FROM THE STATE DIRECTOR

Across Nevada, nature is our highest priority.

2021, like the year before, brought unforeseeable challenges to all of us. But 2021 also brought tremendous hope—our field work continued to move forward, more challenges to all of us. But 2021 also brought tremendous opportunities to work more effectively through three new initiatives:

• Our Resilient Lands Initiative brings our efforts on the lands and waters on which all life depends.
• Our Climate Action Initiative brings innovation to climate change in Nevada and around the world.
• Our Resilient Waters Initiative is focused on protecting our limited water supply from stresses and threats, while helping decision-makers understand the complexity of ground and surface water needs.

As we move forward in this new fiscal year, we invite you to experience our work firsthand—visit a preserve, attend one of our educational programs, and most importantly, reach out to us with your questions, concerns and ideas.

Thank you for being part of our journey!

Mauricia M.M. Baca, Nevada State Director

WHERE WE WORK

PROTECT

A Timber Harvest Plan for 1,260 acres on the Independence Lake Preserve was approved this year by Cal Fire. No invasive brook trout were encountered in upper Independence Creek or Independence Lake this fall—a win for Lahontan cutthroat trout.

TRANSFORM

In January, TNC staff planted 750 cottonwood trees at River Fork Ranch Preserve. These trees were successfully harvested from McCarran Ranch Preserve, where thousands of cottonwood trees grew from seeds, thanks to the river restoration efforts in 2016-2017. Volunteers also helped plant 2,000 native shrubs at River Fork Ranch in 2021.

INSPIRE

Nevada State College (NSC), Clark County School District, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and TNC are teaming up on a $300,000 grant awarded to NSC. The funding will be used to promote Hispanic and Latino student engagement in STEM fields and reduce barriers to STEM careers. The partners hosted a student learning lab at 71 Ranch in November.

The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.

Dear friends,

As I approach my first anniversary with The Nature Conservancy in Nevada (TNC), I am overwhelmed with gratitude! We have a team of brilliant conservation leaders, I have made incredible friends where our work has had a transformational impact on our beautiful state, and I have had the privilege of meeting many of the donors and community leaders who make our work possible.

February 2021

By the Numbers

395 participants

In 2020 and 2021, we pivoted to virtual events and hosted 12 webinars with a total of 395 participants.

92 Miles of streams mapped

Last summer, while thick smoke covered the Upper Truckee River project area, our scientists mapped pools and riffles of all stream reaches with potential to support eastern Sierra Nevada native fish species, such as Lahontan mountain sucker and Paiute sculpin, as well as upland areas where vegetation can support cutthroat trout.

100,000 New trees planted

That’s how many we are planting along the Amargosa River by the end of 2022. 30,000 trees were already planted in 2020, with another 40,000 arriving this fall.

40,000 arriving this fall.

32 Webinars

In 2020 and 2021, we have hosted 32 webinars and hosted 22,000 participants.

Webinars

92

100,000

395

32
In spring 2021 The Nature Conservancy in Nevada received a $750,000 gift from the Bretzlaff Foundation to greatly expand our scientific forecasting of fuels management. By adding sociopolitical opportunities and constraints to fuels management, this funding will help TNC and partners predict changes to at-risk wildlife and fish habitat across the northern Sierra Nevada. These funded innovations will allow improvements to similar land management modeling across the Intermountain West.

When Herb and Hazel Bretzlaff sold their Detroit furniture business in the 1970s, they headed west. With homes in both Nevada and Hawai‘i and no children to share their new lives, they decided to use their wealth to help others. At the time of Herb’s passing, Hazel met with her attorney to share her desire to continue their path of paying forward and ensure that important causes continued to benefit from their philanthropy. That attorney was Mike Melarkey, of Reno. Together with Hazel and accountant Dick Gilbert, the tiny board has impacted Nevada and Hawai‘i more than the Bretzlaffs themselves could have foreseen. They were able to grow the initial investment of $5 million to a level that allowed them to provide $25 million in donations over the years.

“Hazel’s soft spot was in serving at-risk youth, so that was where we started,” says Melarkey. “From there we began funding arts programs in both states, and then Hazel took note of my personal interests in environmental causes. We saw that The Nature Conservancy in Nevada was having a tremendous impact not only in finding conservation solutions that benefit both people and nature, but they were also leading through collaboration and partnership with other stakeholders.”

