The Nature Conservancy



Colorado

Year in Review 2026 | Celebrating 60 Years of Conservation Success

The Nature Conservancy in Colorado

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,



As we reflect on 2026, I am filled with gratitude for our staff and the partners, supporters and volunteers who made this year's conservation achievements possible. This year was especially meaningful as we celebrated two remarkable milestones: 60 years of The Nature Conservancy in Colorado, and 75 years of TNC's global impact. These anniversaries gave us an opportunity to honor the visionaries who came before us while recommitting ourselves to the work ahead.

I was also honored and humbled this year to receive the Nonprofit Leader of the Year award from Leading Colorado and sponsored by the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce and 9News. While I may have been the one accepting the award, I truly believe that I was there as a representative of TNC's incredible staff and volunteers, who show up every day with purpose and dedication to our mission.

During my travels across Colorado this year, I had the privilege of meeting with supporters, partners and community members from every corner of the state. While the landscapes and communities we visited were diverse, a common thread emerged in nearly every conversation: a deep appreciation for the outdoors and a shared commitment to protecting the places that make Colorado extraordinary. Time and again, I was reminded that nature has a unique ability to connect us, bringing people together around values that transcend differences and inspire collective action.

This 2026 Year in Review shares some of the stories of our work with partners across Colorado as we advanced solutions to protect our lands and waters, to tackle climate change and to contend with this season's low snowpack and the ongoing drought. We worked alongside ranchers, Tribal Nations, community leaders, businesses, public agencies and other conservation partners. Together, we demonstrated that lasting conservation is built through collaboration, innovation and a shared commitment to future generations.

The challenges facing Colorado remain significant, but so is our resolve. Thank you for your continued support and belief in a thriving future for people and nature. We are proud to share the impact we achieved together in 2026, and I am confident that we will continue to make meaningful progress in Colorado and across the globe.

