—of biodiverse habitats such as forests, grasslands and desert.

 **3.8B**

Conserve 3.8 billion hectares of marine habitat—that's 95% of TNC's total goal—through protected areas, sustainable fishing and more.

 **13.9M**

Conserve 476,000 kilometers of rivers plus 13.9 million hectares of lakes and wetlands—totaling 47% and 46% of TNC's goals, respectively.

 **10.2M**

Support the leadership of 10.2 million people from Indigenous and local communities in stewarding their environment as well as securing their rights—23% of TNC's total goal.



***We can* provide enough
food and water for people
while restoring nature.**

Mainstreaming Solutions *for Food and Freshwater Systems*



Top and bottom: © Tim Calver.

THE DUAL crises of biodiversity loss and climate change are pushing the planet to a tipping point. As the world’s population continues to grow, freshwater and food system ecosystems around the world are in peril.

Despite the barriers, we **can** provide enough food and water for people while restoring nature. The Provide Food and Water (Provide) global priority is focused on mainstreaming solutions that nourish and connect people with nature. Through regenerative and resilient food and water systems, we’re catalyzing action to improve food and water security, support communities as well as conserve and restore biodiversity.

PROVIDE PATHWAYS:

Resilient Freshwater: Engaging in collaborative partnerships to mainstream nature-positive solutions as well as promote innovative policies that improve freshwater management to balance the needs of people and nature.

Thriving Fisheries: Collaboratively addressing gaps and mainstreaming solutions to ensure sustainably managed fisheries for ecosystems and human benefits.

Regenerative Food: Working in partnerships to actively restore nature and to reverse previous damage, producing food on land and at sea, ensuring our global food system can feed the many generations to come.

Success hinges on partnerships and collaborations across the food and water sectors—and throughout the value chain. Alongside communities, we’re better managing working lands, waters and oceans to co-create solutions to the climate and biodiversity crises. Together, we can find a way to conserve our precious freshwater ecosystems as well as shift to a regenerative food system for today and tomorrow. Learn more about the [Provide Food and Water Global Priority on nature.org](https://www.providefoodandwater.org).



COP28

PROGRESS TOWARD PROVIDING FOOD AND WATER

THE 28th meeting of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) was held in Dubai late in 2023. TNC's Provide Food and Water Global Priority led or supported more than 20 events, co-hosted a Global Goal on Adaptation Day and co-sponsored both the Water Pavilion and the Food Systems Pavilion, which featured our [Grow Positive campaign](#). There were several reasons to celebrate on behalf of our work to provide food and fresh water for a global population, including a high-level announcement by the Governor of Pará in Brazil ([see page 23](#)) and celebrating the one-year anniversary of the International Drought Resilience Alliance ([see page 12](#)). Other highlights include:

Endorsement of The Leaders' Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action by 158 countries committing to integrate agriculture and food systems into their national climate plans by 2025.

Signing of the Call to Action by a broad coalition of more than 200 organizations, including farmers, businesses, cities, civil society and philanthropies. This mobilizes collective efforts around a shared vision of food systems that deliver significant, measurable progress for people, nature and climate by 2030.

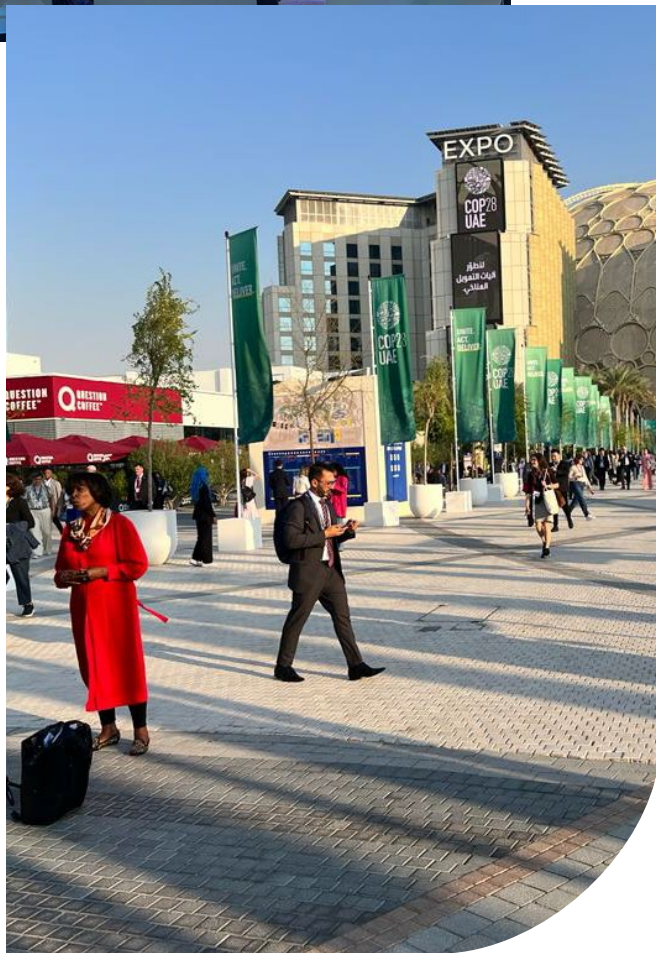
Investments of USD 2.2 billion by more than 25 leading agriculture and food organizations to scale regenerative agriculture through the COP28 Action Agenda on Regenerative Landscapes. This will support 3.6 million farmers to accelerate the transition of over 160 million hectares to regenerative landscapes.

