While working from home over the course of this challenging year, I thought a lot about the concept of resilience. Observing the ever-changing array of birds, greedy squirrels and curious deer at my backyard feeders provided me with a constant reminder of nature’s strength.

A fundamental goal of our conservation work is to protect nature in the face of climate change. Historically, we have achieved this by focusing on the protection of large, intact natural landscapes with their resilient mosaics of diverse species and habitats. A classic example is our decades of work on the borderlands. Through the purchase of the Gray Ranch and the establishment of the Janos Biosphere Reserve in Mexico, we protected a natural corridor of more than 2 million acres containing an extraordinary assemblage of ecosystems.

Our work is now increasingly focused on creating resilience by providing a helping hand to nature through restoring ecosystems that have been altered. A great example is our new program to collect one million pine seeds and to plant 100,000 trees to rehabilitate severely burned areas within the Jemez Mountains.

Thanks to your ongoing support we are able to expand our efforts to conserve and create a resilient New Mexico for our children and our grandchildren.

Yours in nature,

Terry Sullivan, State Director

ON THE COVER A storm rolling through the Cliff-Gila Valley at sunset. © Dave Showalter

THIS PAGE LEFT TO RIGHT TOP ROW State Director Terry Sullivan © Alan Eckert Photography; Hummingbird © John Duncan/TNC Photo Contest 2018; Partners across New Mexico helped TNC in reforestation, tree-planting and other conservation efforts this year, both in person and remotely. © Roberto Rosales

OPPOSITE PAGE LARGE PHOTO The Gila River, the last of the Southwest’s major free-flowing rivers, runs through Grant County, New Mexico. INSET TOP TO BOTTOM The Conservancy’s Gila Riparian Preserve protects more than 1,200 acres of the Southwest’s fragile riparian habitat and the verdant gallery woodland along the river. © Erika Nortemann/TNC; A pied-billed grebe (Podilymbus podiceps) at the wetland pond at TNC’s Gila River Farm in Cliff, New Mexico. © Erika Nortemann/TNC;
Some remember 1982 for buying your first CD or hearing about the Falkland Islands, but for conservationists in New Mexico, that was the year when the first purchase was made to establish TNC’s Gila River Preserve. Nearly 40 years later, the preserve protects one of the last free flowing rivers in the West, a “reference river” — a place people can learn from when working to restore rivers that are no longer functioning well.

The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission’s important decision this year to not construct a diversion on the river will safeguard those flows for future generations.

Most rivers in the Southwest are disappearing or struggling due to stresses such as over-diversion, de-watering, dams and other barriers. Investing time into restoration equity, the Gila now has an intact flow regime that experiences the full range of flows, creating an incredibly dynamic river ecosystem resilient to challenges. It rebounds from floods and drought because the flow regime is intact, a keystone component to its health and diversity.

Our optimistic outlook for a resilient riparian area resulted from long-term investments in science, planning, analysis and ultimately, action. Where land, water and topographical changes intermingle, diversity thrives. Here, neotropical migratory songbirds like the Southwest willow flycatcher nest in Goodding willows shading the floodplain and where the American black bear, New Mexico’s state animal, can be spotted on trail cameras.

This diverse habitat led conservationists to collaborate on community-based strategies using every tool in the protection toolbox, from land and water right acquisitions to wetland restoration demonstration projects with places for monitoring and passive recreation. Today, more than 250,000 acres are collaboratively managed by TNC, local landowners, federal and state agencies in partnership with local organizations.

PIVOTAL PROJECTS

Hooray for the Gila!
Healthy Forests & Water

Bringing our forests back to life one tree at a time

Imagine your favorite forested area without big, beautiful pine trees cooling you from the sun or providing fresh air during your hike. That’s what we’re facing across the Jemez Mountains, which were scorched by the Las Conchas Fire in 2011.

The flames burned so hot that the seed supply was destroyed. That, combined with drought and warmer temperatures, could mean serious issues for our water, recreation industry and the animals who call the forest their home.

To enhance the TNC-led Rio Grande Water Fund, the chapter launched a reforestation effort — After the Fire: Seeding New Mexico’s Future — designed to bring life back to 4,000 acres of scarred land in the Bandelier National Monument.

“The Rio Grande Water Fund has thinned 140,000 acres to prevent severe fires — including one in the Santa Fe National Forest this summer,” says Collin Haffey, TNC’s Forest and Watershed Health Manager in New Mexico. “Now, we’re thinning in tandem with planting to create forests that capture carbon, protect our water and create wildlife habitat.

