

BASIN RANGE & RIMROCK

FALL 2020 NEWSLETTER ■ UTAH CHAPTER

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The Nature
Conservancy



Conservation Corner

Landmark Policy Passage

Believe it or not, there was something to cheer about this summer. For years, TNC and its partners have been working to secure permanent, dedicated funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). On August 4, President Trump signed the Great America Outdoors Act into law—one of the most significant pieces of conservation legislation in decades. This historic bipartisan measure secures full funding for LWCF and also provides funding to maintain our national parks. The monies, which come from offshore oil and gas revenues, will be used to protect open spaces, wildlife habitat and critical lands and waters in every state. Here in Utah, LWCF funds have helped preserve places like Red Cliffs National Conservation Area, the Bear River Bird Refuge and the Bonneville Shoreline Trail.

Utah Leaders Unite on Climate & Air

On October 7, more than 120 of Utah's most prominent business, government, faith, civic and education leaders signed the Climate and Clean Air Compact, a first-of-its kind directive that encourages broad support and non-partisan collaboration on climate and clean air solutions. TNC's Utah State Director, Dave Livermore, was proud to be an inaugural signer of this unprecedented agreement, sponsored by Utah Clean Energy. The Compact commits support

to the solutions and milestones laid out in "The Utah Roadmap," a plan developed at the request of the 2019 Utah Legislature by the Kem Gardner Policy Institute to address challenges ranging from protecting our health and the economy to re-energizing rural communities.



TNC's nursery will be a haven for razorback sucker larvae.
© Zach Ahrens, UT Division of Wildlife Resources

Final Touches at TNC's Fish Nursery

At TNC's Scott and Norma Matheson Wetlands Preserve in Moab, we're completing the last phase of construction at our native fish nursery. The nursery allows endangered razorback sucker larvae from the Colorado River to take refuge in the preserve's pond, growing stronger before re-entering the river. Construction crews are excavating the channel to connect the preserve's wetlands to the river and installing 5,000 linear feet of pipeline to convey water from a nearby spring to the nursery. The pipeline will help ensure good water quality and quantity during the months when larvae are growing in the preserve. The goal of this innovative project is to create a safe haven for juvenile suckers to thrive, bolstering the recovery of this endangered species.

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Lasting Results

Utah Private Lands Protection

Number of Projects. 195
Acres Protected. 938,878

Utah Public Lands Protection

Number of Projects. 40
Acres Protected. 130,063

Total Acres Protected 1,068,941

Total Utah Membership 7,477

COVER The Wilson's warbler benefits from TNC's conservation work along the Virgin River.
© Rick Fridell

To Heal the Earth

Restoring Nature, Our Nation and Ourselves



Dave Livermore
Utah State Director

RESTORE:

1. *To bring back to a previous right, custom or situation; to reinstate.*
2. *To return something or someone to a former condition, place or position.*

—Merriam-Webster

I AM NOT A RESTORATION ECOLOGIST, but recent events have gotten me thinking about the parallels between the world we are living in and our Utah Chapter's restoration efforts on the ground. I admit that having knee surgery recently has made me pretty focused

on how to restore and heal my aging body! But apart from my own recovery, I have also been thinking about the restoration and healing of the lands and waters The Nature Conservancy manages—and the considerable effort that goes into this work.