Launching of the Alliance of Champions for Food Systems Transformation. Brazil, Cambodia, Norway, Sierra Leone, and Rwanda have committed to a “whole of government” approach to transforming food systems so that they deliver better outcomes across five key themes: food and nutrition security; adaptation and resilience; equity and livelihoods; nature and biodiversity; and climate mitigation.

Agreement on language for the Global Goal on Adaptation, including clear mentions of nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based adaptations.

43 countries joined the Freshwater Challenge, committing to protect and restore 300,000 km of rivers and 350 million hectares of wetlands by 2030.

Visit nature.org to learn more about how [TNC showed up to coordinate global climate action at COP28](#).



Top and bottom: © Tom Jennings/TNC.



United Nations
Climate Change



COP28
UAE

The Nature
Conservancy

RESILIENT FRESHWATER

Engaging in collaborative partnerships to mainstream nature-positive solutions and promote innovative policies that improve freshwater management to balance the needs of people and nature.



■ RESILIENT FRESHWATER

For people and nature, water is life. Through the rivers, lakes, wetlands and springs beneath our feet, water connects every living thing on the planet. Freshwater habitats cover less than 1% of the planet's total surface, and yet they are some of the most diverse in the world.

Unfortunately, they are under threat like never before. We've been pulling too much water out, letting too much pollution in, and putting up barriers that disrupt the natural flow of rivers and streams.

The impacts are tragic—monitored populations of freshwater species have plummeted by 84% since 1970. Additionally, more than 2 billion people don't have access to reliable drinking water.

We can reverse the flood of bad news with the right strategies followed by decisive and urgent action. Investing in nature offers a clear pathway to protecting and restoring the freshwater systems on which nature and people depend.

ONLINE: Learn more about TNC's commitment to fresh water at [nature.org/freshwater](https://www.nature.org/freshwater)



© Shane Kalym/TNC Photo Contest 2018



From left to right: © Erika Nortemann/TNC. © Roshni Lodhia

Freshwater ecosystems are the great
connector of people and nature.
Together, we can find a way to help
conserve our world's most precious
and vital resources.

© Jerod Foster





■ MILESTONE | **LAUNCHING A GLOBAL DROUGHT ALLIANCE**

TNC celebrated the [International Drought Resilience Alliance](#) (IDRA), with CEO Jennifer Morris joining the initiative's steering committee, and supported the inclusion of nature as a key component of drought resilience. The IDRA was launched by Spain and Senegal at COP 27 and is being led by United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) with the goal of accelerating action as well as helping countries prepare for long-term drought resilience.

Morris represented TNC at the COP28 high-level roundtable celebrating the one-year anniversary of the IDRA, speaking alongside notable leaders including Prime Minister of Spain Pedro Sánchez, UNCCD Executive Secretary Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Director of UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Inger Andersen and Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim.

■ MILESTONE | **MAINSTREAMING NATURE FOR A WATER-SECURE WORLD**

The United Nations' 2023 Water Conference in March—the first of its kind in nearly 50 years—united the world for water. Focused on accelerating implementation and improving impact to advance the broad challenges surrounding water, the event brought together freshwater leaders across the globe.

