



Nevada

Year in Review 2025

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Dear Member,

From glimmering coastlines and majestic mountains to vibrant deserts, cool forests and sweeping grasslands, the American West is home to some of the planet's most iconic landscapes and species.

Indeed, Nevada itself is home to over 300 species that live here and nowhere else on earth. This beautiful state includes the sweeping Sagebrush Sea, the Mojave Desert, bristlecone and ponderosa pine trees, the Colorado River and the Truckee River that flows from Lake Tahoe to Pyramid Lake.

As I write this, I am reliving memories of the scent of creosote and sagebrush and pine needles after a rain, and the glow of the sunset over the mountains. I love exploring this state, and cherish the thought that future generations can have these experiences.

As we experience drought, wildfire and a changing climate that impacts people and nature, The Nature Conservancy is rising to meet the moment. We're championing conservation policies and advancing solutions to secure a livable future—one with healthier communities, thriving wildlife and resilient ecosystems.

In this Year in Review, you'll discover how TNC in Nevada is driving local projects that support our regional conservation priorities. For decades, we've pioneered innovative solutions designed to be replicated in similar climates. Now, we're scaling up—faster and further than ever before—to deliver lasting, meaningful change.

We are able to do this important work because of people like you who have invested in solutions. I am so grateful for your continued support, and I hope you enjoy reading about our progress.

Yours in conservation,



Mauricia M.M. Baca
Nevada State Director



*ON THE COVER: Ruby Ridge © Chip Carroon
RIGHT: Mauricia Baca © Roger Pettersson
ON THE MAP: Sagebrush Sea © Chip Carroon;
Lake Mead water line © Chip Carroon; Solar
panels © Joanna Kulesza; Big Jack East Project
at Sawtooth Trailhead © Anthony Cupaiuolo*

TNC's 2030 GOALS

The North America Region of The Nature Conservancy is united by a shared commitment to conservation and climate action with the greatest potential to advance our 2030 goals. This work is propelled by divisional priorities that guide efforts across the continent. In the West, we are currently focused on nine divisional priorities— four of which touch down directly in Nevada. This approach helps us connect the dots, enabling smart, transparent decisions that amplify the scale and impact of our work.

We know that by working together, we will find a way.



[Learn more about The Nature Conservancy's 2030 Goals.](#)

Divisional Priorities that touch down in Nevada

1: Saving the Sagebrush Sea

Where once there were only brown plants and dust, now there are flowers.

2: The Colorado River

TNC is working across the Basin to protect the river.

3: Renewable Energy

TNC in Nevada works to build a future where renewable energy and conservation go hand in hand.

4: Western Dry Forests Program

A new TNC initiative seeks to improve forest health and address severe wildfires across the West.

Saving the Sagebrush Sea: A Seven-State Collaboration to Meet the Moment

“Our science, partnerships and actions together are building knowledge and skills with the people who will be the next generation of caretakers.”

MATT CAHILL
SAGEBRUSH SEA PROGRAM DIRECTOR

REGIONAL

From the Sierra to the Rockies, Canada to the Grand Canyon, the Sagebrush Sea is a vast mosaic of rangelands and grasslands, towering mountains and sweeping plains. This unique ecosystem is the cultural and economic engine for people and communities across the region, and the center of debate for the future of our lands and waters. The decisions we make today to steward this place will carry on far into the future.

At TNC, our Sagebrush Sea Program is forging unprecedented collaboration across seven chapters in the West—including Nevada—united by a vision for landscape-scale success. Teams are collaborating with ranchers, agencies and community leaders to develop solutions that are ecologically and economically viable, connect people to place, and meet the scale of our need to confront weeds, wildfire, drought and degradation.

In the past year, we have made important strides in how we protect, manage and restore the Sagebrush Sea, from our West-wide team reviving water in our streams and springs to innovating with technology on working ranches, adapting grazing to a changing world with newfound precision.

then

THIS PAGE: Sagebrush Sea habitat then © Brian Taylor
OPPOSITE PAGE: Sagebrush Sea now © Andrew Church;
A burrowing owl is one of 350 species that call the sagebrush sea home. © Zhvowhen Chen

LOCAL

Nature's Wonder and Resilience

Where once there were only brown plants and dust, now there are flowers, birdsong, and 45 strutting male sage-grouse.