Sincerely,

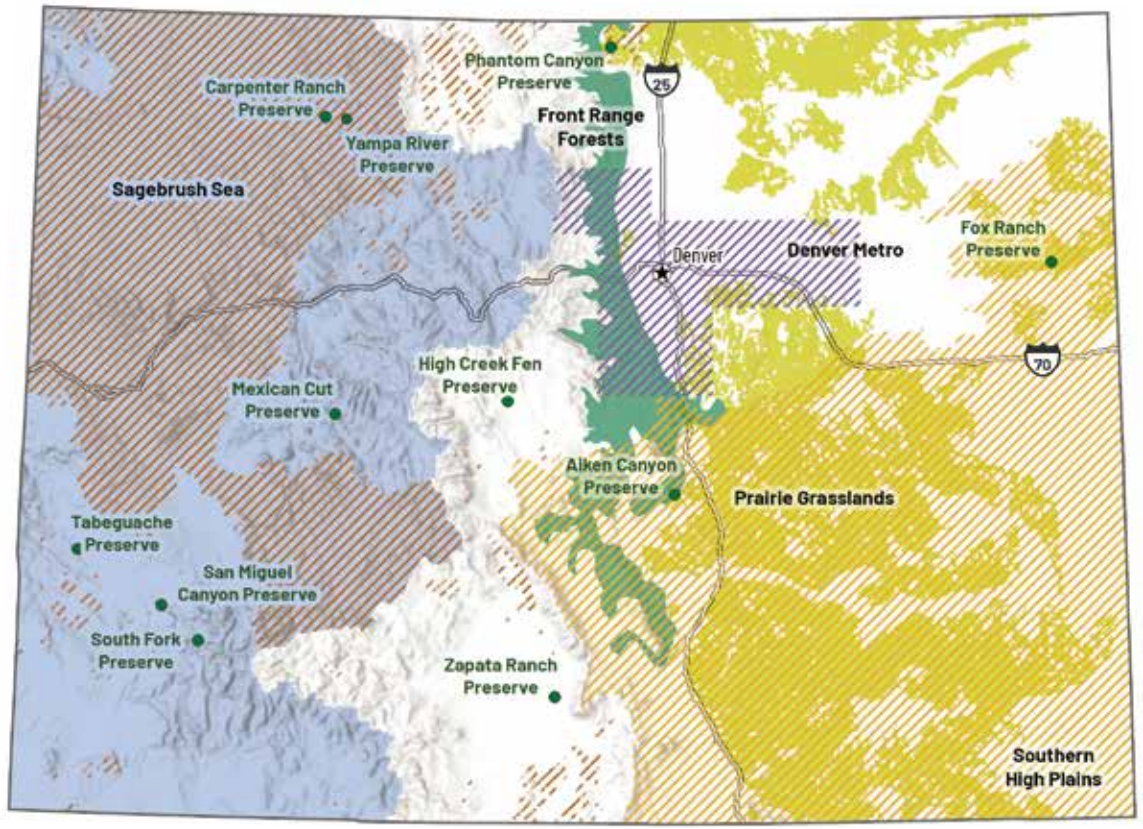


Carlos E. Fernández
State Director, The Nature Conservancy in Colorado

ABOVE Carlos Fernández accepting the Nonprofit Leader of the Year award © Kelli Harrington/TNC; **COVER** Mexican Cut Preserve © Audrey Wolk/TNC; **OPPOSITE** Map © Meghan Bogaerts/TNC and Lucy Haggard/TNC

TNC Colorado

Where We Work



60 YEARS

Our Nature, Our Home
COLORADO
1966-2026

Since 1966, The Nature Conservancy has been working in Colorado toward the one future we envision: **a future with a livable climate, healthy communities and thriving nature**. Our ambitious 2030 goals focus on science-based strategies, including protecting land and water, providing food and water sustainably, and tackling climate change.

Colorado by the Numbers

1.6m

acres TNC has helped to protect in Colorado

1,300

river miles TNC has helped to restore in Colorado

23

properties TNC owns and manages as preserves in Colorado

(Several preserves are listed on the adjacent map.)

TO LEARN MORE, visit **nature.org/Colorado**

For the Love of Colorado

Celebrating 60 years of Conservation

It started with a small property near Crested Butte.

In the 1960s, scientists from the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory asked The Nature Conservancy to help protect an extraordinary series of glacial wetlands on the slopes of Galena Mountain known as Mexican Cut. When TNC purchased Mexican Cut in 1966, it safeguarded an exceptional outdoor laboratory and marked the beginning of something much larger: The Nature Conservancy's Colorado chapter.

Sixty years later, that single preserve has grown into a statewide conservation legacy. Together with partners, communities, Tribal Nations, landowners and supporters, TNC has helped protect more than 1.6 million acres and 1,300 river miles across Colorado while advancing solutions that benefit people and nature.

Conserving the Places That Define Colorado

Colorado's landscapes are woven into the identity of our state. For six decades, TNC has worked to protect the rivers, forests, grasslands and mountain valleys that sustain wildlife, support local communities and inspire generations of Coloradans.

From Phantom Canyon and High Creek Fen to Fox Ranch and the Zapata Ranch Preserve, our work has helped conserve some of Colorado's most important landscapes across the state.

Over time, our vision has grown from protecting individual properties, like Carpenter Ranch Preserve in northwest Colorado, to launching large-scale efforts, such as the Southern High Plains Initiative. This five-state initiative helps conserve vast grassland ecosystems, which support our ranching communities, remarkable wildlife and local economies across Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

Protecting the Lifeblood of the West

For decades, TNC has worked alongside partners to keep rivers healthy and flowing for people and nature. From improving river flows to helping endangered fish species and informing Colorado's first statewide water plan, our work has focused on solutions that benefit entire river systems.

That legacy continues today through efforts such as our Colorado River Program, which the Colorado Chapter helped to launch, and the Yampa River Fund, which brings communities together to invest in Colorado's last major free-flowing river.

More recently, partners completed the modernization of the Maybell diversion on the Yampa River, improving water delivery for agriculture while enhancing river health and recreational access.

Creating a More Resilient Future

As Colorado faces larger wildfires, prolonged drought and rising temperatures, helping forests withstand a warming climate is a priority.

Working with agencies, researchers, landowners and local communities, we have helped shape a shared vision for healthier forests and watersheds. From expanding prescribed fire and forest restoration to restoring streams and wetlands with nature-based solutions, our focus is simple: healthier ecosystems that can better support wildlife, communities and water supplies.

Today, these efforts extend beyond Colorado to the western United States with initiatives such as the Western Dry Forests Program, ensuring science and collaboration drive conservation at the scale the challenges demand.