TNC convened a group of seven conservation partners and four corporate sponsors to host the Nature Hub, which attracted more than 1,100 guests from around the world. The sessions, meetings and space for professional connection all helped to ensure nature's place on the global water agenda and encourage countries to increase their ambitions around protecting global freshwater systems. Here, TNC helped launch the Freshwater Challenge, a country-led initiative aimed at restoring 300,000 km of degraded rivers and 350 million hectares of degraded wetlands by 2030 as well as conserve intact freshwater ecosystems.

■ MILESTONE | **SCALING WATERSHED INVESTMENT PROGRAMS**

Building on our more than 20-year record of success, TNC and partners launched a number of new watershed investment programs (WIPs) around the world. The Norfolk Water Strategy Programme in the UK became TNC's first WIP in Europe—a region ripe with enabling policies that could help rapidly replicate the use of nature-based solutions within the water sector. Partner-led projects, including the new Freetown Water Fund in Sierra Leone, Eldoret-Iten Water Fund in Kenya and the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region Catchment Investment Programme in South Africa, are helping to build the capacity of local partners to replicate TNC's water fund model as well as scale this work across Africa.

Saving Water by Saving Nature

Ongoing partnerships thoughtfully quicken the pace and scale of watershed protection at the local level.

OUR WATERSHEDS—the lands around rivers, lakes and streams—are some of the hardest-working natural systems on Earth. These forests, grassy plains, wetlands and other intact landscapes not only filter and store our drinking water, but they also provide critical habitats for wildlife. However, in the face of climate change, deforestation, poor agricultural practices, illegal mining and unchecked urban development, our watersheds are rapidly changing, thereby threatening the quality and quantity of water reaching our communities.

The good news is we can change this trajectory by investing in nature. For the past 20 years, TNC has developed and refined a unique model for source-water protection that helps communities invest in upstream conservation practices to drive downstream water quantity and quality benefits. We successfully championed the development of more than 40 Water Funds around the world that are making a real difference for people and nature. That being said, to truly reach scale, **we know we need to go further—and faster**. To drive rapid and cost-effective scaling of watershed investment programs (WIPs), like water funds, TNC partnered with Pegasys, a South Africa-based water management consulting firm, to launch Nature for Water (N4W) in March 2022.

N4W started as a technical assistance platform that supports local partners in developing their own watershed investment programs, ultimately equipping more practitioners to champion this work alongside us. Our use of a flexible delivery model has been purpose-built to respond to partner-led demand. Since 2022, N4W has assembled a team of more than 40 people working across 37 concurrent engagements in 30 countries to drive rapid and cost-effective scaling of watershed investment programs.

Conserving our watersheds is a planet-sized challenge, but the potential benefits for people and nature are too big to ignore. Nature for Water is designed to help.



Launched in October 2023, the River Yala Water Fund in Kenya became the first women-led water fund in the world. The innovative project leverages experiences of smallholder farmers to improve water security, conserve biodiversity and support resilient livelihoods. Through the water fund, TNC and partners aim to empower women and girls to spearhead watershed protection activities within the catchment, addressing challenges related to forest degradation, rapid growth of settlements, and increased agricultural activity which is impacting water security.