The 27,000-acre BooHoo fire burned in 2007 and attempts by the Bureau of Land Management to re-establish vegetation in this important sage grouse habitat were unsuccessful. TNC took a different approach. We used novel techniques, precise mapping and science, and incentives for partners to invest in sage-grouse habitat to catalyze a new restoration effort. This time around, a concerted multi-year effort by Nevada Gold Mines, in coordination with the BLM and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to control invasive weeds, plant a wide diversity of species both with range drills and by hand, led to a new future for this land.

Liz Munn, Nevada's director of resilient public lands, who's been leading this work for TNC for 10 years, got a call in May from one of the partners that urged her to go to the site saying she won't believe her eyes. A week later, she was there.

"My heart burst with hope and relief to see thousands of acres restored and sage-grouse coming back to the area," said Liz Munn. "Arid restoration is so difficult, and we've been chipping away at this for so long, and all of a sudden, here was the evidence."

Now, TNC in Nevada is actively working with the Sagebrush Sea Program to take lessons learned to other places.



now

The Nature Conservancy's Work in the Colorado River Basin

REGIONAL

The Colorado River is the lifeblood of the American West, supplying water to more than 40 million people, including 30 Tribal nations; irrigating over five million acres of farmland; generating hydropower for major cities; and supporting a \$26 billion recreation economy. It also sustains critical habitat for endangered fish, birds and mammals.

But climate change, prolonged drought, rising temperatures and decades of overuse have reduced river flows by 20% since 2000, threatening water supplies, food production and ecosystems.

The Nature Conservancy is working across the Basin to protect the river, with a vision for a system where water flows at the right times and places to support the people, wildlife and fish that depend on the river.

TNC is focused on balancing water uses and supplies through projects that enhance river flows and support climate-strong communities. In Colorado's Upper Basin, TNC is working with partners to test Kernza®, a drought-resilient forage crop, at the Gila River Farm. Early results show improved soil health, increased carbon storage and strong productivity under water stress, offering promising benefits for ranchers and ecosystems alike.

TNC is also focused on strengthening partnerships with Tribal Nations to support sustainable river management. A collaboration with TNC, the Jicarilla Apache Nation and the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission resulted in a water-sharing agreement that allows the state to lease water from the nation, benefiting endangered fish and enhancing water security.

These efforts across the Basin are especially important for Nevada, where the Colorado River supplies 90% of southern Nevada's water, supports vital habitats, and fuels the region's tourism economy, making upstream innovations in conservation, infrastructure and collaboration that are essential for the state's future.

TNC believes that solving the Colorado River crisis requires everyone, including states, Tribal Nations, farmers, cities and conservationists to come together to find lasting solutions. No matter the odds, by working together, we find a way.



“I have hope for the future of the Basin because of how many different people, governments, communities, and organizations care about the Colorado River and are willing to work together to find a way forward.”

CELENE HAWKINS
DIRECTOR, TNC'S COLORADO RIVER PROGRAM



Q&A

Meet Celene Hawkins, TNC's New Colorado River Program Director

Celene Hawkins is the new director of TNC's Colorado River Program. Hawkins has been working in the Colorado River Basin for more than 15 years and has extensive experience in water law and working with Tribal Nations. She brings a passion for partnership as well as a critical understanding of projects and policies that will be paramount to the role as she leads the program at an extremely pivotal time for the seven states that rely on one of the hardest working rivers in the world.

We asked her a few questions about her connection to the Colorado River, her excitement about her new role and her hopes for the future of the river.

Tell us about your background and what brought you to The Nature Conservancy.

I grew up in northern Nevada and northern California (in the eastern Sierras) before heading east to the intermountain West to study and work. I have always lived in places experiencing water scarcity and that are in or connected to management of the Colorado River Basin. During my childhood, I got to have a lot of kitchen table discussions with family and friends who were active in the Quincy Library Group (an early multi-stakeholder collaboration that addressed some really tough local forest management and endangered species issues). I knew from an early age that I wanted to focus on conservation work, and this early exposure to collaborative conservation really shaped my life and career path.