TNC is also helping to restore streams and wetlands using low-tech, nature-based approaches that slow water, reduce the impacts of drought and improve resilience for wildlife, ranching operations and local communities.

Bringing Nature Closer to Home

Since 2017, TNC has worked with community partners to bring the benefits of nature to Metro Denver. Through its leadership on Denver's Parks Legacy Fund and support for the Climate Action Fund, TNC has helped secure significant investments in urban green spaces, nature-based climate solutions and community resilience across the region.

Expanding Tribal Engagement

Through the years and across the state, TNC has deepened partnerships with Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities, supporting community priorities while creating opportunities for culturally grounded conservation. At places like Zapata Ranch Preserve, we are working alongside partners to strengthen connections to ancestral homelands, buffalo restoration and stewardship traditions.

These collaborations reflect an enduring truth: Lasting conservation depends on uplifting Indigenous knowledge, relationships, trust and a commitment to the future.

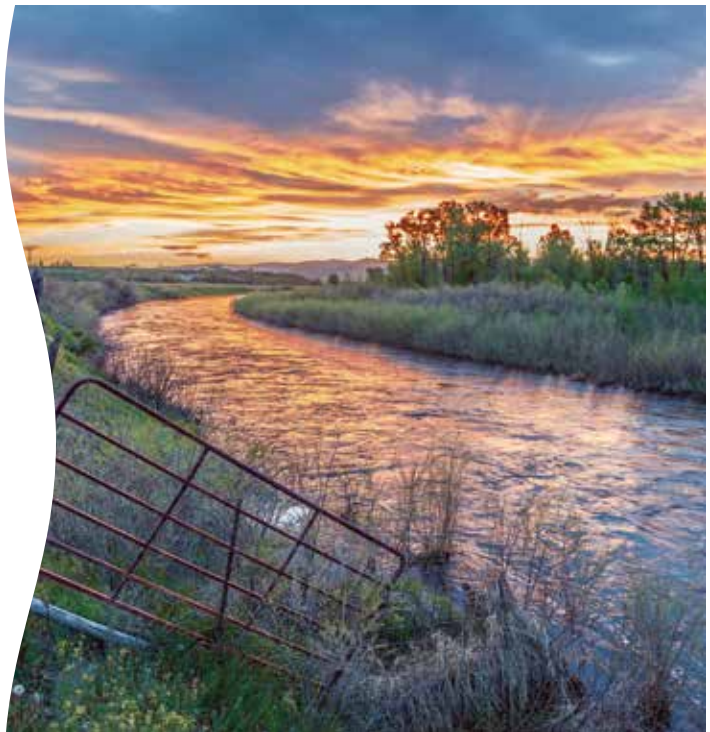
Looking Ahead

Over the past 60 years, TNC has helped to protect treasured landscapes, restore rivers, strengthen forests, support communities and advance some of Colorado's most significant conservation achievements, including Great Sand Dunes National Park, Fishers Peak State Park, Great Outdoors Colorado and Colorado's Outdoors Strategy.

Yet our proudest accomplishment may be the community of people who made this work possible. Since 1966, supporters like you have helped build a conservation legacy that protects Colorado's lands, waters and way of life for future generations.

As we celebrate 60 years of conservation in Colorado, we are grateful for what we have accomplished together and hopeful for what lies ahead. The work continues, but so does the opportunity. Together, we are building a future where nature and people thrive for generations to come.







FROM TOP Fishers Peak © Cameron Davidson; Yampa River © John Fielder; Great Sand Dunes National Park © Nick Hall

A Smart Path for Renewable Energy

Turning Brownfields into Bright Futures

Colorado is taking a new approach to the clean energy transition: Build renewable energy infrastructure where the land has already been disturbed. A new state law spearheaded by The Nature Conservancy encourages renewable energy development on underused sites, such as former mines, landfills and industrial properties.

The Renewable Energy Development on Disturbed Lands Act (HB26-1268), also known as the Brownfields Act, gives Colorado communities new tools to benefit from the clean energy transition. The policy allows local governments to voluntarily designate Renewable Energy Reinvestment Areas (RERAs), helping to direct renewable energy and battery storage projects to thousands of sites across the state, including closed landfills, former factories, and abandoned mining, oil and gas properties.