Using seeds procured by the timber industry in the 1970s, Santa Clara Pueblo has already planted 3,000 trees.

“But, we have a challenge in front of us in that we need to collect millions of seeds now because supply is running out,” Haffey said.

A new online app in development can teach people how to collect the right kind of seeds from the right landscapes. Collected seeds will be delivered to Dr. Owen Burney, superintendent of New Mexico State University’s John T. Harrington Forestry Research Center, who will ensure new trees grown are resilient to warmer, drier weather.

Creating resilient forests and planting trees are strategies embedded in the 2020 New Mexico State Forest Action Plan. Former TNC employee and current State Forester Laura McCarthy worked with TNC and other stakeholders to develop a plan to address land and watershed issues in the face of climate change. Recreation — as a driver of our economic engine — is also pivotal part of the plan.

Haffey agrees. “A healthy environment is inextricably tied to a healthy economy,” he said.
Tackling Climate Change

Ready! Climate! Action!

With the sun shining at least 75 days a year more than most states, New Mexico radiates potential for solar, wind and other clean energy alternatives. Now the state is focused on those renewable options, thanks to a huge change in momentum that took place in 2019.

In that year, an Executive Order called for statewide reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of at least 45 percent by 2030 over 2005 levels, in support of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. Next, the Energy Transition Act (ETA) established clear goals for the state to utilize these resources for transitioning our energy needs away from carbon-based power.

Establishing these goals was a needed first step, but work must continue to ensure we meet these goals.

“We believe that it is possible to meet the goals of the ETA, have carbon-free power and protect key ecosystems and natural places in New Mexico,” said Nina Carranco, TNC’s director of external affairs in New Mexico.

Carranco said that in 2020, TNC advanced clean energy and climate change action in New Mexico by advocating for tax credits for electric vehicles and for charging stations. Reviewing methane regulations, increasing carbon sequestration on working lands and natural infrastructure solutions also round-out TNC’s clean energy and climate action agenda in New Mexico.

A good example of how conservation can help in the fight against climate change is the Rio Grande Water Fund, a public-private partnership collaborating to prevent catastrophic wildfire while also reforesting critical areas. This successful project demonstrates TNC leading on-the-ground action that helps our ecosystems and mitigates climate change to clean our air, improve our health and create new jobs.

“I hope momentum continues,” Carranco said. “A good foundation exists, but we need to ensure New Mexico engages and keeps making progress on these matters. We can sequester carbon and help remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Our leadership here can demonstrate to the rest of the region and the US how a transition to clean energy works. We can make a difference here.”
People Partner Together for Planting Trees

When you look at trees, you may see them for the shade they provide or the green pop of color they add to the landscape. They also serve as air purifiers, water filters, and even squirrel homes. Trees are forts, hammock holders and sometimes even grocery stores, for the fruit they give to birds and us. Today, we also recognize trees as climate fighters and with us, partners for nature.

People and organizations around Albuquerque are joining The Nature Conservancy to plant trees. Collectively, the goal is to establish more than 100,000 trees in Albuquerque over the next 10 years to build shade that will reduce heat and improve air quality naturally.

The effort has attracted groups like the City of Albuquerque Parks and Recreation Department to local residents to join the cause. The cascading collaboration continues with additional partners like the Friends of Valle de Oro, which launched a Backyard Refuge program, and local community groups that support the collaborative’s tree-planting goal by volunteering to plant seedlings around the city.

“This is one of the only opportunities we have here to bring nature back into our culture and our urban areas,” said Cherry Bell of the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps. “With all the industry and everything, it’s good to add some new green into the area.”

In addition to the Youth Corps, TNC organized volunteers who gave more than 1,000 hours to the tree planting effort last year. Working with an alliance composed of public and private industry leaders, TNC also produced a series of videos to raise awareness about the need to steward our mature tree canopy while planting for the future.

Additionally, The Nature Conservancy launched a Tree Stewards program to help train volunteers in proper tree care. Now in its second season, volunteers are helping another non-profit, Tree New Mexico, lead on planting this fall — adding nearly 1,000 trees toward our shared goal. A video featuring Bell and other bilingual speakers explains the partnership online at nature.org/abq.

Jennifer Dann, a former urban and community forestry program manager for New Mexico State Forestry said the arrival of TNC’s tree-planting program was “a life-saving defibrillator on the heart of the Middle Rio Grande Valley natural resource community.”

Dann said TNC collaborated with more than 20 government and non-profit organizations to identify and execute a unifying strategy with precision while developing capacity and leveraging funding.

