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Alaska is a land of immense opportunity. Its expansive wild areas provide an opportunity to demonstrate how public lands can be sustainably managed for conservation and community benefit. Its last great fishery strongholds offer an opportunity to feed the world and create management regimes that temper climate impacts and benefit coastal communities. The staggering pace of climate change provides an opportunity to demonstrate how science informs on-the-ground resilience and how people's voices are powerful tools to prompt policy action. Alaskans have an opportunity to shape a future that values the close ties of lands and waters to traditional ways of life and modern Alaska Native communities. In Alaska, The Nature Conservancy is presented with an opportunity that demands large-scale, locally effective and globally relevant conservation.

Mission

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

Vision for Alaska

We envision a future Alaska in which natural systems thrive—capable of balancing ecological, cultural and economic benefits—by conserving key ecosystems, building strong climate resilience and achieving sustainable economic development. The future we envision is one in which:

- » Alaska maintains its globally unique (ecologically significant, culturally valuable and highly profitable) natural landscapes and natural resources.
- » Alaska adapts to the impacts of climate change, builds resiliency and harnesses opportunities.
- » Alaska leads responsible development and accelerates the growth of conservation-compatible industry.

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Values

Integrity Beyond Reproach: We will meet the highest ethical and professional standards in all of our organizational endeavors and, in doing so, we hold ourselves accountable to our mission and to the public.

Respect for People, Communities and Cultures: Enduring conservation success depends on the active involvement of people and partners whose lives and livelihoods are linked to the natural systems we seek to conserve. We respect the needs, values and traditions of local communities and cultures, and we forge relationships based on mutual benefit and trust.

Commitment to Diversity: We recognize that conservation is best advanced by the leadership and contributions of people of widely diverse backgrounds, experiences and identities. We will recruit and develop staff to create a diverse, inclusive and equitable organization that reflects our global character.

One Conservancy: Our strength and vitality lie in being one organization working together in local places and across borders to achieve our global mission. We value the collective and collaborative efforts that are so essential to our success.

Tangible, Lasting Results: We use the best available science, a creative spirit and a nonconfrontational approach to craft innovative solutions to complex conservation problems at scales that matter and in ways that will endure.

Approach

We are conserving Alaska's lands and waters with pragmatic, widely-supported solutions that are rooted in science. We work with a broad spectrum of partners around common values and respect for equity at all stages of conservation. We pursue lasting results to Alaska's most pressing conservation challenges with a commitment to innovation and an emphasis on Indigenous and community-based stewardship.

Our Plan

The Nature Conservancy has developed a bold plan to advance conservation in priority areas across Alaska for the next three years. It captures long-term goals while laying out a set of strategies and outcomes for us to achieve by 2023. We have identified an ambitious suite of work to deliver, as well as emerging opportunities to take our work above and beyond its current limit. Our plan

realistically accounts for the need to scale up resources and capacity to push science to a new level, broaden projects and put in place the early stages of projects that will come to fruition in the more distant future.

The strategic plan represents our best summary of the challenges and opportunities for conservation in Alaska in the coming decades, with an emphasis on action over the next three years. The plan was built on our 30-year legacy, including significant improvements in land management of the Tongass National Forest and sustainable fisheries science in Bristol Bay. It also reaches into new areas of work, such as efforts specifically designed to address climate change and a broad commitment to Alaska Native peoples and economic development. The Nature Conservancy's Shared Conservation Agenda drives our approach in Alaska, and the successes we achieve here influence conservation around the world.

Our strategic plan is primarily intended for TNC staff and trustees. It will inform annual staff objectives and budgets, setting us up to work as a team toward progress on each priority. The Alaska Board of Trustees approved the plan in February 2019. We will review our progress annually. Our hope is that this plan will serve as a strong guide while allowing flexibility to explore unforeseen opportunities that align with our priorities and goals.

Criteria for Our Work

As this plan was developed, the following list of guiding questions helped us prioritize strategies and weigh each conservation opportunity:

- » Does it address the biggest challenges for Alaska and North America?
- » Is it likely to lead to a lasting conservation outcome?
- » Does it consider the balance of environment, community and economy?
- » Can it lead to enduring climate-resilient impacts?
- » Does it fit TNC's strengths? Does it leverage TNC's unique capacities, approaches and resources?
- » Is TNC an invited partner?





