



CASE  
FOR  
SUPPORT

2024 - 2025

The Nature  
Conservancy  
Alaska





# Massive size, massive conservation opportunity

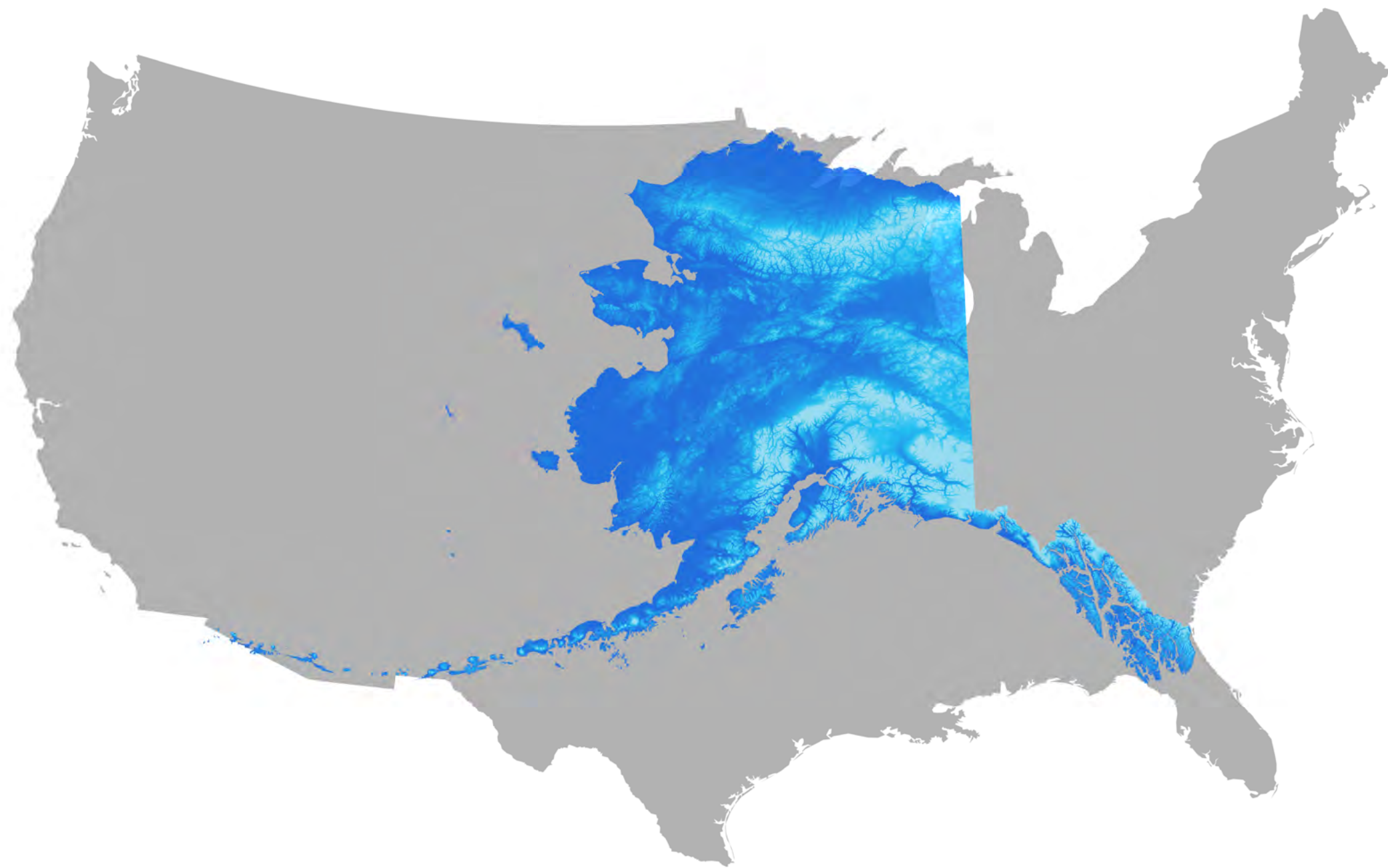
Alaska is one of the world's last, great wild places. It represents a unique opportunity for The Nature Conservancy to advance its 2030 goals and will be critical to the future climate resilience of our nation—and the world.

