



The Appalachian Mountains running through New York are part of a 2,000-mile range stretching from Alabama to Canada. © Byron Jorjorian



Bill Ulfelder © Jonathan Grassi

### From our Executive Director

Dear Friend,

As you read on, you'll learn more about the globally critical Appalachians and the opportunities they offer to conserve nature, strengthen communities, support local economies and promote climate resilience.

New York is a vital connector in this vast corridor, where we're advancing nature-based climate solutions, including efforts to help the state plant 25 million trees by 2033.

With gratitude for your continued support to make this work possible,

Bill Ulfelder, Executive Director



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## A new Appalachian economy

### Investing in our mountains offers reward of a brighter future

The Appalachians form one of North America's most quietly powerful natural economies. Stretching 2,000 miles from Alabama to Canada, their forests, rivers and working lands sustain diverse wild-life and millions of people. Those who call these mountains home continue to shape this corridor of rich nature, cultural heritage and community resilience.

Appalachian communities are building economic futures that center nature, and The Nature Conservancy is proud to partner with them. Locally driven, nature-based solutions are redefining what's possible—from innovative forest management and clean energy development to outdoor recreation and cultural tourism. The Nature Conservancy works with local towns and Indigenous partners to ensure that their voices guide decisions about the region's resources.

Protecting and restoring land and water remain key to a brighter future for the Appalachians. Conserved lands safeguard traditional uses, support wildlife and draw visitor dollars that bolster local economies.

We also connect communities with public-private funding for clean-energy development, workforce training and revitalization efforts. Our largest initiative, the 253,000-acre tri-state Cumberland Forest Project, generates grants that are reinvested into community-driven, nature-based projects such as trails, outdoor community spaces and new business opportunities.

Investing in nature also reduces long-term costs from severe storms and other climate-driven events, as healthy floodplains, intact forests and restored wetlands help shield communities. A recent Nature Conservancy-commissioned study, *Nature's Dividends*, shows that every federal dollar spent strengthening nature can save up to \$7 in future disaster-recovery expenses. Returns at the state level are often even greater.

Investing in Appalachians conservation is one of the greatest opportunities of our time. It's a chance to honor the region's heritage, strengthen local economies and build climate adaptability for generations to come. Visit [nature.org/appalachians](https://nature.org/appalachians).



To help reach our statewide reforestation goals, The Nature Conservancy partners with New York landowners to plant trees on their properties. © Nancie Battaglia

## Planting the seeds for long-term success

The Nature Conservancy is leading a bold reforestation effort in New York. As the state aims to plant 25 million trees by 2033, New York is becoming a proving ground for solutions that are rooted in economic best practices and can scale across the Appalachians.

Trees clean our air and water, absorb carbon, reduce flooding and provide vital wildlife habitat. But restoring forests at the speed and scale that climate change demands is complex, requiring new approaches, strong partnerships and a reforestation economy capable of meeting long-term demand.

Alongside our partners, we're laying the groundwork for success. The Collaborative Priority Species List identifies 40 high-value native tree species suited for reforestation, helping landowners and practitioners select the right trees for their projects. The list also gives nurseries a clearer picture of which trees will be in high demand, encouraging them to focus on growing the ones landowners and restoration projects need most.

Through our Appalachian nursery market analysis, we're mapping seedling production capacity and seedling demand across 18 states to strengthen the supply chain and guide smart investments. Meanwhile, our Plant a Billion Trees campaign is driving momentum, leveraging public and private funding to reforest lands more efficiently, planting over 900,000 trees across the Appalachians to date.

In New York, landowner engagement is essential, as roughly 97% of the reforestation opportunity is on private land. As Ann Armstrong, New York social scientist, explains: "When we understand landowners' concerns and motivations, we can design programs that make tree planting on their lands a practical and rewarding choice. That's how individual decisions can turn into landscape-scale impact."

Thanks to your support, we're helping build the reforestation economy the Appalachians need to deliver lasting benefits for all of nature—humanity included.

## NATURE NEW YORK

New York supports conservation initiatives around the globe. Here is a recent highlight:

# 400,000 people

now benefit from a clean water fund in Kenya's Rift Valley



At Two Rivers Dam in the Eldoret-Iten watershed, Ruth Kimitei operates a drone as one of 18 local youths trained to collect monitoring data. © Roshni Lodhia

### Water funds: A proven solution for clean, reliable water

Water funds bring together communities, industries and landowners to co-invest in restoring and protecting the watershed areas that supply their water.

Over the last 25 years, The Nature Conservancy has helped establish 50 highly successful water funds in dozens of countries across Latin America, Europe and Africa.

In Kenya, the Eldoret-Iten Water Fund now secures clean water for more than 400,000 people. The fund trains students to use drones to gather data across the watershed, review the footage with local farmers and work with The Nature Conservancy to develop restoration plans.