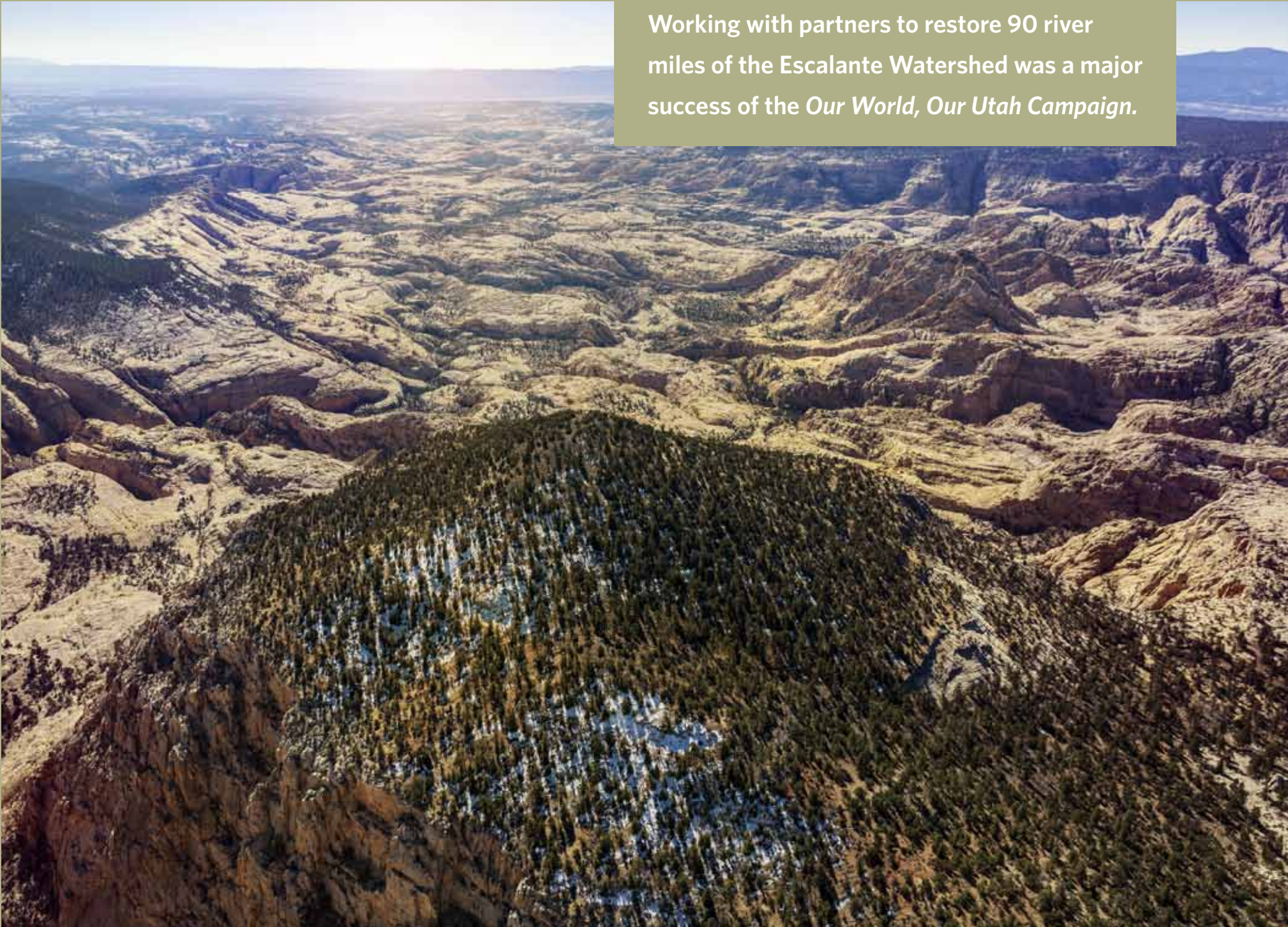
At the Great Salt Lake Shorelands Preserve, preserve stewards Chris Brown and Mike Kolendrianos spend countless hours combating invasive phragmites. At the Scott and Norma Matheson Wetlands Preserve, preserve manager Linda Whitham is monitoring the impacts of past fires. At the Dugout Ranch and Canyonlands Research Center, Matt Redd and Kristen Redd are working with scientists to learn how rangelands can adapt to climate change. In Washington County, teams of volunteers have re-planted burned vegetation. And, from San Juan County to northern Utah, TNC scientists are re-seeding sagebrush to restore compromised greater sage-grouse habitat. Yes, TNC “conserves and protects,” but we also steward, restore and heal.

Whether healing and restoring the human body, or improving wildlife habitat on the ground, eventually a

new equilibrium will be reached. Noted University of Utah forest ecologist Dr. Nalini Nadkarni, who is also a TNC Utah trustee, calls this the “Third State.” Things will not be exactly as they have been before, nor will they be entirely new. The Third State will be a blend of both.

During these trying times, achieving this new equilibrium can't come soon enough. Wildfires in California, floods in the South, 100-mph windstorms in Salt Lake City, 115 degrees in Los Angeles, a nation deeply divided, cultural norms adrift, the pandemic turning our world upside down...when is this going to end? When can the healing begin?