The Bretzlaff Foundation was one of the early supporters of TNC Nevada’s efforts to build a strong science-based program, which led to a large investment in the restoration of the Lower Truckee River. The thriving ecosystem that visitors to the Truckee River enjoy today is one of many high-impact outcomes of the Bretzlaffs’ generosity.

A little over a year ago, Greg Ferraro joined the Bretzlaff Foundation’s Board, the driving force behind all their funding decisions that has stayed true to Hazel’s interests after she passed away. Hazel herself chose the date that the foundation would finally close their doors—by 2025, all remaining funds will be dispersed across the organizations so dear to her heart.

“TNC is able to fulfill our mission of preserving, protecting and restoring important areas because people like Herb and Hazel commit their resources to helping others,” says Nevada State Director Mauricia Baca. “The Bretzlaffs made philanthropy a priority, and we are so grateful that they—like so many others—were able to create lasting legacies that have huge impacts on their communities.”

“This planet is all we have,” Melarkey adds. “Through our partnership with TNC Nevada, Herb and Hazel have built a foundation for future generations to continue caring for it.”

BUILD A LEGACY

To learn about creating a legacy for conservation in Nevada, please contact Kris Kirkpatrick at kris.kirkpatrick@tnc.org.
TNC Nevada’s Resilient Waters Initiative aims to ensure water security for critical freshwater systems in Nevada even as these systems face increased climatic and societal pressures. The entire state is experiencing moderate to exceptional drought during one of the driest years on record. As the driest state in the nation in terms of precipitation, we are fortunate to have groundwater aquifers that provide a buffer for droughts and climate change. But in arid regions like Nevada, competition for limited water supplies is placing increased pressure on groundwater resources, especially as surface waters become less reliable.

Groundwater at or near the surface in our state has outsized importance for freshwater and terrestrial biodiversity, supporting ecosystems from wetlands to riparian and upland areas. A large percentage of the rare and endemic species found only in Nevada are associated with these wet areas. These groundwater-dependent ecosystems also benefit people in many ways, including by purifying water, storing carbon, providing recreation, and sustaining cultures and livelihoods.

Using our database of indicators of groundwater-dependent ecosystems (GDEs) that show where these important natural systems are, we are looking at the stressors and threats to them to understand how best to ensure their long-term sustainability for people and for nature. And we are engaging with key constituencies to inform policy by sharing our science and the multiple benefits of sustainable water management. We recently published a publicly available article about managing groundwater to ensure ecosystem function so that people can follow best practices that include nature in groundwater management. We will continue to work to fill key information gaps to provide guidance for planners and managers for ensuring that water use and management is sustainable, with criteria that incorporate and deliver nature’s needs for water.

Conserving water for people and nature
Every day we hear about or experience first-hand the effects of a changing climate and biodiversity loss, and we must act quickly and decisively to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, support policies to reduce emissions at state and federal levels. We also need to ensure that our ecosystems are resilient and our communities can adapt to changing conditions. In 2021, we identified places in Nevada that can help both people and nature prepare for a sustainable future.

Climate adaptation passages
Many of the world’s species are on the move because of climate change. In North America, species are shifting their ranges to cooler, more moist places to adapt to a changing climate. Birds, mammals, insects and plants are being pushed northward or up and around mountains and into coastal areas. Changes in temperature and changes in snow and rainfall patterns, and a shift in vegetation range are not guaranteed. In Nevada’s ecosystems, species will be increasingly stressed and are projected to migrate as they adapt to changing conditions.

A new tool called the Resilient and Connected Lands Network has helped TNC identify North America’s most climate-resilient lands. In Nevada, TNC staff are beginning the process that will eventually produce maps of climate adaptation passages of connecting mountains ranges and the process that will eventually produce maps of climate adaptation passages in Nevada that can help both people and nature prepare for a sustainable future.

Mining the Sun
To achieve climate goals, more renewable energy and electricity transmission will be built across the Western U.S. This clean energy build-out, if done improperly, could have devastating effects for Nevada’s open lands and wildlife. From a conservation perspective, the best places for new renewable energy are on lands that have been already developed. In 2021, through the Mining the Sun program, TNC staff worked with state and federal agencies to identify abandoned mine lands, brownfields, and Superfund sites that are potentially suitable for renewable energy development. Over the next year, we will be working with stakeholders to advance feasibility assessments and clean up activities for these sites.