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Conservation Priorities



(pages 6-9)

Alaska's fisheries are globally recognized as sustainably managed. The connection to and stewardship of fisheries is a centerpiece of Alaskan culture. The Nature Conservancy will contribute to science, innovative policy mechanisms and collaborative partnerships to ensure Alaska's wild fish strongholds, especially the salmon fishery of Bristol Bay. We will advance management that is climate-informed and that allows for local communities to have decision-making authority that ensures sustainability and an equitable share in the commercial harvest of fisheries.



Landscapes

(pages 10-13)

Alaska's lands and waters remain uniquely wild. We have an opportunity to work at an enormous scale in some of the most intact natural systems on Earth. The Nature Conservancy will work with decision-makers and community partners in Southeast Alaska and the Arctic's North Slope to ensure strong conservation of key public lands that balances critical habitat protection, sustainable use of natural resources for economic benefit and co-management by tribes and local communities.



Climate

(pages 14-17)

Climate change is the greatest environmental challenge facing humanity, and Alaska is feeling the impacts at a dramatic rate. The Nature Conservancy will elevate local voices to spur federal climate policy and look for opportunities to monetize sequestered carbon for the benefit of Alaskans. We will identify Alaska's most climate-resilient landscapes to set conservation priorities and implement innovative solutions to make communities more resilient.

Alaska: 3-Year Strategic Plan

Lands Management

(page 18)

The Nature Conservancy is committed to ensuring the best long-term stewardship of its land holdings in Alaska to enhance management for ecological value and climate resilience, as well as transferring ownership to partner entities for local authority. We will update our land portfolio by improving management plans, ensuring sustainable community access and use, and returning lands to Alaska Native organizations.

Emerging Opportunities

(page 19)

Navigating complex systems and change requires a willingness to investigate new approaches to conservation challenges. The Nature Conservancy will work with partners to consider how the emerging opportunities of mariculture, climate adaptation technology and outdoor recreation and tourism can develop into exciting areas of future work and support shared goals.



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HEAITHY SALMON IN BRISTOL BAY -



Challenge

The waters of Bristol Bay produce more wild salmon than any place else on Earth. Salmon in Bristol Bay have supported Indigenous peoples for millennia and continue to serve as the foundation for cultural, social, economic and ecological well-being in the region. For the past century, Bristol Bay salmon have also supported a commercial fishing industry that is valued today at \$1.5 billion and world-class recreational fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities. While the ecosystems of Bristol Bay are largely intact and the fisheries are sustainably managed, the potential large-scale extraction of valuable mineral deposits in the region threatens the salmon fishery and the people that depend on it for income, food, livelihood and culture. In recent years, community well-being and values, conservation interests, economic opportunities and resource development have often been at odds. It is increasingly clear that resource development decisions are inextricably linked to human well-being and economic opportunities. Recently, dozens of Bristol Bay communities collectively shaped a regional vision that provides a path toward broad-based prosperity, holistic health and a more sustainable future, but making that plan a reality requires time, respect and collaboration. After a decade of science in the region, The Nature Conservancy is uniquely positioned to support the activation of this plan and to define other solutions to ensure the health of Bristol Bay salmon.



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Goal

The Bristol Bay watershed is managed to prioritize healthy and intact salmon habitat, and local leaders and residents have the resources and authority to ensure sustainable fisheries and livelihoods.

Strategies

- » Improve Policy Decisions: Provide sound science so that decision-makers can understand how mining can impact Bristol Bay salmon. Work through existing public processes and regulatory mechanisms, such as the National Environmental Policy Act and protections for anadromous streams and wetlands, to ensure that freshwater resources are adequately mapped and receive appropriate protections.
- » Identify and Promote Compatible Economies: Convene regional stakeholders in Bristol Bay to discuss innovative development and economic opportunities that are compatible with healthy salmon habitat. Foster local leadership in Bristol Bay communities and shared learning to support the long-term capacity required to take collective action, manage resources sustainably and improve local fisheries access.