The law is also expected to deliver important conservation benefits. By encouraging development on previously disturbed lands, it can reduce pressure to build projects on undeveloped landscapes that provide critical wildlife habitat or valuable agricultural land. At the same time, the legislation preserves all existing state and federal laws and regulations governing contaminated site cleanup and remediation.

Representative Karen McCormick was the primary sponsor, along with Representative Lesley Smith and Senator William Lindstedt.

"With our increasing need for clean energy to be close to the demand for it, this bill will open up opportunities for local governments to partner with renewable energy developers for innovative new uses on otherwise limited-use disturbed lands," says Representative Karen McCormick.

"This bipartisan legislation garnered support because it establishes a common-sense framework for streamlining renewable energy siting and permitting in responsible locations while preserving local decision-making authority and protecting nature," says Duncan Gilchrist, Climate and Energy Policy Advisor for The Nature Conservancy.

A growing body of research supports this approach. The Nature Conservancy's *Mining the Sun* report found that repurposing degraded and abandoned lands for renewable energy can help avoid the conversion of natural lands while creating new economic opportunities for local communities. More recently, analysis from the Rocky Mountain Institute revealed that repurposing just 10 percent of Colorado's brownfields for renewable energy could offset development on approximately 61,800 acres of undeveloped land. That is roughly the amount of land needed to host solar energy projects if Colorado is to achieve its goal of 100 percent renewable energy by 2040.

TNC also advocated for the passage of the Colorado Grid Optimization Act (HB26-1081), which encourages power companies to strengthen our grid by using advanced transmission technologies to improve affordability, increase reliability and reduce wildfire risk.

"These bills show that we can find solutions that benefit communities and wildlife while also addressing climate change and supporting conservation," adds Gilchrist.



Working Together for Water

Resilience in Southwest Colorado

In Colorado, where countless mountain streams and creeks merge into the mighty Colorado River, water is more than a resource. It is a constant consideration. To respond to increasing drought and flood conditions in 2026, TNC launched a unique grant opportunity to test whether this type of support met community needs. When the Drought and Flood Resilience Funding Opportunity for Southwest Colorado was released in April, we discovered a "flood" of interest, receiving $2 million in requests from community-based groups that focus on healthy forests, flowing water and sustainable agriculture. "Reaching our goal of healthy, sustainable rivers requires collaboration," says Diana Lane, Sustainable Food and Water Program Director. "This offering introduced us to new partners across southwest Colorado."

TNC will be distributing $600,000 to 10 projects ranging from restoration at Canyons of the Ancients National Monument and wildfire risk reduction in the San Juan watershed to improved stewardship practices on working lands in the San Miguel watershed. Each project will leverage additional funds and support from partners, leading to a total investment of $4 million in southwest Colorado.

We are also proud of TNC's long-term support for the Dolores River in southwest Colorado. The Wines Diversion near Gateway needed a design that would connect native fish movement, agricultural uses and boat passage. This project requires ongoing collaboration from the Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, American Whitewater, private landowners and river engineers. TNC helped lead an interdisciplinary approach to ensure the new diversion design meets the needs of people and nature. "Each organization brings expertise to the table to share," adds Lane. "That's where solutions are crafted."



Finding Solutions Across the Colorado River Basin

The Colorado River Basin is facing a defining moment. Hot, dry conditions arriving in the third decade of ongoing drought have put additional stress on water supplies, nature and communities.

The basin's temporary operating guidelines, which had guided federal water management since 2007, expired this year. When the seven basin states could not agree on how to distribute water cuts, the Bureau of Reclamation implemented a new 10-year framework with two-year operating plans.

The new guidelines are an important step forward but will not resolve every challenge facing the basin. Smart implementation will be key to protecting natural systems, elevating Tribal leadership and removing barriers to action. TNC is focused on practical solutions that work alongside the guidelines to put the basin on a path to resilience.

"We have an opportunity to build a future where both people and nature can thrive in a drier climate," says Celene Hawkins, TNC's Colorado River Program Director. "I'm encouraged by the commitment of so many partners working together to make that vision a reality."