Potential Mining the Sun sites. This old mill could be the future site of a solar plant that would provide clean, renewable electricity to Lincoln County. © Jaina Moan/TNC

Brittney Cade

Assistant Brittney Cade headed east to pursue her PhD in Human Dimensions of Natural Resources at the University of Missouri. She was named one of two 2021–2022 George Washington Carver Fellows at the university, a prestigious honor. In her time with TNC, Cade worked at three preserves in Nevada, removing invasive species, working on butterfly monitoring and water quality testing, building and maintaining recreational trails, and giving educational presentations to students. She also led a project to plant 30,000 trees along the Amargosa River to help birds and wildlife adapt to changing conditions.

Even from Missouri, Cade is still helping nature in Nevada. Her PhD research will primarily involve using citizen science to investigate the causes of decline within the screwbean mesquite tree. This topic is close to her heart, as she worked in the Oasis Valley, one of the tree’s healthiest known habitats.

“As a child growing up in Chicago, I saw how urbanization left detrimental impacts on the environment and wildlife,” Cade says. “I pledged my life’s journey to making sure that all generations that follow have a strong appreciation for the world around them and how all life depends on it.”

Brittney Cade

Brittney Cade is a sustainability and conservation leader at TNC. In Nevada, she’s working on a quantitative analysis to determine the best places for conservation within those networks. This map offers a visual representation of places that will help provide refuge for plants and wildlife from drought and heat. © Great Basin/NVC, Desert tortoise © Dana Whitsitt/BIO, Pronghorn antelope © Clay Laramore/TNC, Least Bell’s vireo © Len Warren/TNC, Brittney Cade © Len Warren/TNC

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Internships

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For public lands managers in charge of protecting large landscapes across the west, it can be difficult to determine the most efficient ways to restore important ecosystems, especially in a changing climate and on limited budgets.

Louis Provencher was inspired by this challenge to create Landscape Conservation Forecasting™, a science-based tool to map current vegetation conditions, analyze how they have changed over time, and predict how they might look in the future in different climates.

In 2012, a team composed of Provencher, Elaine York, TNC's West Desert Regional Director, and TNC science staff from Nevada and Utah partnered with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Cedar City Field Office to use LCF to tackle conservation and land management challenges. Since then, TNC and BLM have together successfully utilized LCF across the state to improve habitat for a variety of wildlife, including Greater Sage-grouse and Utah prairie dog. Due largely in part to these efforts and the tools that have emerged from this initiative, BLM Cedar City has been able to continue successfully implementing our multiple-use mandate in these important areas.

"Habitat improvement projects that have been completed using the Landscape Conservation Forecasting™ model have improved the health, composition and diversity of the vegetation community, been instrumental in the suppression of wild and forest, minimized the spread of invasive species and maintained adequate habitat components to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife, including Greater Sage-grouse and Utah prairie dog. Due largely in part to these efforts and the tools that have emerged from this initiative, BLM Cedar City has been able to continue successfully implementing our multiple-use mandate in these important areas."

Paul Briggs, BLM Cedar City Field Office Manager

Since 2007, Provencher, TNC's Director of Science for Nevada and Utah, has used LCF on more than 6.7 million acres across Nevada, Utah, and California to find the most cost-effective land management solutions that benefit both people and wildlife.

In 2012, an annual report of the Annual Conservation Forecasting initiative was published, which was the first annual LCF report that was published. The report included maps, charts, and text that provided an overview of the project and its outcomes.

Since then, LCF has been used to map and analyze vegetation conditions in different climates, including areas with changing climate conditions. The tool has also been used to identify areas that are most important for wildlife, and to determine the most efficient ways to restore important ecosystems.

"At the end of the LCF process, which might take two years working with TNC staff and experts on the ground, our public lands partners have detailed maps and models that capture the dynamics of what's happening in all of the different types of vegetation systems that they have," York says. "They have a good plan identifying the top systems, what's going on, how to meet BLM's ecological goals, and what it's going to cost."

"I've seen in my 25 years," York says. "It has such incredible potential for good conservation of these large landscapes."

"I really think LCF is the most important thing I've seen in my 25 years," York says. "It's been a great partnership."

TNC Nevada has an incredible science staff and we needed that expertise.