“For the first time, I feel like we all have the same heart rhythm,” she said.
One Conservancy

Local to Global

Strength and vitality lie in being one organization and working together in local places and across borders to achieve our global mission.

New Mexico leaned into this One Conservancy core value when Nature United (TNC’s name in Canada) needed operations and finance support to establish Thaidene Nënë in Canada’s Northwest Territories. The 6.5-million-acre protected area, which is bigger than Vermont, includes Canada’s newest national park. Indigenous leadership and government collaborated on this historic land protection project.

“We are grateful for the time and energy our colleagues in the New Mexico Chapter, specifically Alberto Granados and Priscilla Ornelas, put into supporting the work of the Canada team,” said Jenny Brown, TNC Canada’s conservation director. “The Thaidene Nënë Trust will ensure the Lutsel K’e Dene First Nation has the financial resources it needs for long-term stewardship of their traditional territory,” she said. “It’s innovative as it’s financing the stewardship activities and leadership of the Indigenous people in perpetuity.”

Thaidene Nënë means Land of Ancestors in the Denesoline language. People who have lived in this area for centuries fish and harvest caribous whose hides are used for clothing, whose bones are used for tools and whose meat they can consume.

“Indigenous people in Canada, New Mexico and around the world have a profound connection to the land,” said Terry Sullivan. “New Mexico is proud to be part of the conservation of this vast territory and excited for the future of these communities.”

The conservation challenges we face today are immense. By helping each other, we can make an everlasting difference.

The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.
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 2020 (July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020). Every gift plays a crucial role in our work—for people and nature. We thank you for your commitment to our mission.*
In 2020, we suffered the loss of Don Lichty, a champion for the conservation of the Gila River. Over the course of several decades, Don and his wife Pam established a lasting conservation legacy. The Lichtys built a house while farming on the banks of the Gila River in the late 1970s. They sold the farm and moved their family to Hawaii in the 1980s, but after TNC purchased the property in the early 2000s, Don and Pam funded the establishment of the Lichty Ecological Research Center at their former residence. The Gila River Farm and the Lichty Center have become the centerpiece of our community-based conservation work on the Gila, serving as a residence for staff and researchers, a wonderful meeting space for scientists and conservationists and a gathering place for the local community.
The Legacy Club is a group of supporters who have made a life-income gift to The Nature Conservancy or named the Conservancy as a beneficiary in their estate plans. We thank our Legacy Club members for their dedication to our mission. If you would like to join our Legacy Club, please contact Jackie Hall, director of philanthropy, at 505-946-2021 or jacquelyn_hall@tnc.org.
Leave a Legacy

To make a gift of any kind to The Nature Conservancy is an act of generosity. To make a long-term gift—one derived from the work of a lifetime—is to make a commitment beyond measure.

If you are interested in becoming a Legacy Club member by naming The Nature Conservancy in New Mexico as a beneficiary of your will, trust, retirement plan, life insurance policy or financial accounts, please contact Jackie Hall at (505) 946-2021 or jacquelyn_hall@tnc.org.

Give the Gift of a Lifetime

The Legacy Club is a group of Conservancy supporters who have made a lasting commitment to conservation by making a life-income gift with TNC or by naming The Nature Conservancy in New Mexico as a beneficiary in their estate plans. The Legacy Club is a way for us to recognize this profound contribution to The Nature Conservancy’s future.

Create Your Conservation Legacy

For more than half a century, thousands of bequests and planned gifts have provided vital support for the lands and waters you care about. Today you can help continue this tradition by making a lasting commitment to TNC. When you join The Legacy Club, you help ensure that the conservation work we pioneer today will continue long into the future.

Legacy Club Benefits

• Nature Conservancy magazine, our award-winning quarterly publication;
• The semi-annual newsletter, “Legacy”; 
• TNC’s annual report;
• Trip invitations offering participants a unique and up-close look at our work;
• Invitations to special events; and
• Exclusive discounts and offers.

If you have already included The Nature Conservancy in your long-term plans and would like your gift specifically designated for New Mexico projects, please speak to your advisors about including the following statement in your paperwork: The Nature Conservancy, a nonprofit corporation, organized and existing under the laws of the District of Columbia, and with principal business address of 4245 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 100, Arlington, VA 22203-1606, (tax number 53-0242652).
In 2020, we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Santa Fe Canyon Preserve.

Established in 2000 when PNM donated 190 acres on Upper Canyon Road, the preserve is just a few miles from Santa Fe’s historic downtown plaza. Today, more than 30,000 visitors and 5,000 students annually hike the preserve that has grown to 575 acres.

Learn more at nature.org/santafecanyon