Scaling Up

- » Coordinate with regional entities and the scientific community to leverage relevant information so that resource management decisions, policies and landuse designations are informed by the best available science and regional priorities.
- » Transition land-use designations to ensure salmon thrive in Bristol Bay and local entities have the authority to manage lands and waters for local values and regional priorities.
- » Work with regional stakeholders to put ideas into action for a sustainable future in the Bristol Bay region and continue to build capacity for collective action.
- » Invest in local entrepreneurs to support diverse economic opportunities while growing a cohort of innovative leaders in the region.

Outcomes

- » Two hundred and fifty thousand acres of watershed and salmon habitat in the Bristol Bay region remain intact and are protected from mining by statute.
- » A collective impact network of at least 12 diverse organizations and Bristol Bay communities is established that works toward regional economic, social and environmental prosperity.
- » Ownership of commercial fishing permits by Bristol Bay residents increases by 20 percent of 2018 permit holdings.

- » Analyze policy options to change the region's land-use designation under state law and increase opportunities for co-management of natural resources.
- » Create a learning exchange between Bristol Bay and Southeast Alaska communities to explore fisheries issues and solutions.
- » Design a collective impact network in collaboration with partners in Bristol Bay that has a common agenda, mutually reinforcing activities and shared learning to take a holistic approach to sustainable development.
- » Support the expansion of the Path To Prosperity business competition to Bristol Bay.
- » Craft a regional solution to equity and access challenges in salmon fisheries.
- » Evaluate the applicability of the Local Fish Fund and other equity models for expansion into Bristol Bay fisheries.



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SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES, EQUITY AND ACCESS — 🗯



Challenge

Alaska has a global reputation for sustainable fisheries management. Both state and federally managed fisheries in Alaska rely on science-based decision-making and setting sustainable harvest levels. However, changes in ocean conditions (e.g., temperature, chemistry, etc.) are triggering changes in species' ranges and fish size, habitat and diet, resulting in uncertainty for fisheries-dependent communities as well as global market uncertainty. There is insufficient science to confidently manage for these ecosystem changes and locally and globally important fish stocks, including salmon, Pacific cod and shellfish. Ecological changes, combined with global seafood market dynamics, modern management approaches (e.g., limited-access programs) and the cumulative impacts of colonialism, contribute to the loss of opportunity and access to fishery resources in many rural and Alaska Native fishing communities. The Nature Conservancy can build a framework that brings together science-informed management, timely research and decision-making that is responsive to community concerns and is vital to the long-term health of communities and fisheries.

Goal

Wild fish populations endure, and fishing communities have local stewardship authority and access to sustainable fisheries.

Strategies

» Increase Local Access and Decision-Making: Provide loans to long-line fishermen in Southeast Alaska. Engage in regional partnerships and ensure that equitable access is a focus. Build the capacity of residents to participate in and influence fisheries resource management.

Scaling Up

- » Coordinate a broad research endeavor to understand how a changing ocean is affecting Alaska fisheries and fishing communities. Leverage that process and its results to inform fisheries management and ensure that local challenges and solutions are incorporated into the regulatory framework.
- » Work with scientists, fishermen and Indigenous leaders and knowledge holders to provide expert analysis of marine science issues that influence Alaska fisheries and communities to inform federal fisheries policies.

Outcomes

- » At least ten Alaskans purchase commercial fishing rights through the Local Fish Fund, a newly established TNC partnership that structures loan products to support the purchase of fishing quota.
- » At least two additional sustainable small-scale fishery projects are established.
- » An interdisciplinary consortium of scientists is working together to understand climate change impacts in Alaska waters and inform fisheries management and policy.

- » Support and assess the potential to scale the Local Fish Fund to other regions and fisheries of Alaska.
- » Advance the regional understanding of how climate change will affect fisheries-dependent communities in Alaska.
- » Engage with fishery associations, Alaska Native tribes and others, and become a respected authority to promote methods to ensure sustainable commercial fisheries.
- » Assess federal policy and prepare legal and technical recommendations that encourage favorable sustainable fisheries policies.