The use of LCF continues to grow–across Utah and Nevada and even overseas in Australia, where Provencher is consulting with the government's research arm to build a national program to measure the condition of Australian lands and help achieve better ecological and social conditions.

"We are very fortunate to have TNC Nevada work with us," York says. "It's been a great partnership.

Innovation in our Initiatives

Using science tools to improve restoration across large landscapes

Restoring lands for people and nature

Provencher says that LCF can be summarized by three "Ms": maps, which are obtained by remote-sensing; models, and metrics. The tool identifies vegetation and how conditions have changed, allowing a comparison between what lands look like today and what they should ideally look like.

"This tool can help us restore large ecological systems for wildlife, whether we are trying to restore a landscape full of invasive species like cheatgrass, trying to fix riparian or wet systems as we have water in the future, or protecting habitats for at-risk species, such as sage-grouse, or economically important species that may be locally declining like mule deer," Provencher says. "We're requiring places that have changed from their historical conditions. We want to bring them closer to how they should be."

York says a valuable and unique aspect of LCF is that it can be used to look at large landscapes as a whole and focus on habitat that support a variety of wildlife, not just one species. It can be an especially good tool for land agencies in the west, especially in Nevada and Utah, where most of the land is federally owned.

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Reflecting on more than two decades of service to TNC, York says that LCF stands out as her most rewarding work in Utah's West Desert.

"I really think LCF is the most important thing I've seen in my 25 years," York says. "It has such incredible potential for good conservation of these large landscapes."

"Keeping lands resilient for nature helps people, too. LCF can be used to help support sustainable grazing for ranchers and maintain lands so they are suitable for recreational activities like hiking, hunting, and ecotourism.

Restoring ecosystems for at-risk wildlife can also prevent them being listed as endangered species. Provencher was also inspired to design LCF to deliver science products to help public land managers overcome the hurdle of National Environmental Policy Act documentation and litigation for proposed restoration projects, which can be costly and prevent conservation on the ground.

"We created LCF so it would fit into this regulatory process," Provencher says. "We have a tool that fits nicely into this federal lands process that's so prevalent in the western United States."

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2021 was a challenging year, but we are grateful for some exciting progress: With your support, we brought new staff and trustees onboard, realigned our chapter into three inspiring initiatives, formed new partnerships and made great progress in our conservation work. We can’t wait to see what we can accomplish together in 2022.

**YEAR IN PICTURES**

**Torrence Ranch Restoration** In 2020, we planted 30,000 trees along the Amargosa River. They are doing well and some are nearly four feet tall already! In fall and winter 2021, we’ll be planting another 40,000. © Michael Clifford/TNC

**BLM Sagebrush Stewards Award** TNC Nevada and Utah staff were presented with the award at a virtual ceremony in September for Landscape Conservation Forecasting™ work done across Utah to help protect at-risk wildlife species. © Marion Wallace

**Reno Philharmonic Orchestra Announces ‘Altered Landscape’** We debuted our new partnership with the Reno Phil at McCarran Ranch in September. The Reno Phil commissioned a new symphony by composer Jimmy López Bellido inspired by a collection from the Nevada Museum of Art. The Reno Phil will offer the work free to orchestras around the world if they donate to The Nature Conservancy, and hope to inspire conversations and environmental action. © David Calvert

**TNC on Vegas PBS** Last winter, Outdoor Nevada host John Burke visited 7J Ranch and planted a tree along the Amargosa River with our conservation staff. © Courtney Vega PBS

**Reno Philharmonic Orchestra**

**BLM Sagebrush Stewards Award**

**Reno Philharmonic Orchestra Announces ‘Altered Landscape’**

**TNC on Vegas PBS**

**Mauricia Baca tours Oasis Valley** State director Mauricia Baca visited our Amargosa River properties with conservation staff in December 2020. © Chip Carroon/TNC

**Welcoming our new Director of Development** Kristen McInnis joined the Nevada Chapter full-time in August after a year supporting in an interim role. © Courtesy Kristen McInnis

**Mining the Sun site visit** In August, Senator Catherine Cortez Masto visited an old mine site with TNC, Lincoln County Power District and the landowner. © Jaina Moan/TNC

**Shrub planting with River Wranglers** Eight volunteers from the River Wranglers board planted 175 native shrubs in March 2021. This was our first volunteer event at River Fork Ranch Preserve since March 2020. © Lori Leonard/TNC