FROM LEFT Solar Array © Frank Gärtner; Paddling the Dolores River © Lauryn Wachs/TNC

2026
YEAR IN PHOTOS

See the latest Colorado photos! Follow us at **Instagram.com/co_nature**







THIS PAGE FROM LEFT TNC held 60th anniversary gatherings around the state. © Marissa Gross/TNC; Willow Creek wetland restoration © Joe Leonhard; In 2026, TNC Colorado protected the 30,000-acre Cucharas Ranch supporting a threatened ecosystem and working ranches. © Camerahead Media; **OPPOSITE PAGE FROM TOP LEFT** Bobcat at Phantom Canyon Preserve © Fernando Boza; TNC Colorado participated in two panels, one on the Colorado River and one on Public Lands at the Conference on World Affairs held at The University of Colorado in Boulder. © Kelli Harrington/TNC; CO staff and Trustees at the Western Trustee Summit in October 2026 © Meg Morris/TNC; TNC Colorado is a proud nonprofit sponsor of Mountainfilm Festival in Telluride. © Alexa Garcia/TNC

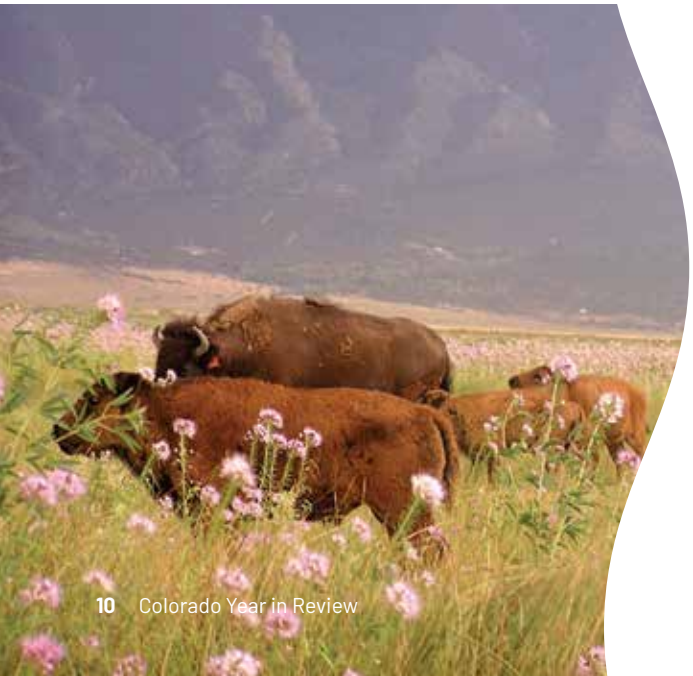





MOUNTAINFILM







Zapata Ranch Preserve

Where Conservation and Culture Converge

The Zapata Ranch Preserve has been home to Indigenous people since time immemorial, with the creation stories of some Tribal Nations taking place in the San Luis Valley. The Preserve is well suited to serve as a learning landscape for globally relevant and culturally sensitive conservation that weaves together Western science and traditional ways of knowing.

We are furthering this vision by having deep and active conversations with Tribal Nations, local community organizations, and a wide range of other partners. We are listening and learning from these communities to help guide and co-create what comes next. Izabella Ruffino, Tribal and Indigenous Engagement Program Manager for TNC in Colorado, has been dedicated and focused on building trusting relationships with Tribal Nations, and thoughtfully making space for meaningful collaboration.

InterTribal Gathering

In May, an InterTribal Gathering brought together 25 representatives from nine Tribal Nations with ancestral connection to the area, to introduce the Preserve, build relationships, and explore future engagement opportunities. Led by Indigenous facilitators, conversations focused on stewardship, cultural practices and knowledge sharing to center Tribal priorities at the Preserve.

The gathering marked an important step in ensuring that Tribal voices help to inform the future of Zapata Ranch Preserve.

Reconnecting Youth and Elders

Tribal Listening sessions, including the InterTribal gathering, highlighted the importance of providing opportunities for elders and youth to engage at the Preserve. In response, the Preserve hosted the first Elder and Youth Camp with the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. The camp brought members from the Tribal community together to create opportunities to reconnect with ancestral homelands and cultural traditions.

A Living Classroom

Through a new agreement with Adams State University and partnerships with organizations including San Luis Valley Great Outdoors and Generation Wild, the Preserve is also emerging as a living classroom for students and future conservation leaders.

"Together, these efforts are helping shape a new chapter for the Preserve, one where conservation extends beyond protecting landscapes to honoring cultural traditions, strengthening relationships and creating opportunities for learning and belonging," says Nancy Fishbein, TNC in Colorado's Resilient Lands Director.