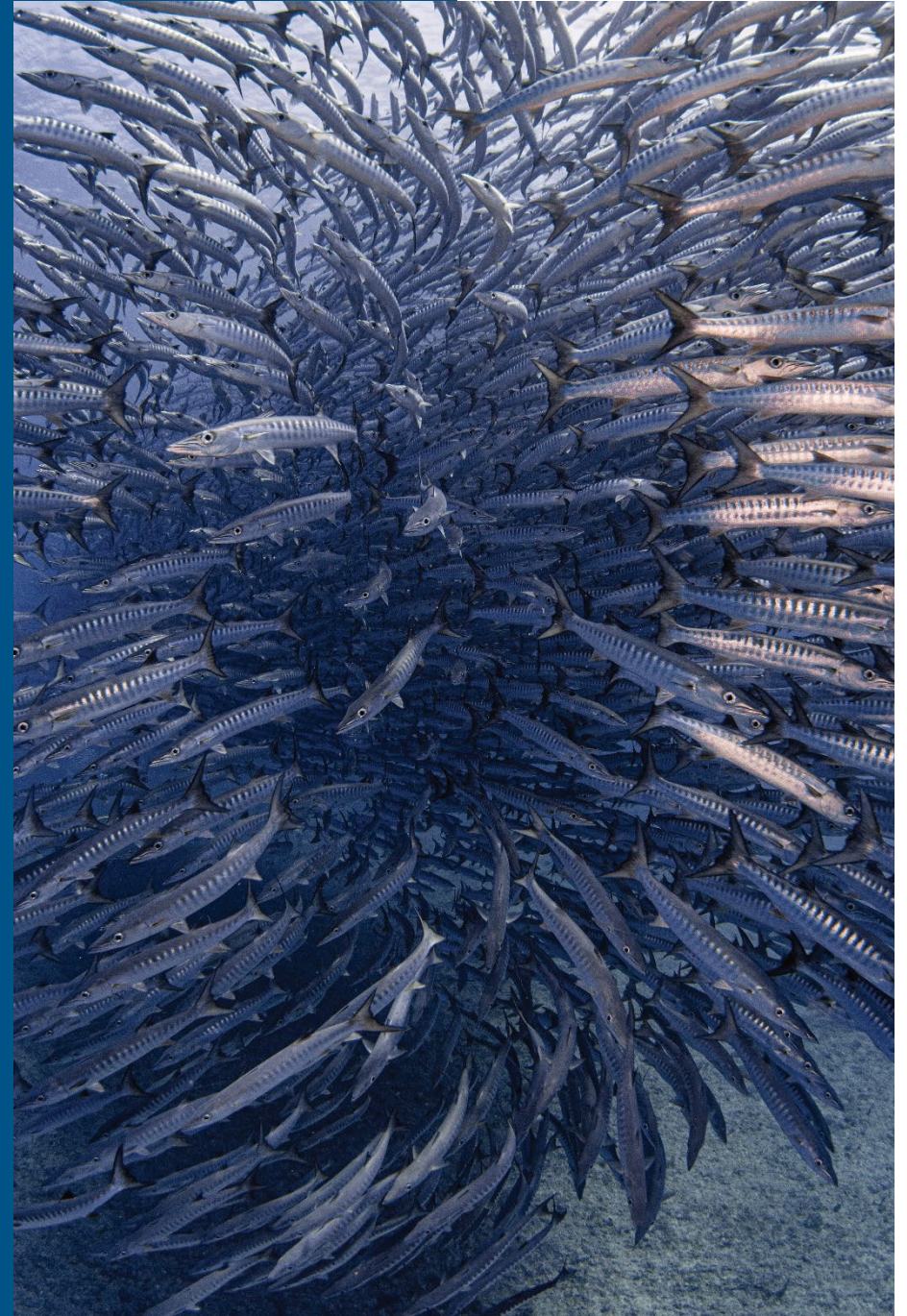


ONLINE: Learn more about how TNC is enabling nature-based solutions for global source water protection at nature4water.org and resilientwatersheds.nature.org

Top: © Ami Vitale. Middle: © Roshni Lodhia. Bottom: © TNC.

THRIVING FISHERIES

Collaboratively addressing gaps and mainstreaming solutions to ensure sustainably managed fisheries for ecosystems and human benefits.



■ THRIVING FISHERIES

The health of our oceans, inland waters—rivers, lakes and wetlands—and the livelihoods of millions of people depend on well-managed fisheries. Freshwater fish and seafood products alike provide vital nutrients for more than three billion people around the globe as well as supply incomes for up to 12 percent of the world’s population.

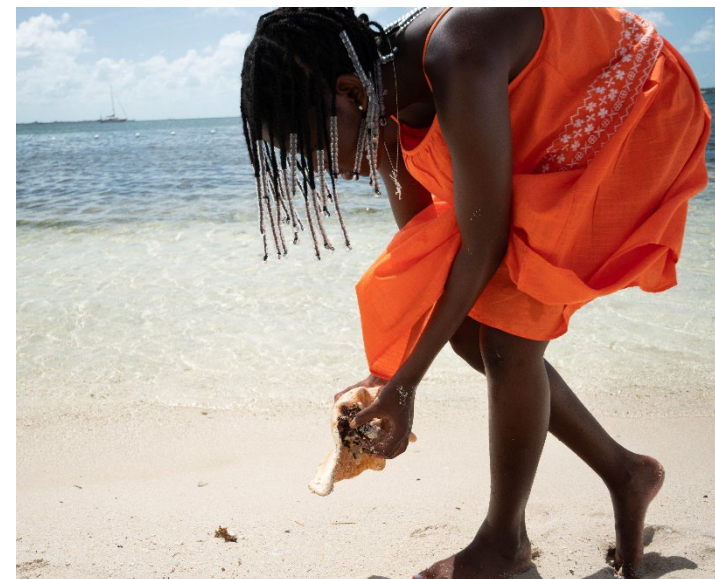
But unsustainable fishing practices threaten ecosystems and community resilience by contributing to overfishing, habitat destruction and poor fisheries management. Just as well, climate change amplifies existing stressors to marine and freshwater ecosystems.