**Wildflowers at River Fork Ranch Preserve** Sunflowers and other beautiful wildflowers surrounded the Preserve and the Whit Hall Interpretive Center this spring, as seen in this photo by River Fork Ranch Preserve Manager Lori Leonard. © Lori Leonard/TNC

**7J Ranch Preserve Volunteer photographer Chip Carroon captured this stunning photo last December. © Chip Carroon/TNC**
Winning the Wayne E. Kirch Conservation Award

Len Warren

Last spring, Leonard “Len” Warren received the prestigious Wayne E. Kirch Conservation Award for 2020, given annually by the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners to recipients who have demonstrated significant ways to conserve, management, or enhancement of wildlife. The award is named in memory of Wayne E. Kirch, who passed away in 1989 after serving on the Fish and Game Commission for more than 25 years, the longest tenure on the board since its inception in 1877.

Warren, TNC’s Amargosa River Project Manager, has served the Nevada chapter for seven years and was nominated by his colleagues for his passion for conservation, his dedication to educating Nevada’s youth and his stewardship of the Amargosa River. Warren has helped vastly improve and expand habitat along the river for threatened and endangered bird populations, as well as spearheaded the recent planting of 30,000 trees to help birds and wildlife adapt to climate change. He was instrumental in TNC’s 2019 acquisition of 7J Ranch, which conserves the Amargosa River’s headwaters, one of the most important biological resources in the desert Southwest. Warren has helped nearly 4,000 rural youth in Nevada to help them experience nature and learn about the wildlife around them.

“Len is as determined as anyone I’ve ever known to make a positive difference not only for Nevada’s wildlife, but in helping people to understand, appreciate and find meaning in wildlife conservation,” says John Lenihan, Director of Energy and Land Use, who nominated Warren for the award. “Over the past decade, I have watched Len turn his visions into reality. He always finds a way to connect and inspire people from all walks of life.”

“Len has the ability to create a sense of passion for birds and the environment in almost everyone he meets,” says Susan Sorrells, a landowner and businesswoman in Shoshone, California. “Len has made the learning experience for students engaging, immersive, and interactive, and provided a breadth of invaluable information for their projects on wildlife preservation,” says Philip Zawarzu, Assistant Professor in the Landscape Architecture Program at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

“My favorite thing about my work is to be able to share my passion for nature with other people.” – Len Warren

“My favorite thing about my work is to be able to share my passion for nature with other people,” Warren says. “That’s really the magic of it for me. I feel like I can make a little bit of a difference in the world.”

Warren will accept the award at a commission meeting in November 2021.

Robert Gifford

Why supporting nature matters in Nevada

Robert Gifford joined TNC in Nevada’s Board of Trustees in January 2021, after previously serving as a Trustee for the Minnesota Chapter. Gifford is a Board Director for corporate and nonprofit organizations and currently serves as the President and CEO of Beachbody LLC. He has more than 30 years of experience in global leadership roles, during which he traveled around the world helping Fortune 100 companies in the United States and abroad create competitive advantage with supply chain optimization, product development, technology management and innovative customer care management.

“Protecting and conserving nature in Nevada helps all of us,” Robert says. “A vibrant and healthy natural environment helps all of us live better lives. TNC helps restore lands that have been compromised. We bring solutions for renewable infrastructure that protect our natural environment. We have solutions to address climate change, water shortages, biodiversity and so much more. Bottom line: Together, we can help address the problems of our age and make Nevada a place where both people and nature thrive.”

Why I joined TNC Nevada

Brooke Hart, a Reno native, joined TNC in Nevada’s Board of Trustees in May 2021. She has more than 20 years of experience in on-air network news reporting and nonprofit and tech startup engagement, and excels in bringing historic, succinct human storytelling to grow awareness, engagement, outcomes aligned with customer expectations and public good. Hart earned her BA with Honors from Stanford University and her MA with Distinction from Georgetown University.

“I’ve been a supporter of TNC’s mission and approach to land use and environmental solutions for many years, and the opportunity to engage on a deeply personal level in northern Nevada—which has been so important to my family and me for generations—feels like a true calling,” Hart says. “I value TNC’s thoughtful, steady, data-driven and honest-broker positioning, and I strongly believe this is the essential ingredient to achieve meaningful and lasting outcomes that stakeholders can believe in. It’s my hope and intention to leverage TNC’s leadership position to educate more people about the importance of common sense land-use solutions and the steps we can all take to protect and preserve the ecosystems we depend on. It is a privilege to be able to serve in this way with such a knowledgeable, committed, caring TNC team.”