“With malice toward none; with charity for all...Let us strive to bind up the nation's wounds,” said President Lincoln in his moving second Inaugural Address. This, perhaps, is one of the greatest restoration messages of all time. Across the globe, while “preserving,” TNC is also helping to “bind up the Earth's wounds.” In this same spirit, let us embrace an even higher calling. While we work to restore and heal the Earth, let's also work to heal our nation and ourselves.

An aerial photograph showing a vast, rugged landscape. In the foreground, a large, dark green forested area, possibly a riparian zone, stretches across the lower half of the frame. Beyond this, the terrain rises into a series of rolling hills and valleys, characterized by light brown, eroded soil and sparse vegetation. A winding river or stream is visible in the distance, carving its way through the landscape. The sky is clear and blue, suggesting a bright day. The overall scene conveys a sense of natural beauty and the scale of the restoration project mentioned in the text.

Working with partners to restore 90 river miles of the Escalante Watershed was a major success of the *Our World, Our Utah Campaign*.

Five Years—and Cheers—for Nature

Celebrating the *Our World, Our Utah Campaign*

IN 2015, THE NATURE CONSERVANCY (TNC), together with our partners and supporters, embarked on an ambitious journey. The *Our World, Our Utah Campaign* set forth bold goals for Utah's natural world. We aimed to protect critical lands and vulnerable species, improve flows on major rivers, advance conservation legislation and inspire more people to care about nature. This fall, as the campaign closes, we are humbled and uplifted by all that we've done together. Thanks to a groundswell of support from our members, benefactors and partners, the campaign raised \$68.9 million in private and public funds and land gifts for conservation in Utah. More importantly, it delivered lasting impacts for people and nature statewide. "I knew that we were aiming high in our

plans for many of these landscapes and watersheds," says Dave Livermore, TNC's Utah State Director. "But I also knew we had the science and innovative ideas, the partners and the energy from our supporters to do more to protect Utah's natural world."

From the advances in biocrust restoration at the Canyonlands Research Center to the protection of lands vital to the at-risk greater sage-grouse in northwest Utah to the cutting-edge, collaborative projects unfolding on rivers like the Virgin, Price and Escalante, the impact of the *Our World, Our Utah Campaign* will last for generations. The campaign also laid a powerful foundation for the future.

"It's important to pause and feel truly grateful for our supporters' generosity and their commitment to conservation," says Livermore. "And then it's as important to use this momentum as a springboard to where we want to go—Utah as a place where our quality of life, growing economy and vibrant natural resources all thrive."

Campaign Highlights

PROTECTING LANDS AND WATERS

- Protected 10,000 acres of sage grouse habitat in NW Utah.
- Purchased property spanning 2 miles of the Virgin River.
- Helped complete the 90th mile of restoration on the Escalante River.
- Took over management of the Legacy Nature Preserve at the Great Salt Lake.
- Partnered on a new \$10 million irrigation efficiency project on the Virgin River.
- Launched an innovative water-saving project on the Price River.
- Created a nursery for the endangered razorback sucker on the Colorado.
- Fueled restoration research at the world's first biocrust farm.