Roughly one-fifth the size of the contiguous United States, Alaska contains 95% of the nation's remaining wilderness and dozens of unique ecosystems. In the far north, hundreds of thousands of caribou roam the grassy Arctic tundra. The Aleutian chain, a string of rocky volcanic islands stretching 1,100 miles and whipped by fierce winds and waves, hosts migratory birds from all seven continents. In Southwest Alaska, Bristol Bay's meandering rivers produce half the world's wild sockeye salmon. In the coastal temperate rainforest of Southeast, old-growth trees support bear and deer and store massive amounts of carbon. The scale of this place and its potential to help us achieve our climate and biodiversity goals cannot be overstated.

**For TNC—and the world—to achieve these goals, we must work together to harness the power of Alaska. By joining forces—we can make a difference for the entire planet.**







# Oversized Impact

By stewarding Alaska's abundant natural resources today, we can ensure a safer, healthier planet for future generations.



More than 40% of the nation's freshwater



Half of the nation's terrestrial carbon



Nearly two-thirds of the nation's wetlands



20% of the landmass of the contiguous United States



The largest intact temperate rainforest in the world



60% of the U.S. seafood harvest





# Respectful, Community-Based Conservation

**TNC Alaska's approach is extremely pragmatic, grounded in science and based on deep partnerships with Indigenous Peoples.**

In Alaska, we do conservation differently:

- ▶ Instead of locking up nature, we're helping people live on and from the land in ways that are consistent with our Alaska values.
- ▶ To achieve our vision for the future of Alaska, we're engaging with diverse and powerful coalitions that include Indigenous leaders, nonprofits, government agencies, industry representatives and local communities.
- ▶ Alaska's 365 million acres are about 85% public, so we rely heavily on political engagement for conservation impact.
- ▶ We participate in collaborative partnerships and projects with Alaska Native corporations—Alaska's largest private landowners—and federal agencies to achieve our goals of sequestering millions of metric tons of carbon, restoring degraded forests and streams, and ensuring the long-term health of the coastal temperate rainforest and Bristol Bay.



Our work in Alaska falls into three main categories: **Climate Solutions**, **Thriving Communities** and **Sustainable Fisheries**.



## Climate Solutions

We work with lawmakers, Tribes and communities to preserve Alaska's vast carbon stores, transition to renewable energy and plan for future climate-related impacts.



## Thriving Communities

We work with local communities to elevate their conservation priorities and identify sustainable economic opportunities.



## Sustainable Fisheries

Drawing on both Western science and Indigenous ways of knowing, we work to protect and restore fish habitat and improve equity and sustainability in Alaska's fisheries.