TRUSTEE PROFILE

Robert Gifford

TRUSTEE PROFILE

Brooke Hart
Science intern Torrie Goldstone spent the summer with TNC at Independence Lake and returned to the University of Nevada, Reno this fall for her senior year to complete her degree in environmental science with an emphasis in natural resource planning and management. As our science intern, she spent the summer monitoring water health, surveying for invasive species, tagging Lahontan cutthroat trout and monitoring their spawn as part of TNC’s ongoing efforts to rehabilitate their population, and more. She even went fishing for the first time and got a once-in-a-lifetime catch!

Goldstone grew up in Tahoe City, so working to protect and preserve a high alpine lake in the Sierra Nevada is close to her heart. “I’m super grateful that I was given this opportunity at such an instrumental organization in conservation, and I feel extremely lucky that I got to work in such a pristine environment,” Goldstone says. “This lake is mostly undeveloped, and really the only thing that is affecting it is climate change, which is an important thing to study. Even in my 22 years of life, I’ve seen huge changes with weather patterns, and the seasons not being how they were when I was young. So many other freshwater bodies have development around them, and Independence Lake is special. It felt cool and special to be involved in it.” Goldstone says that meeting with colleagues and agencies in the field and the data and technical skills she has learned in her internship have given her a broad range of ideas for future careers. This experience also reinforced her interest in environmental science and conservation. “I want to make a difference in this field because it’s one of the most important,” she says. “We all need to live on this earth—anything I can do to preserve it matters.”

THIS PAGE Jess Molasky © Courtesy Jess Molasky; Torrie Goldstone with a Lahontan cutthroat trout; Flowers at Independence Lake © Courtesy Torrie Goldstone.

INTERN PROFILE

Torrie Goldstone, Independence Lake Science Intern

Jess Molasky
Making the world more sustainable

Jess Molasky is a Project Manager for Ovation Development and joined the Nevada Board of Trustees in November 2021. He was born and raised in Las Vegas, and returned to his home city in 2018 after graduating from UCLA and helping the UCLA Capital Programs build new LEED-certified dorm and athletic facilities that will be used for the upcoming Olympics. His work at Ovation focuses primarily on building affordable senior housing units that are Energy Star Certified and powered by solar.

Molasky says he has a deep love for the environment and philanthropy from a young age, guided by his dad’s weekend hikes to Red Rock Canyon, and inspired by volunteering to clean up trash at local preserves with his mom. This guidance early in life allowed him to understand the therapeutic and beneficial aspects of spending time outdoors, and led him to create a small nonprofit in high school that helped get at-risk youth out into nature.

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INTERN PROFILE

Torrie Goldstone, Independence Lake Science Intern

Science intern Torrie Goldstone spent the summer with TNC at Independence Lake and returned to the University of Nevada, Reno this fall for her senior year to complete her degree in environmental science with an emphasis in natural resource planning and management. As our science intern, she spent the summer monitoring water health, surveying for invasive species, tagging Lahontan cutthroat trout and monitoring their spawn as part of TNC’s ongoing efforts to rehabilitate their population, and more. She even went fishing for the first time and got a once-in-a-lifetime catch! Goldstone grew up in Tahoe City, so working to protect and preserve a high alpine lake in the Sierra Nevada is close to her heart. “I’m super grateful that I was given this opportunity at such an instrumental organization in conservation, and I feel extremely lucky that I got to work in such a pristine environment,” Goldstone says. “This lake is mostly undeveloped, and really the only thing that is affecting it is climate change, which is an important thing to study. Even in my 22 years of life, I’ve seen huge changes with weather patterns, and the seasons not being how they were when I was young. So many other freshwater bodies have development around them, and Independence Lake is special. It felt cool and special to be involved in it.” Goldstone says that meeting with colleagues and agencies in the field and the data and technical skills she has learned in her internship have given her a broad range of ideas for future careers. This experience also reinforced her interest in environmental science and conservation. “I want to make a difference in this field because it’s one of the most important,” she says. “We all need to live on this earth—anything I can do to preserve it matters.”