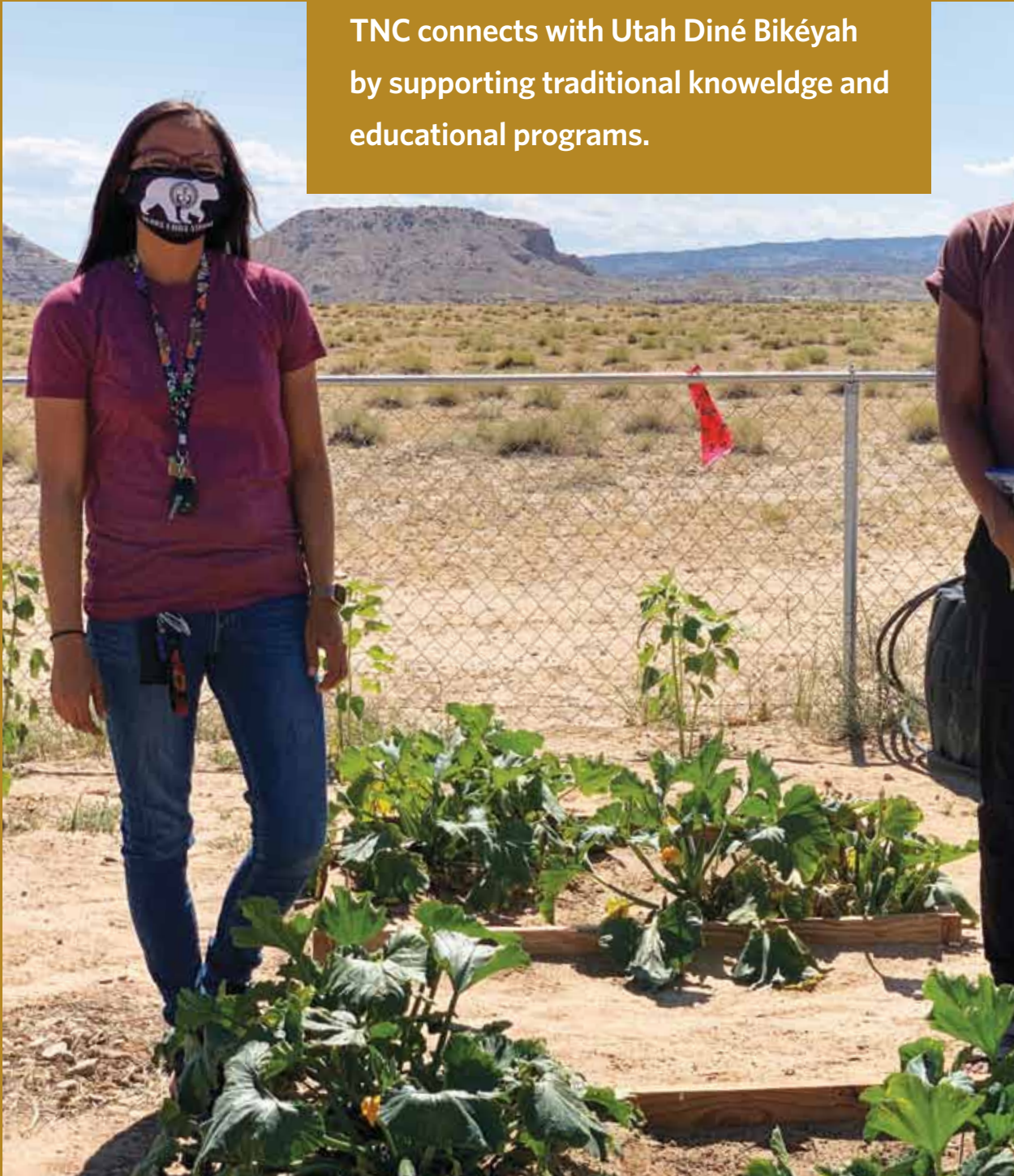
TRANSFORMING POLICY

- Helped Utah pass landmark water banking legislation.
- Supported passage of Emery County Public Lands Mgmt Act.
- Advanced initiatives of the Great Salt Lake Advisory Council.

INSPIRING ACTION

- Expanded partnership with Utah Clean Energy.
- Launched iFiesta for Nature!, a bilingual community celebration.
- Supported the growth of LDS Earth Stewardship.
- Enhanced our Wings & Water Wetlands Education program.
- Provided partnership support for Utah Diné Bikéyah.
- Supported fellowships at the Canyonlands Research Center.

TNC connects with Utah Diné Bikéyah
by supporting traditional knowledge and
educational programs.



Learning from Sacred Lands

Utah Diné Bikéyah and a Sustainable Future

WOODY LEE SEES HIMSELF AS A BRIDGE builder. Lee, who was recently appointed as the new executive director of Utah Diné Bikéyah (UDB), is a former Navajo Nation Council delegate, a translator and a man experienced in helping connect people from different backgrounds. Established in 2012, UDB, representing the interests of the Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, Ute Indian Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and Pueblo of Zuni, advocates for the protection of Native American lands and cultures, including the preservation of Bears Ears.

“The Western side of thinking of land is ownership,” says Lee. “From our standpoint, we are part of that land. How can we own it? We are part of nature as humans. The land is alive. It breathes. It supports us and we support it.” This innate connection to nature, and the vital role Indigenous people play as stewards of Utah’s lands and waters, makes UDB a critical partner in conservation.