I came to The Nature Conservancy because of the organization's non-partisan and solutions-oriented approach to work in the Colorado River Basin. I wanted to be part of an organization that was building a better future for the Colorado River Basin and that worked to protect the Basin for both nature and people.

What are you most excited about in your new role as program director?

I am really excited to work with The Nature Conservancy's staff across the Colorado River Basin to care for the river. TNC has amazing teams working in every U.S. state in the Basin, with many Tribal Nation partners, and in Mexico in the Colorado River delta. It is such an honor to lead this effort and help these teams make a difference across such a large landscape!

What gives you hope for the future of the Colorado River Basin?

I have hope for the future of the Basin because of how many different people, governments, communities, and organizations care about the Colorado River and are willing to work together to find a way forward. I am also raising my family in the headwaters of the Colorado River Basin, and I think a lot about how our work today will matter for future generations and how to mentor and empower the next generation of water leaders. Spending time with future water leaders gives me so much hope for the basin's future!

Wildlife in the Colorado River Basin

The Nature Conservancy has identified more than 150 species that depend on the Colorado River Basin for their survival. To sustain this river in the face of climate change, we must find solutions that work for both the people and the wildlife that depend on this iconic river.



Cross-Border Collaboration for a Renewable Future

“TNC’s approach to clean energy transmission is about reducing emissions that cause climate change while ensuring that people and nature thrive.”

PETER GOWER
PROGRAM DIRECTOR,
TNC’S CLIMATE ACTION AND
RENEWABLE ENERGY PROGRAM

REGIONAL

Imagine opening your windows in the summer without worrying about smog or wildfire smoke. Picture paying next to nothing for electricity—freeing up money for groceries, school supplies and everyday needs. All while protecting natural values and wildlife corridors. This is the promise of a renewable energy future across the West.

Some of North America’s most intact ecosystems span the United States and Canada, and 10 TNC chapters across this region are collaborating across borders to advance climate solutions. Together, we’re delivering cutting-edge science, building relationships with local leaders, and shaping policies that remove barriers, unlock funding and drive initiatives to reduce the toxic pollution we breathe.

“TNC’s approach to clean energy transmission is about reducing emissions that cause climate change while ensuring that people and nature thrive,” says Peter Gower, Climate Action and Renewable Energy Program director for TNC

This work supports safer, more resilient communities, modern infrastructure and strong job growth—including high-paying careers. These are shared goals across political and ideological lines.



Nearly two-thirds of the nation’s new planned power generation projects are solar or wind energy projects.



LOCAL

Nevada Contributes to Renewable Energy

Nevada's iconic landscapes are changing, shaped by the urgent need for clean energy, climate adaptation and ecological restoration. From rural counties to vast public lands, TNC Nevada works to build a future where renewable energy and conservation go hand in hand.

Empowering Esmeralda County to Shape Its Future

In Esmeralda County, where farming and wide-open spaces have defined daily life for more than a century, new clean energy supply chain projects like lithium mines and solar arrays are changing the rural character. To help the community protect its past and have a say in its future, TNC in Nevada is working alongside local leaders to host workshops, update planning codes, and participate in federal planning processes. Each week, community, conservationists and industry sit down together to find common ground. It's a powerful example of how communities can work with environmental organizations while welcoming new opportunities for renewable energy.

Climate Passages for Species on the Move

As the climate changes, many species will need to move across the landscape to survive. TNC Nevada is mapping the routes they're likely to move through, called climate passages, and identifying key places where their movement could be blocked. These areas often overlap with unsuitable habitats and development zones, including renewable energy, transmission and mining projects. By working with landowners and public agencies, TNC is positioning itself to protect these natural corridors and restore vegetation so wildlife can keep moving safely for generations to come.

As Nevada continues to lead in the clean energy transition, the chapter demonstrates how conservation, climate and communities can align to ensure a future where energy benefits both people and nature.