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HEALTHY RAINFOREST-



Challenge

Southeast Alaska holds the world's largest remaining tracts of old-growth coastal temperate rainforest, providing habitat to important subsistence species, such as Sitka black-tailed deer and salmon, and storing tremendous amounts of carbon. The most pressing direct threats to the ecological integrity of this region are old-growth timber harvest and a lack of restoration following historical logging in the Tongass National Forest. Without sustainable forest management that better balances the protection of priority areas, industrial development and long-term stewardship, we risk the region's ecological integrity. Rural communities and Indigenous peoples—Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian—are uniquely tied to the landscape that defines their ways of life. Conservation challenges are intricately linked to threats to human well-being in the Southeast Alaska socio-ecological system; any durable solutions to address these conservation challenges must consider social challenges. The Nature Conservancy has a long history

of constructive partnerships in Southeast Alaska and is well positioned to continue leading the region toward a sustainable future built around a healthy rainforest.

Goal

The Southeast Alaska coastal temperate rainforest is sustainably and collaboratively managed by and for the communities who live there with a diverse suite of ecological, social and economic functions.

Strategies

» Transform Forest Use and Stewardship: Ensure the essential building blocks are in place to successfully transition coastal temperate rainforest management away from old-growth logging to a sustainable regime within a 15-year time frame. Work with federal and state land managers and Alaska Native corporation landowners to demonstrate innovative and sciencebased forest management practices rooted in community values. Support Sustainable Economies and Indigenous Stewardship: Financially invest in community-led stewardship and conservation-compatible economies. Catalyze the enabling conditions for community-based stewardship: leadership, authority and sustainable economic development. Implement this strategy as part of TNC's Emerald Edge whole system program, working throughout the coastal temperate rainforest ecosystem to support Indigenous authority, build healthy economies, invest in youth and help emerging leaders achieve long-lasting conservation.

Scaling Up

» Develop a framework of best practices that effectively change the narrative of mutually exclusive conservation and economic activities to achieve durable conservation results in Southeast Alaska. Assess the potential for this approach in other regions of Alaska.

Outcomes

- » Three and a half million acres of high-priority forest habitat for a variety of species is permanently protected.
- » Increased regional capacity for improving forest conditions.
- » Fifteen communities have increased decision-making authority to improve forest conditions.
- » Increased regional collaboration toward triplebottom-line (people, planet and profit) community development.
- » Sixty businesses have sustainable practices and placebased economic opportunities.

Over the next three years, we will:

» Continue to engage with decision-makers and participate in the public stakeholder engagement processes for the Tongass National Forest. Encourage appropriate young-growth sales and tree thinning to ensure a marketable volume of trees in the future. Increase the capacity of public staff to accelerate the pace of forest restoration.



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- » Work with public land managers and private landowners to develop demonstration sites to show the feasibility of forest thinning for the benefit of habitat and timber through collaborative science.
- » Continue to develop community forestry partnerships to implement sustainable forest management techniques such as young-growth management, restoration projects and a guardian watchman stewardship network.
- » Build and improve upon the work of the Sustainable Southeast Partnership, a regional collective impact network, such as through the establishment of a community development fund.
- » Further refine models for communities to exert authority over their local natural resources.
- » Continue to support entrepreneurial enterprises through the Path To Prosperity business competition and a revolving loan fund.
- » Encourage practitioners to share their experiences with their counterparts in other regions of Alaska.



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BALANCED ARCTIC LAND MANAGEMENT-



Challenge

The Arctic region of Alaska is home to vast expanses of wildlife habitat, profitable oil and gas development and Inupiat peoples who have lived on the North Slope for millenia. There, temperatures are warming at a faster rate than any other location in the country. An ever-growing body of science has demonstrated the global importance of intact habitat for migratory species, such as caribou and geese. Yet, market forces, limited income diversity and political pressure have prevented harmony between these interests. The region has seen dramatic swings between habitat protection for species and resource extraction, making it difficult to develop a long-term vision for the region. Much of this touches down in the North Slope's National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A), where public land managers have a statutory responsibility to balance environmental protection, public access, subsistence use and resource extraction. In this vast stretch of Arctic coastal plain, no one stands to gain from the status quo. All stakeholders—the oil and gas industry, local communities and government, Alaska Native corporations, Alaska Native tribes, scientists and environmental non-profits—see room for improvement. The Nature Conservancy sees great value in dialogue that builds common ground among seemingly opposed factions in an effort to build a balanced stage upon which to protect critical habitat.