TNC has recently expanded its commitment to UDB, including providing financial support for

its Traditional Foods program, which incorporates Indigenous foods into Native American diets as a way to improve health. This fall, UDB is working with students from Monument Valley High School in San Juan County to grow the Four Corners potato, a small, edible tuber which has sustained tribes in this region for thousands of years. The students are learning cultivation techniques from local tribal elders and supporting them in caring for their gardens.

“We honor the complex and ancient ties that Native Americans have to the Bears Ears region,” says Dave Livermore, TNC Utah’s State Director. “TNC also recognizes the importance of integrating traditional knowledge in the long-term stewardship of this area.” As the largest private landowner in Bears Ears, TNC, which owns the Dugout Ranch, also values the tribes as neighbors. Last spring, when the COVID-19 virus began to hit hard, TNC worked with UDB to donate 4,421 pounds of ground beef from the Dugout Ranch to the Navajo Senior Meals program, Montezuma Creek Food Drive, Bluff Area Mutual Aid, White Mountain Ute tribe, and multiple chapter houses on the Navajo Nation.

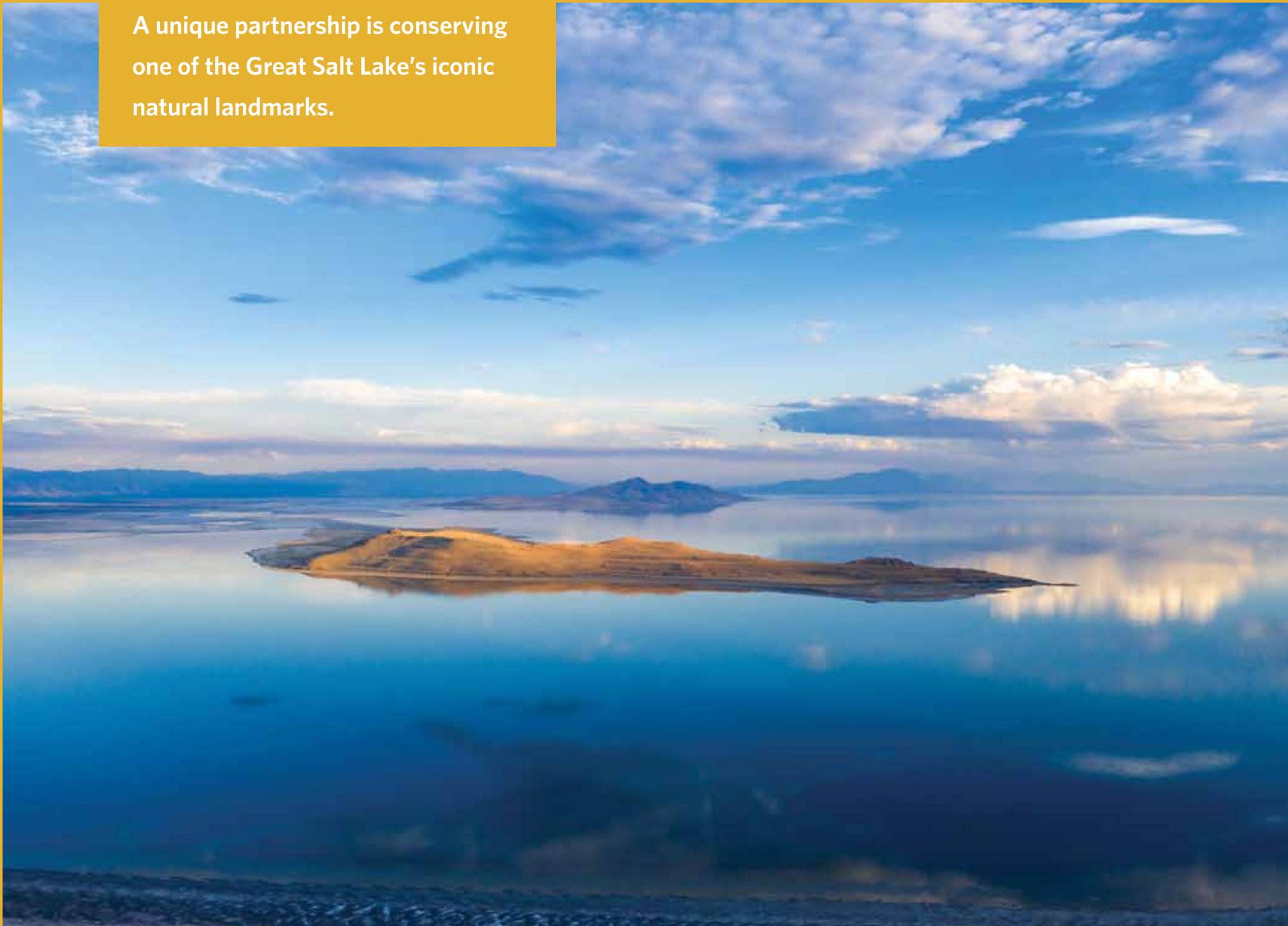
Lee sees more potential synergy for UDB and conservation groups like TNC: “We know

