



Locke Ogens © Kyle LaFerriere

A Climate of Change

What if we create a better world for nothing? You might have heard this breezy response to those who question the need for action on climate. Because we rely on the best available science, The Nature Conservancy recognizes the serious threat that climate change poses to life on Earth and to people's livelihoods. The urgency of this crisis compels us to find innovative solutions. Our Virginia conservation and climate teams work from the Appalachians to the Atlantic to help nature help itself—and all of us—by protecting and restoring healthy, resilient habitats, while also collaborating with vulnerable communities to encourage more sustainable economies and a clean energy future. Taking action is no longer optional, nor does real change come “for nothing.” As a TNC supporter, you are part of the solution, and I thank you for your commitment to a better world.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Locke W. O." followed by a stylized flourish.

Locke Ogens, Virginia Director



Aerial view of Cumberland Forest Project © Cameron Davidson

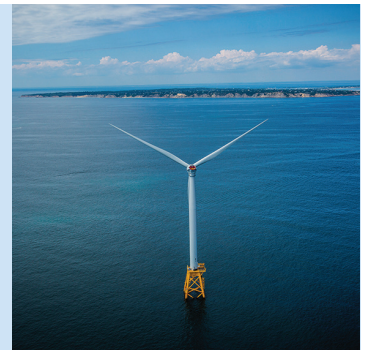
Mining the Sun

Appalachian coalfields to produce solar energy

The Nature Conservancy recently announced an innovative collaboration with two renewable energy companies that aim to develop some of the first utility-scale solar projects in the Central Appalachian coalfields. Charlottesville-based Sun Tribe and Washington, D.C.-based Sol Systems will build on former coal mines within TNC's nearly 253,000-acre Cumberland Forest Project. “Southwest Virginia and the wider Central Appalachian coalfield region is uniquely positioned to support the expansion of renewable energy development with hundreds of reclaimed former surface mines potentially capable of being converted to new solar projects,” says Brad Kreps, director of TNC's Clinch Valley Program. Explore our climate work at nature.org/vaclimate.

Better Planning for Wind Energy

The nation's new goal of reaching 30 gigawatts of offshore wind capacity by 2030 means building about 2,500 turbines. Where those turbines go will be critical decisions, and that's where a new Marine Mapping tool developed by TNC scientists can play a vital role. It shows which species are abundant in a given area and what trends are likely, enabling informed discussions and choices that promote green energy production *and* a healthy ocean.



Offshore wind turbine © Ayla Fox



Using fire to revitalize habitat in the Central Appalachians © Nikole Simmons/TNC

Burning Desire

Fire team sets new record for forest restoration

Following a long hiatus due to the pandemic, The Nature Conservancy and our partners not only returned safely to the fire lines this year, but also shattered previous records. Working almost seamlessly, TNC and multi-agency fire teams conducted controlled burns across 36,000 acres in our Central Appalachian Mountains and well over 7,000 acres to the east at Piney Grove Preserve and other key sites in the Virginia Pinelands. Virginia’s fire team and new drone also helped our colleagues to the north ignite their largest-ever burn across 900 acres at Nassawango Creek Preserve on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. “I would attribute this record-breaking season to three factors,” says fire program director Sam Lindblom: “good weather, the maturation of our partnerships and everyone’s burning desire, pun definitely intended, to get back to work restoring our forests.” Learn more about how we’re using fire to revitalize forest habitat at nature.org/vapineygrovefire and nature.org/alleghenyfireva.

New Drone Enhances Fire Safety

Since March, the fire team has used a new drone for aerial ignition. An immediate benefit has been increased safety, as the drone has replaced many inherently risky helicopter flights. It also easily accesses terrain that is treacherous for crews on the ground to reach, and its imaging technology gives the pilot an eagle’s-eye view of the burn operation.



Sam Lindblom with drone © Daniel White/TNC

Research Yields Richer Story



Brownsville Preserve © Gordon Campbell/At Altitude

As headquarters for the Volgenau Virginia Coast Reserve, The Nature Conservancy’s Brownsville Preserve has long been a catalyst for scientific discovery. Now researcher Ian Post, local history archivist at Salisbury University, is uncovering what Brownsville can tell us about our past, including new insights into the previously untold stories of enslaved African Americans at Brownsville. Explore Post’s initial findings at coastalstylemag.com/legends-of-the-land.

Generosity Fuels the Flames



Steve Croy (right) © Daniel White/TNC

Having worked on countless burns during his career with the U.S. Forest Service, Steve Croy recognized a game-changer when he saw one. In 2019, Croy observed a demonstration (pictured above) of the drone-based Ignis ignition system at Piney Grove Preserve. Cost was the main obstacle to TNC adopting this new technology, so Croy—a long-time supporter as well as partner—tapped his own resources to make it happen. His generosity was integral to an exceptional burn season.