FROM TOP UMUT Campfire © Izabella Ruffino/TNC; Bison © Audrey Wolk/TNC

Restoring Colorado's Forests for a More Resilient Future

Colorado's forests faced a perfect storm in 2026. One of the worst snow droughts in recent history, record-breaking heat and renewed bark beetle outbreaks compounded stress on already vulnerable landscapes.

"By February, bare patches of ground were already visible where deep mountain snow would normally linger," says Rob Addington, TNC in Colorado's Forest and Fire Program Director. "We knew we were entering uncharted territory."

Many forests also carry the legacy of more than a century of fire suppression, leaving some landscapes unnaturally dense and increasingly susceptible to drought, insects and severe wildfire.

The warning signs arrived early. By mid-March, the Highway 24 Fire erupted south of Colorado Springs, foreshadowing the destructive wildfire season ahead.

"Drought and wildfire threaten the many benefits forests provide, including clean water, recreation, wildlife habitat and rural livelihoods," says Addington. "Severe fires can also leave watersheds susceptible to erosion and debris flows long after the flames are extinguished."

Millions of acres across Colorado need restoration to improve resilience and reduce wildfire risk, yet funding, workforce and implementation challenges limit the pace of progress.

To address these challenges, TNC works with partners—including the Upper South Platte Partnership (USPP)—to increase the pace and scale of restoration efforts that reduce wildfire risk, protect water supplies, strengthen climate resilience and improve forest health. In ponderosa pine forests, restoration often involves thinning small trees and applying prescribed fire to reduce hazardous fuels and restore more natural conditions. TNC also advances policy and funding solutions, supports workforce development and applies science to guide effective forest management.

Evidence shows these investments are working.

The recent Rolling Creek Fire in Park County and the White Hawk Fire in Jefferson County demonstrated that strategic restoration works, reducing fire intensity and giving firefighters a critical advantage when protecting communities.

Colorado's forests will continue to face drought, insects and wildfire; however, recent fires have reinforced an important lesson: Proactive, science-based restoration works.

"When communities, agencies, scientists and conservation organizations work together, they can help create more resilient forests, better-protected watersheds and communities better prepared for an increasingly uncertain future," says Audrey Miles-Cherney, USPP Coordinator with the Colorado State Forest Service.







FROM TOP Mule deer standing in ponderosa pine forest © Evan Barrientos; Rob Addington measures tree density. © Evan Barrientos; Forest restoration on the Ben Delatour Scout Ranch © Evan Barrientos

A Land Conservation Legacy That Continues to Grow

Sixty years ago, The Nature Conservancy's work in Colorado began with the protection of a single piece of land.

In 1966, TNC conserved Mexican Cut Preserve near Crested Butte. This launched the Colorado chapter and reflected a simple belief: Protecting important places matters to both nature and people. Today, that belief remains unchanged. What has evolved is the ever-growing scale and complexity of the conservation needed to address climate change and biodiversity loss.

Through the Southern High Plains Initiative, which spans large areas of Colorado, New Mexico, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas, TNC is protecting intact grasslands across one of North America's largest remaining native prairie landscapes. These working lands provide critical connectivity so nature can move, adapt and endure in a changing climate, while also sustaining rural communities and economies.

Our approach to land protection has evolved since TNC's initial purchase in 1966. While we maintain our historic preserves around the state, TNC's role as a landowner can also be temporary. In these situations, we acquire strategically important properties, secure their long-term protection through conservation easements and other tools, then return them to private or public ownership, ensuring they remain productive parts of their communities while safeguarding their important natural and cultural values through the conservation easement.

"It's an honor to be engaged in protecting these working lands in southeast Colorado," says Joel Nystrom, Land Protection Director for TNC in Colorado. "Ranching is woven into the fabric of our state; ranchers steward our land and water and remain a critical part of our economy."

Recent projects demonstrate how this approach can build a connected conservation landscape. At Silver Mountain Preserve near La Veta, TNC partnered with Palmer Land Conservancy to permanently protect an 11,000-acre cattle and bison ranch. The acquisition of Poitry Canyon Ranch in Las Animas County added to a landscape of more than 336,000 acres of protected prairie, canyon and ranchland habitat. Most recently, TNC acquired the 30,000-acre Cucharas Ranch near Walsenburg, furthering efforts to conserve one of the nation's most significant prairie landscapes while supporting working ranches.