At TNC, we combine innovative technology and collaboration to ensure sustainable fisheries and livelihoods that balance the needs of people and nature. We envision sustainable fisheries that result in stable supplies of seafood, thriving coastal and inland communities, biodiversity conservation, as well as healthy oceans, rivers and lakes.

ONLINE: Learn more about [TNC's work with global fisheries.](#)



© Jason Houston



From left to right: © Juan Arredondo, © Shane Gross



Together, we can restore the health of our oceans and inland waters, protect sensitive species and habitats as well as support the livelihoods of millions of people who all depend on well-managed fisheries.

© Jason Houston



Top: © Jason Houston. Bottom: © Ami Vitale



■ MILESTONE | **BUILDING CAPACITY AROUND THE WORLD TO PUT FISHERIES ON THE PATH TO SUSTAINABILITY**

Small-scale fisheries impact most of the biodiversity in our oceans and employ more than 90% of the fishers in the world. TNC’s FishPath approach supports communities and governments in advancing tailored solutions to achieve enduring, sustainable management objectives as well as marine biodiversity conservation.

Throughout 2023, the FishPath strategy successfully expanded into new geographies—Tanzania and French Polynesia—and advanced policies and regulations for key fisheries in Bahamas, Kenya, Chile, Seychelles, Peru and Mexico. The strategy also completed a series of publications and online fisheries trainings that will benefit the FishPath Network and scale-up our impact. Through the FishPath application and tool, we can positively impact 30% of the small-scale fisheries landings by 2030. [Learn more at FishPath.org](https://www.fishpath.org).

■ MILESTONE | **STEWARDED FRAGILE FRESHWATER FISHERIES AND ECOSYSTEMS**

Since 1970, monitored populations of freshwater plants and animals have declined by 84% due to threats like poor fisheries management, watershed degradation and overuse. TNC’s Freshwater Fisheries strategy is working to reverse that trajectory.

To get there, we are partnering directly with Indigenous people and local communities around the world to apply traditional knowledge as well as co-create new, science-based conservation strategies. A key milestone was the launch of the [Community-Based Co-Management Guide for Inland Fisheries](#), also available in [Español \(ESP\)](#), [Português \(POR\)](#) and [Français \(FRA\)](#). This guide provides a holistic framework to support the planning and execution of inland fisheries projects, which are often complex. The guide is a living resource and aims to advance governance and management systems that are able to deliver sustainable use of inland fisheries with decreasing reliance on external funding and support. It will also serve as the basis for the strategy’s Center of Excellence, which is currently in development.

To move more effectively, we must look to the people and local communities that have long stewarded these fragile ecosystems. To see how this work is playing out in Latin America and Africa, explore the recently launched [interactive storymap](#)—which was recognized as a winner and a finalist in different geographic information system (GIS) competitions.

Keeping Eyes on the Catch

The Tuna Transparency Pledge aims to achieve 100% on-the-water monitoring on all industrial tuna fishing vessels by 2027.

NEARLY HALF of our global population depends on fish for protein, and tuna is one of the most prized and popular catches. Global tuna fisheries alone produce five million tons of fish with an annual dockside value (the amount paid to fishers) of USD 10 billion, representing one of the most valuable, beneficial and life-serving fish species we manage and harvest from our ocean.