there is a similar belief toward nature and a similar focus on saving something for the sake of future generations. The common denominator for all of us is preserving the land.” UDB originally formed to advocate for the designation of Bears Ears National Monument to protect lands that are sacred to Native Americans. As UDB continues its legal fight against President Trump’s rescission of the Bears Ears monument, Lee says the organization is also focused on its broader work in San Juan County, supporting Indigenous communities and advocating for cultural resource protection.

Looking ahead, Livermore hopes to build more bridges between TNC and UDB. “It’s our time to listen and learn,” says Livermore. “As the original stewards of these natural systems, Indigenous peoples have extensive, unique experience with lands and waters in Utah and worldwide.” Indeed, in projects and countries around the globe, TNC is committed to elevating the voices of Indigenous peoples. From the rainforests of the Emerald Edge and the Amazon to the wetlands of Nari Nari Country in eastern Australia to the grasslands of Tanzania, TNC recognizes that when Indigenous people and local communities lead in conservation, the outcomes are powerful and lasting. [Learn more at nature.org/Indigenous](https://www.nature.org/Indigenous).

(OPPOSITE LARGE IMAGE) UDB staff with Four Corners potato plants; (INSET) TNC staff delivering donated beef. Photos courtesy of Utah Diné Bikéyah.

A unique partnership is conserving one of the Great Salt Lake's iconic natural landmarks.



History & Habitat

Collaborative Conservation

“...it was a handsome broad beach where we landed, behind which the hill, into which the island was gathered, rose somewhat abruptly; and a point of rock at one end enclosed it in a sheltering way...”

THOSE ARE THE WORDS OF EXPLORER John C. Fremont, recounting the moment in September 1843 when he and his expedition emerged, brine-encrusted, from a rubber boat trip across the Great Salt Lake to stand on the shores of what is now called Fremont Island. Fremont and his men, including the famous frontiersman Kit Carson, spent the day exploring the island, and, climbing to the highest point, drew the nation's first map of the Great Salt Lake and surrounding geologic features. That day, Carson also carved a six-inch cross into a rock at the island's northern tip which remains remarkably well preserved. While they were the first Europeans to visit the area, Fremont and his team were preceded by Native Americans such as the Fremont People (named for the Fremont River), who long knew the island and lived amid the Lake's wetlands 1,000 years ago.

Today, Fremont, one of the Lake's largest islands, looks much the same as it did in the 1840s. Despite a curious history (see sidebar), and several attempts made at cattle operations or development, the island's habitat has been relatively undisturbed.

In a new collaboration, TNC is working to ensure this special landmark is permanently conserved as a part of the Great Salt Lake ecosystem and its cultural history. An anonymous conservation buyer has purchased Fremont Island, which encompasses over 3,000 acres, and is in the process of donating a conservation easement to TNC. Upon completion of the easement donation, ownership of the island will be transferred to the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands (FFSL) for long-term protection and management.

“Fremont Island provides foraging and staging habitat for shorebirds and waterfowl and is an integral part of the Great Salt Lake ecosystem,” says Dave Livermore, TNC's Utah State Director. “We're thrilled to work with FFSL to keep the island viable for birds and other wildlife and to preserve its unique place in our state's history.”