## Climate Solutions

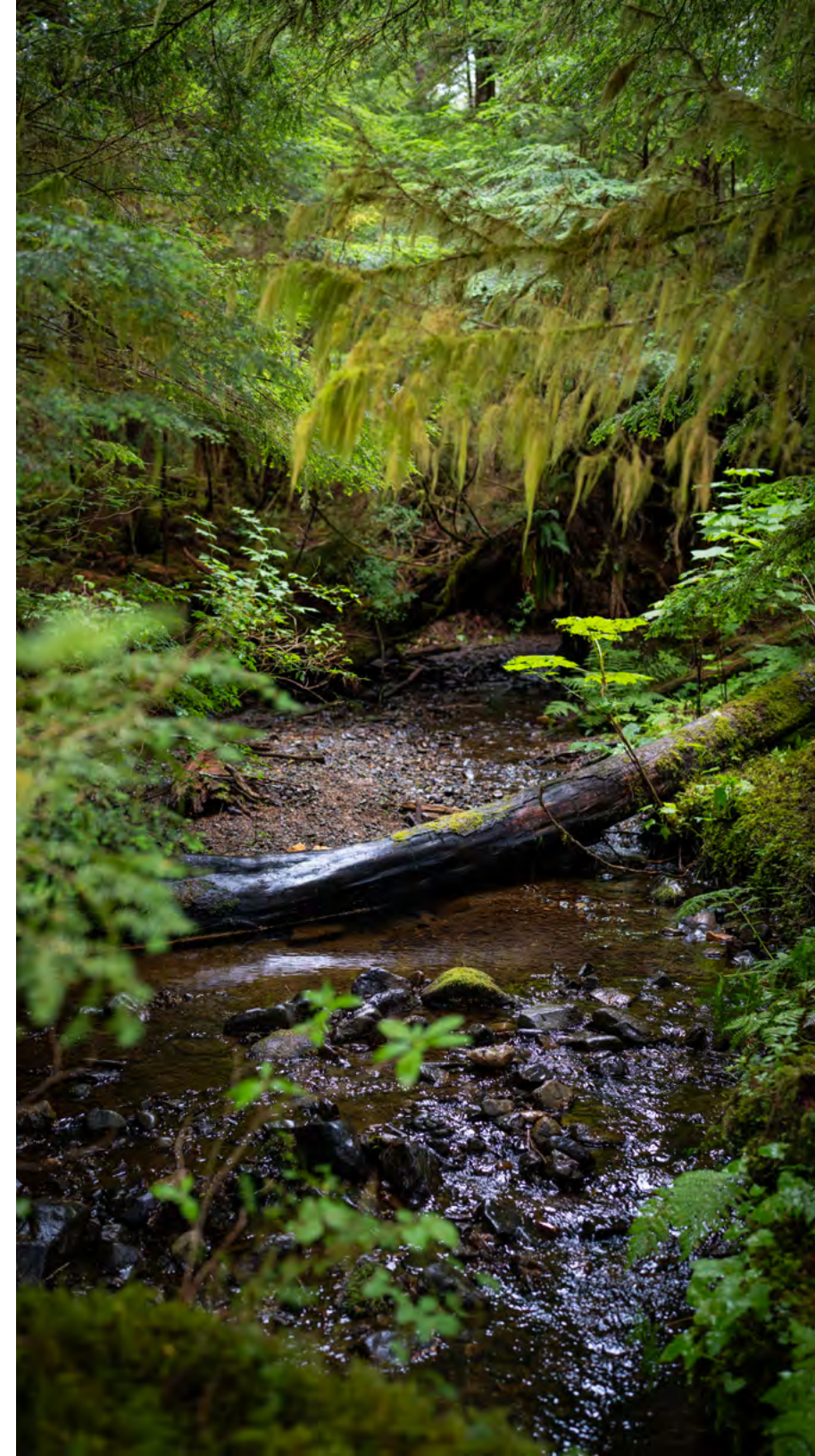
**\$3.2**  
MILLION

**Alaska, with its natural abundance, represents a powerful opportunity for climate action that helps mitigate the worst impacts of climate change.**

Alaska has more coastline than all the other 49 states combined, with tremendous potential for renewable energy like tidal power. Fifty percent of the carbon stored in our nation's trees, vegetation and soils is right here in Alaska! Offshore, rich kelp forests require few resources to grow, regenerate quickly and absorb loads of carbon. Natural Climate Solutions targeting Alaska's kelp and old-growth forests, and its wetlands and peatlands, could play a significant role in keeping hazardous greenhouse gasses locked away.

Unfortunately, Alaska is warming at 2-4 times the global rate. The changes already underway in Alaska—melting glaciers and permafrost, more frequent and destructive wildfires, rising ocean temperatures and increasingly severe storms—all pose immediate threats to Alaska and are disproportionately affecting our Indigenous communities. Flooding, erosion and melting sea ice are impacting ancestral hunting grounds and travel routes and destroying critical infrastructure like schools, roads and sewer systems.

Unchecked, these impacts will eventually threaten the health of human and natural communities worldwide through the release of carbon dioxide and methane into our atmosphere.



For **Julia Nave**, the Tongass National Forest is home. She grew up running wild through its trees, and is deeply connected to its communities and landscapes. As the director of TNC's Southeast Alaska program, she was delighted when her staff took the lead on developing a carbon map for the Emerald Edge—the world's largest coastal temperate rainforest, spanning Alaska, British Columbia, Washington and Oregon.

Using remote sensing data, the mapping team estimated the forest's carbon values from Kodiak, Alaska all the way down to the northwest coast of Oregon. The result is a map that shows which parts of this great forest are most at risk, and where shifts in land management could have the greatest impact on its carbon storage.

Southeast Alaska houses the Tongass National Forest, the largest national forest in the nation and an ideal storehouse for carbon. The Tongass sequesters enough carbon each year to offset emissions for up to 6 million vehicles—and with an average of up to 18 feet of rain per year, there's little risk of wildfires sending that carbon up in smoke.