Bill Janowski

Bill Janowski credits his late wife, Jo, with his deep appreciation for nature. Bill’s love for his wife and generosity to the Nevada chapter will now be forever remembered at River Fork Ranch Preserve with a dedicated grove of beautiful cottonwoods by the Carson River called “Jo’s Grove.” Jo’s Grove was officially named during a celebration at River Fork Ranch in October 2021.

Bill and Jo found each other through their passion for sports car racing. They started their own vehicle and tire testing business in Reno in 1972, which flourished with their hard work. Together, they took long trips in their 1943 military Jeep, which Janowski still owns, and camped and explored California coastal sand dunes, mountains, and remote, untouched places in the Mojave Desert.

Janowski’s generous donations have supported his two favorite preserves: River Fork Ranch and 7J Ranch, as well as the chapter’s science program. As Janowski says, “I want my gifts to support the type of work that TNC does well, as a science-based organization. I’m a big believer in trying to preserve our environment. We are seeing some devastating effects on the environment we live in worldwide, and we need to save what we have.” Janowski has also explored a lot of the west by air since he achieved his dream, with Jo’s encouragement, of becoming a licensed private pilot, at the age of 62. He has even flown his 1976 Cessna 182P single-engine airplane on a trip to TNC’s 7J Ranch Preserve.

Thank you, Bill! Donors like you make our work possible.

Visit River Fork Ranch and our other preserves nature.org/preserves
When Steve and Karen Wiel moved to Nevada, they fell in love with the Great Basin Desert. They’ve explored a lot of it, from easy day trips to challenging four-wheel drive excursions. For more than 15 years, Steve did an annual Memorial Day trip off-roading around the northern parts of the state, racking up more than 15,000 miles and exploring anywhere he could drive with a group of friends that grew to more than 10 people. “Our approach we take to exploring is, what haven’t we seen before? Where haven’t we been before?” Steve says.

He says there’s something about the altitude of the Great Basin, which averages a flatness of about 6,000 feet and contains Nevada’s only alpine climate zone, that adds to his experiences there. “I love how I feel when I’m there. It’s a combination of high altitude and dry air and expansiveness,” he says.

The Wiels, who split their time between Incline Village and the Bay Area, have been donors to The Nature Conservancy since 1996, and protecting the places they know and love in Nevada is part of their mission for supporting TNC. “When we were able to make donations, we decided our priorities were in preserving land and nature. In that arena, TNC is the obvious choice,” Steve says.

Steve is a former energy efficiency specialist who worked at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, as a Nevada Public Service Commissioner, as a Professor in the Graduate Engineering Department at the University of Nevada, Reno, and as an energy management and residential solar design consultant. Karen has two master’s degrees and has worked in secondary education and as a marriage and family therapist.

After meeting at Stanford University, they married shortly after graduation and lived all over the country before settling in Reno in the late 1970s. They have now been married for 60 years and have two children and four grandchildren.

“I like TNC’s philosophy, and I’ve been pleased with various and sundry projects that I’ve seen,” Karen says. “Steve and I make these decisions jointly and we both felt that this was very important.” The Wiels also contribute to rainforest preservation in Panama, a cause close to their hearts, through another organization. “TNC is one of the organizations we respect for long-range thinking. The international part of the mission is also very important to us,” Steve says.

Steve and Karen Wiel
Protecting the Nevada they know and love

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The Nature Conservancy in Nevada
1 E. 1st St.
Reno, NV 89501

(775) 322-4990 (Reno)
(702) 737-8744 (Las Vegas)
nevada@tnc.org

Like us at facebook.com/naturenevada
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clockwise Snow at River Fork Ranch Preserve; TNC staff at 7J Ranch © Chip Carroon/TNC; Pygmy blue butterfly © Len Warren/TNC; Bat © Chip Carroon/TNC; Phainopepla © Len Warren/TNC; Fall on the Truckee River © Chip Carroon/TNC.

Building a bright future for Nevada

The Nature Conservancy in Nevada proudly stewards the abundant natural resources of our state with a goal of ensuring that what makes Nevada special will be here for future generations to enjoy. Our efforts to preserve, protect and restore important places for both humans and nature are possible because people like you choose to invest in our work. We are incredibly grateful for your trust in us, and thank you from the bottom of our hearts.