Goal

The NPR-A's critical habitat is protected within a larger co-management context that affords abundant wildlife, well-informed oil and gas development and equitable community access and use.

Strategies

» Institutionalize Best Practices: Promote sustainable land use policies for the NPR-A that balance development and the protection of terrestrial habitat.

Outcomes

- » The NPR-A is publicly managed with a plan to meet the needs of nature, Indigenous communities and industry.
- » Teshekpuk Lake and surrounding lands are permanently protected within the NPR-A, likely through a legislative approach.
- » Four communities in and adjacent to the NPR-A have increased management authority over their territory and resources.

- » Convene stakeholders for a series of meetings to arrive at a shared vision for protection and development in the NPR-A.
- » Research and identify legal models to durably protect critical habitat, including an Alaska Native co-management model.
- » Partner with leading scientists to publicly communicate the ecological importance of Teshekpuk Lake.





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LOW CARBON FUTURE-



Challenge

Climate change is the greatest environmental challenge facing humanity. Policies to reduce carbon emissions and other measures to halt and prevent the further exacerbation of the impacts of climate change must happen—quickly. Existing mechanisms to compel the reduction of carbon emissions, such as carbon markets, lack sufficient involvement to make a meaningful global contribution. Many Alaskans recognize climate change as a problem and want their leaders to act. Voices from oil-producing states such as Alaska are crucial in changing the public narrative so that climate change is part of the nation's political agenda and policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are a priority. Additionally, forest management strategies designed to sequester carbon can help Alaskan landowners and communities participate in the carbon market. The Nature Conservancy is ready to deliver an integral contribution towards national climate policy as well as local, Alaska-relevant market opportunities.

Goal

Alaska's political leadership prioritizes comprehensive legislation to address climate change and Alaskans are active participants in natural carbon sequestration solutions.

Strategies

- » Amplify Alaskan Voices: Convene Alaskans to broadly share their experiences and desires, contributing to a national culture shift. Elevate the voices of Alaskans and highlight climate action in the state to help lower barriers to enacting ambitious national climate policy.
- » Encourage Political Leadership: Work with partners to engage policymakers and influencers to identify climate policy approaches and garner congressional support. Build a broad base of support for policy outcomes and corporate practice changes.

» Employ Natural Climate Solutions: Enable carbon sequestration at scale, using feasible and effective market-based solutions. Connect landowners with carbon credit purchasers to increase the viability of carbon-reducing offset projects and incentivize future project planning.

Outcomes

- » The views of Alaskan residents are captured and shared, demonstrating support for climate change policy.
- » Alaska's senators have prepared or supported draft legislation for national climate policy.
- » At least one large-scale carbon sequestration demonstration project is underway.

- » Poll Alaskan voters on climate change issues and policy options and distribute data to policymakers and private stakeholders.
- » Hold a dozen meetings with industry and sectorspecific stakeholders to understand their views on federal climate change policy and share their feedback with Alaska's congressional delegation.
- » Support a broad convening of U.S. senators to draft and pass climate change legislation.
- » Work with other states to identify opportunities for new or expanded carbon markets that promote clean energy and benefit the communities most impacted by climate change.
- » Provide technical assistance to landowners interested in entering the carbon market.
- » Launch a pilot project to demonstrate the viability of sustainable forest certification programs (Forest Stewardship Council or Sustainable Forestry Initiative) on Alaska Native corporation or university trust land.
- » Evaluate a specific offset project such as biomass, and if viable, connect at least one carbon-offset project with a voluntary carbon credit purchaser.







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CLIMATE RESILIENT ALASKA-



Challenge

In Alaska, the annual average temperature for many areas is rising at more than twice the continental U.S. rate. The dramatic consequences are apparent: eroding shorelines, thawing permafrost, melting glaciers, reduced sea ice and unprecedented impacts to Alaska's fish and wildlife. Climate change poses an immediate threat, placing enormous pressure on ecosystems and communities to quickly adapt and increasing the vulnerability of Alaska's people. With a better understanding of how the changing climate is affecting ecosystem functions and the people and communities that rely on those ecosystems, conservation efforts can play a critical role in developing and implementing enduring solutions.