**"The Tongass is a delightfully dynamic place that offers so much to people who live here and who visit. It is a reliable source of food, and its beauty is unmatched. Meanwhile, in the background, the forest is silently storing carbon, an invaluable service for people and the planet."**

-JULIA NAVE, SOUTHEAST ALASKA PROGRAM DIRECTOR,  
THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IN ALASKA



### Where we've been

**TNC Alaska has helped protect the most important 2.5 million acres of the Tongass, which contains almost a third of the world's remaining old-growth temperate rainforest.**

We're advancing bold solutions to transition to clean energy, adopt Natural Climate Solutions that help forests, soil and marine waters absorb and store more carbon, and strengthen communities' resilience to the impacts of climate change. These solutions include an agreement we struck in 2017 to protect nearly 100 square miles of coal deposits and old-growth forests near the mouth of the Copper River, keeping millions of tons of carbon dioxide locked away.



### Where we're going

We will continue providing needed scientific research for prospective carbon projects in Alaska and developing mapping tools that make it easy for landowners to assess the carbon-market potential of their lands on a parcel-by-parcel basis.

**We will also help communities plan for climate adaptation and resilience, while moving toward renewable energy and climate-smart policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.**





**\$1.8  
MILLION**

**In Alaska, ties to the land extend  
back thousands of years.**



**Thriving  
Communities**

Throughout this time, Alaska Natives practiced hands-on stewardship of Alaska's lands and waters, which resulted in the remarkable abundance for which Alaska is known around the world: rivers choked with fish, thick forests and iconic animals. For thousands of years, Alaska's healthy lands and waters were stewarded by its first people, and their lives and cultures are tied to their homelands. But the arrival of settlers brought a new era defined by boom-and-bust economies: the Russian fur trade, fish canneries, the gold rush and the timber industry. The result was the disconnection of Indigenous Peoples from their traditional ways of life, and degraded landscapes that struggled to support the needs of people and nature.

Fortunately, the tide is turning as Alaska's leaders and communities re-examine what the future could look like. We're helping Alaskans, whose well-being and livelihoods depend on healthy oceans, freshwater and lands, prepare for a prosperous future, connected to the lands and waters that have sustained them for millennia. We're partnering with local and Indigenous communities in Alaska to learn from and support their leadership in stewarding their environment, securing rights to resources, improving economic opportunities and shaping their future.

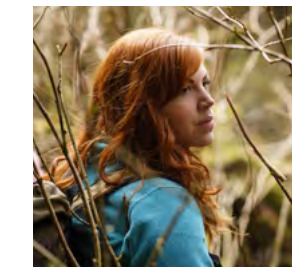


### **Collaborating as communities gets us even farther.**

How best to find solutions in Alaska? Who knows the way forward? This much we know: The most durable and lasting solutions arise when we come together and learn from one another. This is what makes trust possible. Together, we can see new possibilities and imagine what can be.

This is how we've proceeded for well over a decade as a founding member of the Sustainable Southeast Partnership (SSP). We work for the collective well-being and economic prosperity of Alaska Native Tribes stewarding one of the world's most ecologically important places—the coastal temperate rainforest of Southeast Alaska. With the boom-and-bust of the Tongass timber heydays now in the rear-view mirror, people and their communities have the momentum once again. You can see the change. Future decisions about the region's lush forests now take guidance from Indigenous Peoples with deep ancestral ties to this place. Community institutions are laying the foundation for future generations, and new, sustainable economies are growing. Indigenous-led crews are restoring salmon streams and forests.

The work of the SSP is ongoing, as is our commitment. The Nature Conservancy is a steadfast supporter of the Seacoast Trust, a perpetual funding source for SSP's goals of healthy and abundant lands, waters and communities. This fund has grown to \$23 million-plus—with a goal of creating a long-term, intergenerational resource of \$100 million.



**"It's about keeping the balance, remembering who we are...going out in the world to gather tools and experiences, and to come back and lift up my community with these new tools."**

-MARINA ANDERSON, PROGRAM DIRECTOR FOR THE  
SUSTAINABLE SOUTHEAST PARTNERSHIP



### Where we've been

For more than 20 years, TNC Alaska has worked to protect and restore the lush natural abundance of Alaska.

We've worked with landowners, nonprofits, government agencies and communities to shift their approach to conservation. With our partners, we've grown the Sustainable Southeast Partnership to include 14 communities and three community forest partnerships, and established a funding mechanism to maintain it into the future. We've helped the Alaska Native Village of Igiugig in Bristol Bay launch an Indigenous Guardians program, which uses Indigenous and Western science to monitor freshwater in one of the richest salmon rivers in the world. Following the lead of our Indigenous partners, we've established youth and workforce development programs and have supported the development of hundreds of green jobs.