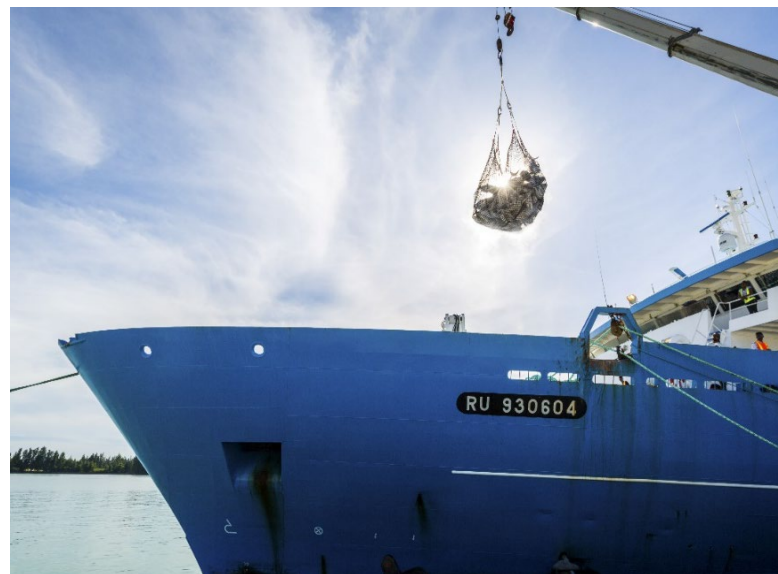
A lack of transparency, however, is threatening our global seafood supply, harming coastal communities and undermining marine conservation efforts. Two-thirds of global fisheries, including tuna, are either overfished or cannot sustain further pressure. Because of this, we are driven to address the long-term sustainability of this critical fishery to create a world where people and nature thrive.

To sustain this incredibly valuable fishery—including the supply chain encompassing fishers, coastal communities and businesses that rely on it—TNC spearheaded the creation of the Tuna Transparency Pledge in 2023. The Pledge aims to help tackle illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing at the source, which is often on legally licensed vessels through prohibited activities like misreporting of retained catch, shark finning and the catching of endangered species.

Building upon years of deep collaboration and strategic partnerships, the Pledge is a natural progression for our work in large-scale fisheries. From our innovative [partnership with Pacific Island Tuna](#)—that directs profits to local communities—to our [collaboration with Thai Union](#) that resulted in their commitment to ensure 100% monitoring on its entire tuna fleet by 2025, TNC is leading efforts to further compel the improved management of tuna, which can influence the sustainable management of other fisheries that feed the world.


In 2023, Walmart, Sam’s Club and Walmart Canada were the initial signatories of the Pledge. With support from other retailers, environmental NGO’s, industry collaborators, seafood suppliers and governments across the world, we can—through this effort—truly shape the sustainability of our global fisheries.

Learn more about how TNC is partnering to tackle IUU fishing together at [nature.org/tunapledge](https://www.nature.org/tunapledge).



On-the-water monitoring—whether carried out by human or electronic observers—gives us the opportunity to have sights of what’s happening on fishing vessels, allowing fishery managers and companies to make great strides in eliminating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing at the source.

Top: © Jason Houston. Left: © Lauren Owens. Bottom: © TNC.

 **TUNA
TRANSPARENCY
PLEDGE.**

REGENERATIVE FOOD

Working in partnerships to actively restore nature as well as reverse previous damage to produce food on land and at sea, ensuring our global food system can feed the many generations to come.



■ REGENERATIVE FOOD

Food shapes our cultures. It is essential for our bodies, our economies and our communities. That being said, many of our current food production methods can harm nature, which—in turn—harms our ability to keep growing food in the future.

It doesn't have to be this way. Regenerative food systems help the world's farmers, fishers and ranchers restore nature by doing what they do best—providing people with food. While these terms may be new, the methods are not. Indigenous people have been using many of these nurturing practices for thousands of years. Together, we can grow positive and actively embrace the diversity that makes food so much more than just eating and growing so much more than just producing.

ONLINE: Learn more about TNC's global [work in regenerative food systems](#)



© Bridget Besaw



From left to right: © Kevin Arnold, © Smita Sharma.



Together, we can turn one of today's biggest challenges into our greatest opportunity—a food system that goes beyond sustainable and creates growth for communities, economies and the planet.

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Top: © Heinn Htet Kyaw/TNC Photo Contest 2021. Bottom: © Felipe Fittipaldi



■ MILESTONE | **CATALYZING A FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION**

Food production is a major driver of climate change and the destruction of nature, accounting for nearly one-third of greenhouse gas emissions, 80% of land-use change and 70% of water use globally.

Our path to change must be swift. To ensure that food production is a leading solution instead of the greatest challenge, we released the [Foodscapes Acceleration Guide](#). The guide aims to catalyze a global food system transformation. It features case studies and offers scalable solutions for a better path forward.