Goal

Alaska communities and landscapes adapt and prosper in the face of climate change through innovative techniques and climate-informed conservation.

Strategies

» Identify Resilience Priorities: Map Alaska landscapes that will provide the most resilient habitat and continued cultural traditions to inform strategic decisions and durable conservation investments.



Scaling Up

» Explore methods to support community resilience and adaptation to a changing climate. Build collective action—on community, regional and statewide scales—for adaptation and resilience by convening, partnering and innovating.

Outcomes

- » A statewide mapping initiative is completed to assess ecological resilience to climate change.
- » Practitioners and other stakeholders from across the state, with an emphasis on women and other target groups, are collaborating and developing adaptation plans together in a 40-organization network.
- » Alaska communities have identified innovative solutions to adapt to climate change.

- » Leverage TNC's network of experts to map resilient and connected landscapes.
- » Convene three workshops to gather climate adaptation experts, rural women practitioners and policymakers from across the state to strengthen networks of support, share best practices and leverage resources to better support their efforts.
- » Engage with partners to implement a communications campaign and educational materials about climate solutions that are generated by Alaskans.
- » Develop a climate-resilient stream restoration framework for Southeast Alaska.



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For decades, The Nature Conservancy has strategically conserved land through fee purchase, conservation easement, deed restriction, acquisition and retirement of fossil fuel interests, and transfer of lands to state and federal parks and preserves. In Alaska, TNC is carefully steering its portfolio of land holdings toward those with the highest ecological value and resilience to predicted climate change impacts. In addition, we are committed to engaging with Indigenous peoples as local stewards and managing TNC's lands in accordance with traditional practices. This strategy offers the worthwhile challenge of both improving long-term land management function and transferring lands to the best stewards.

Improving Management

On the lands we own, TNC will evaluate ways to improve scientific monitoring, enhance protection of critical habitat, provide for local community access and use, and foster the stewardship capacity of partners. By doing so, resources are channeled toward providing the highest standard land management for the benefit of conservation and local communities.

Long-term Indigenous Stewardship

The Nature Conservancy plans to transfer ownership of culturally significant lands to Alaska Native organizations and collaborate to ensure those lands are managed in a manner that sustains ecological protection and supports traditional ways of life. This approach values the rich history and tradition of Alaska Native peoples, as well as contemporary, thriving Indigenous communities with interests in lands returned and decolonization.



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While this plan is focused on a three-year time horizon, The Nature Conservancy in Alaska is also looking further into the future. We must be poised to step into emerging opportunities. The following areas of emerging work are of particular interest.

Mariculture

Mariculture represents a tremendous opportunity to diversify the Alaska economy, strengthen coastal communities and produce food sustainably. Furthermore, certain mariculture crops such as kelp can improve water quality and sequester carbon. As Alaska welcomes more mariculture farms, TNC could play a leading role bringing scientific expertise, a commitment to equity and informed-decision making tools to ensure that business practices are environmentally sustainable, promote the entrée of young, local entrepreneurs and occur in areas supported by coastal communities.

Technology Solutions to Climate Change Adaptation

Climate change is already upending uniquely Alaskan ways of life and there are currently no easy solutions to abate this reality. While still supporting policy solutions

and community-born efforts, TNC can drive a parallel effort to advance technology for a more immediate impact and local relief. The Nature Conservancy can spur and improve innovative solutions to Alaska's climate adaptation needs through climate-themed start-up initiatives, XPRIZE incentives, changing ocean condition monitoring technologies, diversified investors and other similar initiatives. With TNC's involvement, innovative solutions could arrive sooner, be more sustainable, garner broad public support and potentially be replicated around the world.

Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

One of the fastest growing economic sectors in the nation and in Alaska is outdoor recreation and tourism. The economic impact in Alaska of recreation and tourism, both in terms of jobs and productivity, is higher than the national average. The foundation for this growing sector in Alaska is wild, abundant and accessible nature. As these industries continue to grow, TNC is well poised to help forge collaboration between industry, communities, tribes and government, organized around a principle of mutual benefit with conservation at its core.