### Where we're going

We will foster sustainable economic growth that benefits people and the natural world in places like **Southeast Alaska's Tongass National Forest and Southwest's Bristol Bay. We will continue building coalitions – working together toward collaborative land management and resilient communities.**





**\$1.5  
MILLION**

**Alaska is home to more than 627 fish species, including rainbow trout, pollock, halibut, black cod and all five species of Pacific salmon.**

Alaska boasts more than 40 percent of the nation's freshwater, and has more coastline than the rest of the United States combined. Its ocean and streams produce 60 percent of the nation's seafood harvest, and 95 percent of its wild salmon.

But Alaska's waters are threatened by climate change and large-scale development. Timber harvest, large-scale mining and population growth—as well as the pressures of a growing global population—have stressed Alaska's ocean riches. Alaska's fishing families are increasingly struggling to participate in—and profit from—the fishing industry. Coastal communities that have long relied on fishing for economic viability are struggling.



## Sustainable Fisheries



**Norman Van Vactor** isn't from Bristol Bay, but for nearly half a century his heart has never been far from the region, which produces half the world's wild sockeye salmon. Born and raised in the Southern Philippines, Van Vactor flew to Bristol Bay the day after high school graduation, seeking work to pay for college. He worked as a deckhand, and then a tender captain before earning a bachelor's degree from St. Olaf College in Minnesota. Eventually, he settled into a career with the Alaska seafood industry and began splitting his time between Seattle and Bristol Bay.

In 2013 he was offered a role as the CEO of an organization with goals that spoke to his heart: Keeping Bristol Bay free from the threat of the Pebble Mine and ensuring Alaska's fishing families remained part of the industry that is so integral to the state's economies and communities.

Van Vactor and his wife moved permanently to Bristol Bay, where he brought his passion for the land, its people and the region's resources to the forefront of his work. Then in 2019, he joined The Nature Conservancy's Alaska Board of Trustees, where he was able to make a different kind of impact, protecting the region's salmon with the backing of the world's largest conservation organization.

During his time with TNC, the Pebble Mine has been vetoed, and TNC's Bristol Bay program has grown into a powerhouse—helping the region's Indigenous leaders and communities develop sustainable economic opportunities, developing the capacity of the region's youth and workforce to lead in stewarding the watershed and elevating the voices and rights of local and Indigenous people.

"We truly have so much to be grateful for," says Van Vactor. "Thank you for helping us protect our salmon."





### Where we've been

The Nature Conservancy has helped conserve more than 8,000 acres of prime salmon habitat and map the biology and geology of more than 92% of Alaska's shoreline.

Working with a coalition of Tribal and nonprofit leaders, we provided valuable science in Bristol Bay that increased understanding of the danger posed by large-scale mining and contributed to the Environmental Protection Agency's decision to deny the Pebble Mine permit. We helped launch an innovative initiative that incentivizes conservation practices and strengthens fishery leadership in Alaska communities by structuring loan products that support Alaska fishermen. We've also published valuable research about the difficulties Alaska fishing families have in obtaining permits to fish their own waters.

### Where we're going

We will ensure Alaska's world-class waters continue to provide for people around the globe while supporting Alaska's economy by conserving some of the world's last, best fisheries—in Bristol Bay and beyond—and the people and industries that depend on them.







**At TNC we know that together we will find a way.  
Join us and become a powerful force for global impact.**

## **Alaska will be critical to the global fight against climate change and biodiversity loss.**

Preserving intact lands and waters is the single best way to ensure the future health of our planet—and Alaska holds the vast majority of the nation's remaining wilderness.

Iconic species still roam our lands, like wolves, polar bears, and 95% of America's brown bears. Forests full of towering, moss-covered trees hold carbon captured more than 600 years ago.

Hundreds of millions of wild salmon return to Alaska's rivers each year, feeding fat bears, bald eagles and entire forests, nourishing some of the world's last salmon-based cultures, and fueling a sustainably managed \$2 billion commercial fishery.

Alaska is brimming with life and bursting with carbon—and we still have time to protect it. TNC Alaska has the local grounding, relationships, and expertise to do the work. With your support, we can leverage Alaska's rich carbon stores to help cut global emissions, conserve its abundant fish and wildlife, and uphold a way of life for its thriving communities.

**To find out how you can help, contact Caitlin Hedberg, Director of Philanthropy at [caitlin.hedberg@tnc.org](mailto:caitlin.hedberg@tnc.org)**







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Our vision is a world where the diversity of life thrives,  
and people act to conserve nature for its own sake and  
its ability to fulfill our needs and enrich our lives.

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