Threats to the health of the Great Salt Lake are increasing, as spotlighted in an alarming report from the Great Salt Lake Advisory Council. Lake

levels are dropping and vital wetland habitats face development pressures. Livermore notes: “The protection of Fremont Island is another win in our efforts to sustain the natural integrity of the Lake.”

A Colorful Island History

A.D. 1500 — People from the Fremont Culture forage around the Great Salt Lake.

1843 — John C. Fremont, Kit Carson and others land on the island.

1850 — Capt. Howard Stansbury visits and names the island “Fremont Island.”

1850s — The Miller family uses the island for sheep ranching.

1862 — Jean Baptiste, accused grave robber, is banished to the island. He is never seen again.

1886-1889 — Kate and U.J. Wenner homestead on Fremont Island. They are buried there.

1960-1997 — The Richards family purchases the island.

1997-2020 — The island sees a series of owners with various recreation, hunting or development plans.

2020 — An anonymous conservation buyer purchases and donates the island to the State of Utah, with a conservation easement held by TNC.

Special Thanks

The following major supporters have generously contributed to our Utah projects and programs during the period of July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020 (FY 20). We extend our sincere thanks to them and to the many other Utah supporters, too numerous to list here, who have also given during this period.

Major Gifts to Projects \$10,000 and above

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Utah Corporate Alliance \$1,000 and above

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 Paul & Mary Holden*
 Laura Hughes*
 Steven & Suzanne Johnson*
 Marty J. Shannon*

*Indicates Legacy Club Members.
 (Those who have included the
 Conservancy in their estate plans.)

A Tribute to Special Friends

We recently said goodbye to several friends who contributed greatly to our mission in Utah.

Robert H. Garff

A former member of TNC's Utah's Advisory Council, Bob Garff was an important voice for the protection of Utah's quality of life for future generations. His leadership and generosity on issues like conservation, health care and smart growth made a powerful impact in our community.

Barbara L. Tanner

Barbara Tanner devoted her life to the betterment of our world. She built a legacy of vital support for the arts, human rights and the environment as well as other civic causes. Her long-standing contributions to TNC helped advance important conservation projects statewide.

Scott W. Thornton

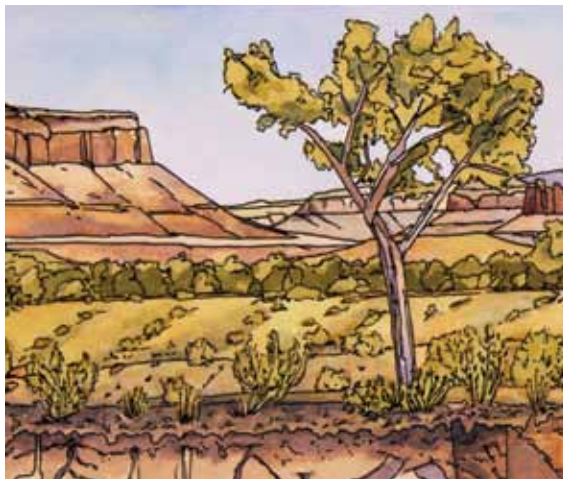
A long-time trustee on TNC's Utah Board, Scott Thornton was a treasured member of the conservation community. His enduring support for TNC's work and his vision and leadership led to the creation of the Canyonlands Research Center, which will benefit people and nature for generations to come.

STAY CONNECTED



FCS FPO

Watch This: Animated Video Makes Biocrust Come Alive



© Brooke Weiland Studios LLC

LET'S GET REAL: BIOCRUST MATTERS A lot to people and to nature. But not everyone understands the importance and the vulnerability of the desert's living "skin." We hope to help change this with a fun, new video accessible now on TNC's web site and our TNC-UT social media channels. A community of lichens, mosses and cyanobacteria that live on the soil surface of dry lands, biocrust is a crucial part of ecosystems in southeastern Utah and other arid regions worldwide. Our short animation uses simple graphics to

illustrate how biocrusts reduce erosion, prevent dust storms that threaten our health, increase soil fertility, capture carbon and retain soil moisture. The video also breaks down some of the cutting-edge biocrust restoration science emerging from the U.S. Geological Survey and TNC's Canyonlands Research Center. As climate change and other human impacts threaten biocrusts around the globe, the race is on to find a way to reverse the damage and heal this delicate and vital part of the Earth. *Check out the animated video at nature.org/Utah.*