"We have been doing this for a long time, and we are still learning," says Matt Moorhead, TNC in Colorado's Conservation Business and Partnership Development Advisor. "Continually improving how our conservation tools address the challenges facing the people and communities we work with is essential to building trust, strengthening partnerships and achieving conservation outcomes that are larger and lasting."

As science advances and partnerships deepen, TNC is helping to conserve the connected landscapes Colorado's wildlife, communities and working lands need to thrive.





Cultural Resource Surveys

Since time immemorial, Indigenous peoples have stewarded the lands we work to conserve today. As relationships with Tribal partners deepen, TNC in Colorado is voluntarily incorporating archaeological surveys for rock art, stone tools and other cultural resources into its land-protection processes to better understand and honor Indigenous histories and traditions connected to these places, ensuring conservation protects both landscapes and living cultural connections.



FROM TOP Map of SHPI landscape © Chris Bruce/TNC; Lesser prairie chicken © Harland J Schuster; Poitry Canyon © Joel Nystrom/TNC



Across party lines and communities, voters in the western United States overwhelmingly agree:

80 % of Western voters oppose selling public lands to private interests

79 % oppose reducing funding for public-land management agencies.

80 % oppose reducing staffing for agencies that manage public lands.

77 % oppose reducing the size of national monuments.

Public lands are central to the West's identity, economy and quality of life.



Made for You and Me

Help keep public lands in public hands

For 60 years, The Nature Conservancy in Colorado has worked alongside communities, ranchers, volunteers and partners to protect the state's most treasured lands and waters, helping to create beloved places such as Great Sand Dunes National Park. These public lands provide clean water, wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation opportunities that support Colorado's economy, culture and quality of life.

Today, Colorado's public lands, and public lands across the West, face growing pressure from proposals to sell, transfer or reduce funding for these shared landscapes. Yet support for protecting them remains strong. Bipartisan polling commissioned by The Nature Conservancy in early 2026 found that 83 percent of Colorado voters, and 80 percent of voters across 12 Western states, oppose selling or transferring federal public lands.

The Western United States contains nearly 90 percent of the nation's public lands, which play a vital role in supporting wildlife, protecting air and water resources, preserving cultural and historic connections, and powering a $1 trillion outdoor recreation economy. From forests and grasslands to mountains, coastlines and waterways, these landscapes provide opportunities for recreation, hunting, fishing and gathering, while holding deep significance for Tribal Nations and local communities.

Despite broad public support, proposals to sell, transfer or weaken protections for public lands continue to emerge. Such actions could permanently limit public access and increase access for private development interests. Once public lands are sold or transferred, the conservation, recreation and community benefits they provide may be lost for future generations.

The Nature Conservancy is working to ensure that public lands remain in public hands. To learn more and add your voice to the growing movement supporting America's public lands, visit **nature.org/publiclands**.

FROM LEFT Fishers Peak State Park © Bergreen Photography; Great Sand Dunes National Park © Erika Nortemann







Growing Resilience Through Nature

Nature-based solutions like tree planting are playing an increasingly vital role in building climate resilience across Colorado. In the wake of severe drought and record-breaking heat waves, Front Range cities are facing growing environmental challenges. Through its Healthy Cities Program, TNC in Colorado is helping communities adapt to a warmer future while creating healthier, greener neighborhoods that improve the quality of life for residents.

A standout project this year took root at Marie L. Greenwood Elementary School in north Denver, home to the Rocky Mountain region's first "pocket forest." Students and volunteers planted 2,000 native trees, shrubs and plants in a dense urban micro-forest designed to cool the neighborhood, improve air quality and support pollinators. Today, students care for the site as a living science lab. Early observations show the dense planting successfully retains soil moisture and lowers local temperatures, creating a model for future pocket forests across Colorado.

"We're excited to share that early observations suggest the dense planting helps retain soil moisture and cool the schoolyard," says Chris Hawkins, lead of The Nature Conservancy's Cities Program in Colorado. "In addition to mitigating climate change, this effort demonstrates how nature can bring people together and inspire the next generation of conservationists."

TNC is also delivering community benefits through other metro-area investments. In partnership with the Birdseed Collective, we hired neighborhood arborists to remove and replace hazardous trees



and steward existing canopy to improve public safety and climate resilience.