TNC will play its part in the global food system transition by investing in a portfolio of foodscapes over the next decade. A foodscape, as defined in our [Foodscapes: Toward Food System Transition](#) report, is a distinct food production geography with specific combinations of biophysical characteristics and management attributes, including the political, cultural and economic influences of food production. In these foodscapes, we will support local players as they determine how to drive changes in production norms, policies and actions that enable regenerative outcomes on farms, fields and fisheries.

■ MILESTONE | **AGROFORESTRY: A GROWING SOLUTION IN FARMING**

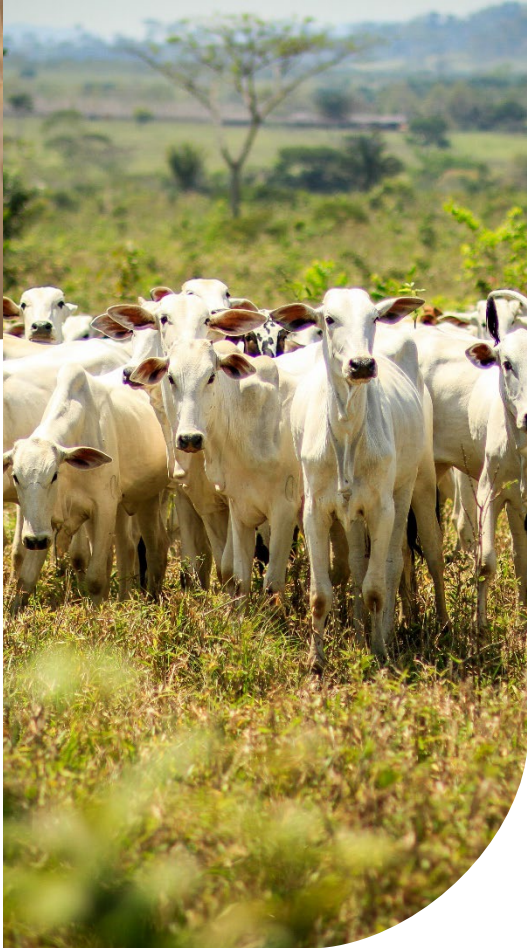
The integration of trees onto working lands—*agroforestry*—has the potential to sequester 2 to 4 tons of carbon per acre per year in plant biomass while providing other important environmental benefits and supporting farmer livelihoods. Yet, less than 2% of farm operations in the United States use agroforestry practices. The Nature Conservancy and more than 20 partners are working to change this.

Funded by a USD \$60 million award from the United States Department of Agriculture, the [Expanding Agroforestry](#) project will pay participating farmers to expand the use of agroforestry practices on 30,000 acres of U.S. working lands in 30 states over the next five years, creating a model for nationwide adoption. The project, which includes efforts to increase accessibility and engagement with underserved producers, will also improve water quality, enhance wildlife habitats as well as increase farmer profitability in agroforestry settings through commodity markets like nuts, fruits, timber and livestock products.



■ MILESTONE | **CHANGING BUSINESS AS USUAL IN CHINA**

A **multi-year** collaboration showcases that we can mainstream solutions to nourish and connect people and nature through best-management practices as well as targeted conservation projects. TNC and Syngenta Group’s ongoing partnership continues to integrate conservation principles into business strategies across major agriculture regions worldwide. Run Tian, a flagship project, demonstrates the advantages—and aims to increase the adoption—of conservation tillage practices for winter wheat production in the North China Plain. Building upon positive results and feedback after sowing 1300 hectares of winter wheat in Hebei, Henan, Anhui, and Shandong Provinces—a major breadbasket in China—recent compelling data highlights farmers experienced a 17% cost savings by using conservation agricultural practices. This data highlights that we can conserve healthy lands and waters for the next generation while producing more food and lowering farming costs. A new collaboration agreement with Syngenta Group will continue and expand the program. For more information on Run Tian, [watch this video](#).



Top: © Smita Sharma.
Bottom: © Erik Lopes/TNC.

■ MILESTONE | **LAUNCHING BEEF CATTLE TRACEABILITY IN BRAZIL**

Cattle ranching is the primary driver of habitat loss in Brazil and is a highly visible issue. Tracking cattle throughout the entire supply chain is critical to ensuring that banks, investors, supermarkets, restaurants, leather goods as well as Brazil’s beef and leather export markets can finance and buy cattle raised legally on deforestation-free land. This tracking not only prevents fraudulent actors from making false claims about where their cattle originated, but also provides better insights on where incentives can be offered to halt deforestation.

At COP28 in Dubai, the governor of Pará, Brazil announced the Cattle Integrity and Development Program, which creates the first mandatory individual traceability policy with environmental requirements for cattle in Brazil. The program will cover an area bigger than France, Spain and Norway combined, with more than 24 million cattle on over 295,000 farms. The government has recognized TNC as a key partner in the development of this program, along with 13 other institutions representing the beef industry, large producers, small family farms, government agencies and other non-governmental organizations.

This state policy win has been endorsed at the federal level as well—Brazil’s Minister of Agrarian Development and Family Agriculture noted that the program’s meeting of environmental issues with social issues is “fundamental for the development of the Amazon.” The Minister of Agriculture declared that they will “transform it into a program for all Brazilian states, in the certainty that this will become a reference for Brazil and the world.” Learn more about [Brazil’s first state-wide cattle traceability program here](#).

Supporting Oyster Aquaculture and Restoration

Launch of a second phase scales an innovative approach and continues to benefit coastal ecosystems and communities with an emphasis on diversity, equity, inclusion and justice (DEIJ).

MORE THAN just a delicacy, oysters and the reefs they form are integral to the health of our oceans and coasts. A single adult oyster can filter up to 50 gallons of water a day. Reefs provide food and shelter for other marine species as well as help protect shorelines from rising tides and coastal erosion. Unfortunately, between climate change, disease, overharvesting, pollution and development, 85% of global oyster reefs have disappeared, making it our most threatened marine habitat.

When restaurant closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic saddled oyster farms with unsellable inventory in 2020, it created an opportunity to swiftly address both problems with a single solution.

To simultaneously support struggling oyster farmers and imperiled oyster reef ecosystems, TNC and the Pew Charitable Trusts partnered with the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration as well as the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 2020 to launch the Supporting Oyster Aquaculture and Restoration (SOAR) Purchase Program, which buys oysters from farmers and deploys them in restoration projects—a win-win for these environmentally friendly businesses and our coastal ecosystems.

This initiative has also established a Shellfish Growers Resiliency Fund, which extends grants for projects that advance sustainability, innovation and DEIJ in the shellfish industry. The success of SOAR has demonstrated that oyster farmers can be strong, long-term partners in rebuilding coastal ecosystems and that the model can be replicated across other species and geographies.



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PHASE ONE IMPACT SINCE 2020

3.5M+

PURCHASED AND REDIRECTED 3.5 MILLION+ FARMED OYSTERS ACROSS 25 RESTORATION PROJECTS, SUPPORTING NEARLY 40 ACRES OF SHELLFISH REEFS.

125

SUPPORTED 125 SHELLFISH FARMING COMPANIES IN 16 STATES AND SUSTAINED 450+ JOBS ACROSS SEVEN U.S. STATES.

ONLINE: Learn more about how TNC is partnering to support a resilient oyster industry and leverage aquaculture in reef restoration at nature.org/soar

Announced in February 2023, phase 2 of SOAR significantly builds upon the initial USD 5 million investment with an additional USD 3 million grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's National Coastal Resilience Fund plus a USD 3.3 million contribution from Builders Initiative. With this funding, SOAR aims to purchase another 2.5 million oysters to rebuild 30 acres of reefs across 11 new restoration sites, while still supporting 100 farms and 300 jobs. Additionally, this new phase will sponsor an additional 50 farmer-led innovation projects to address systemic issues facing the shellfish industry.

This new phase of SOAR is investing in DEIJ, which is essential for the aquaculture industry and restoration projects, to reach their full value and have the greatest impact. SOAR has formed a diverse steering committee made of partner organizations to develop a shared DEIJ strategic plan that will help address inequities in the industry. The Resiliency Fund is also focused on DEIJ. In the selection process, priority has been given to proposals that benefit underserved and underrepresented communities.

Together,
we find a way.

© Smita Sharma

Conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends.

To learn more about the Conservancy's work in 79 countries and territories, and in all 50 U.S. states, visit [nature.org](https://www.nature.org).



We are grateful for the ongoing support of all our donors.
To make a donation that will have an immediate impact on nature now, please visit [nature.org/donate](https://www.nature.org/donate).