Through TNC's leadership in the Metro Denver Nature Alliance, a coalition of more than 50 organizations, we are helping bring new resources to the Front Range to protect critical habitats and connect people with nature. Projects include the Daniels Park Medicine Wheel Grassland Demonstration Garden, which was created with tribal partners to celebrate culturally significant plants and indigenous knowledge while highlighting Colorado's native grasslands, supporting pollinators and deepening appreciation for one of the state's most threatened ecosystems.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate how investing in nature strengthens communities, honors cultural connections and helps people thrive in a changing climate.

LEFT (ALL) Planting Day at the Green Woods Pocket Forest © SUGi Pocket Forests; **ABOVE** Denver Pocket Forest © CBS

Tracking Wildlife Migration and Advancing Conservation at Fox Ranch Preserve

In 2026, The Nature Conservancy in Colorado joined the international Motus wildlife monitoring network by contracting with Bird Conservancy of the Rockies to install a new Motus station at Fox Ranch Preserve in northeastern Colorado. The station, one of nearly 30 in Colorado and the first on a TNC preserve in the state, began operating in early March, just as the spring migration season got underway.

Launched by Birds Canada in 2014, the Motus network provides new insights on wildlife movement and behavior to inform conservation. Motus, Latin for "movement," builds on traditional wildlife monitoring by attaching small, lightweight radio transmitter tags to birds during banding operations in the field. Motus stations use antennas to detect these birds as they pass by within a radius of several miles, and annual migrations can be tracked if tagged birds pass enough stations.

Located along a major bird migration flyway and in an area with limited monitoring coverage, Fox Ranch Preserve was an ideal location for a new Motus station. In just a few months, the station detected ten tagged birds representing six species: chestnut-collared longspur, grasshopper sparrow, lark bunting, lesser yellowlegs, Sprague's pipit and thick-billed longspur.

"These early results reinforce the importance of Fox Ranch Preserve as a stopover and travel corridor for migratory birds," notes Dr. Andrew Rayburn, TNC Colorado Director of Conservation Science. "We expect the station to detect even more birds during the fall migration, and each detection helps tell a unique story about the remarkable migration journeys these birds make each year."

By connecting detections from stations across North, Central and South America, researchers can track migration routes, stopover sites and seasonal movements that are critical to effective conservation. For example, the lesser yellowlegs was tagged in March 2026 on the southern Chilean coast in South America. The bird then traveled thousands of miles northward to Fox Ranch Preserve in late May, after which it continued north toward Canada.

Data from our new Motus station directly contributes to state, national and international wildlife science and conservation efforts. Building on this early success, TNC in Colorado staff are exploring opportunities to install additional stations at other preserves. The team is also working with other TNC state chapters and the North American Region's Leveraging Our Lands program to scope further strategic collaboration between TNC and the Motus program. Together, these efforts could expand wildlife tracking, fill important monitoring gaps and deepen our understanding of bird migration across the continent.





FROM TOP Lesser yellowlegs © Adobe Stock; Motus station at Fox Ranch © Bird Conservancy of the Rocl

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PHOTO Lynn and Rick Hendricks in Denver, CO © Cynthia Weir/TNC



Leaving a Legacy

Deciding to leave a Legacy gift to The Nature Conservancy was a natural choice for Lynn and Rick Hendricks. "We have contributed to TNC for over thirty years," says Lynn. "We have found them to be exceptional stewards as well as responsible project and program managers."

The Hendricks' love of nature grew out of their concern over environmental degradation they witnessed. "We saw, firsthand, what can be done when people combine resources, expertise and science to address problems," Rick says. "This led to so many positive changes for the environment!"

Their goal for making a gift from their investments as part of their estate is to leave the Earth just a little better than they found it and help ensure The Nature Conservancy's ability to protect more lands for conservation purposes. Lynn relates, "While there are many worthy organizations to contribute to locally, TNC has the bandwidth, resources and expertise to make a difference at a local-to-global scale."

If you aren't yet a member of TNC's Legacy Club, Lynn and Rick advise: "Go for it! Time's awasting and there is no better time than now to support the future."

To plan your conservation legacy, contact:
Cynthia Weir | cynthia.weir@tnc.org | 303-444-2950