*LEFT: TNC is working across the West to build out renewable energy in a way that protects wildlife, cools temperatures and boosts local economies. © Stuart Palley
RIGHT: Soldier Meadows © Chip Carroon; Solar panels © TNC*





Western Dry Forests Program

REGIONAL

A new TNC initiative has been taking root to improve forest health and address severe wildfires across the West. Established in 2024, the Western Dry Forests Program (WDFP) is working closely with states and partners across the West to lead and convene collaborative actions that aim to restore western dry forests. Important ecosystems that cover 150 million acres of the Western United States and Canada, dry forests are known for sweeping stands of ponderosa pine and Douglas fir, long dry seasons and periodic beneficial low- and medium-intensity wildfires. Large, high-intensity fires are severely burning these landscapes, impacting people and wildlife.

The initiative is focused on changing this course. This year alone, the program helped advance legislation in Washington, Montana and Colorado that creates more opportunities for prescribed burning by reducing the financial liability risk that has limited burning in the past. It's also been working in partnership with TNC state teams to research and prioritize where restoration is most impactful for forests and communities while supporting projects on the ground.



Middle Truckee River Partnership in NV
5,430 acres improved
8,562 acres ready for implementation

LEFT: Prescribed fire in New Mexico supports the regional effort to scale forest restoration. © Robert Rosales
RIGHT: Big Jack East Project at Sawtooth Trailhead; Goats eat fine fuels as part of forest restoration. © Anthony Cupaiuolo

LOCAL

Doing the Work Before the Disaster

The Nature Conservancy in Nevada contributes to the WDFP in many ways. The newest effort is focused on the Middle Truckee River where the headwaters sit surrounded by a dry, dense forest. These conditions increase the risk of high-intensity fires that burn hotter and faster, decimating the land and sending ash and sediment into our waterways.

There's a lot at stake. The Truckee River provides **80–85% of the region's drinking water**, serving **400,000 people and 7,000 businesses**. The watershed supports a **\$20-billion economy**, clean air, and outdoor recreation. The river and its surrounding forests are essential to the quality of life for people living in Reno and Sparks, Nevada and the town of Truckee and surrounding communities in California.

With a goal of improving forest health *before* a big wildfire and to protect water resources for people in Reno and Sparks, TNC in Nevada, along with the United States Forest Service (USFS), Tahoe National Forest, National Forest Foundation, Truckee River Watershed Council and Truckee Meadows Water Authority joined forces to create the Middle Truckee River Watershed Forest Partnership. Using original science from TNC and other organizations, the coalition first identified the highest priority areas to target on the California side of the watershed.

Executing On-the-Ground Projects

"These projects focus on strategic areas of the watershed to improve the health of remaining trees, to strengthen their resilience to drought, pests and wildfire. Healthy forests protect people, water and wildlife," says Anne Graham, Central Sierra Program coordinator for the National Forest Foundation.

Fortunately, this partnership has been able to secure vital funding from various State of California sources, federal sources including the USFS and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and corporate entities with business interests in the watershed. This influx of support is especially important given the challenges public land agencies face with limited resources.

"Public land agencies—like the Forest Service and BLM—have often faced funding and staffing shortages, making it difficult to fully care for the millions of acres of land they manage. As agency resources continue to shrink, partnerships like this are more critical than ever," says Mickey Hazelwood, TNC in Nevada's conservation director.

Water Authority

Truckee Meadows Water Authority serves drinking water to approximately 475,000 people and relies on the Truckee River for 80–85% of its water supply. "Post-fire water quality degradation and debris flows have the potential to impact our operations. Engaging with this partnership is important to us because reducing wildfire risk protects our water supply," adds Kara Steeland, Truckee Meadows Water Authority senior watershed coordinator.

Investing in forest health today is cheaper and more effective than post-fire recovery. We know it costs \$700 to treat an acre which is much cheaper than \$1,900 an acre for post-fire rehabilitation. No one organization can do it alone. It will take all of us to protect our incredible natural areas.

"These lands belong to all of us, and if we value living near them, enjoying them, and relying on their resources, we must help take care of them. It's time for everyone to pitch in," adds Hazelwood.





Defending Nature Through Advocacy

REGIONAL

All year long, The Nature Conservancy’s federal policy team has been defending the conservation wins we’ve worked so hard to achieve—from tax incentives for renewable energy projects to the Land and Water Conservation Fund and vital federal investments in forest restoration and public lands.

When we were at risk of losing access to hundreds of thousands of acres of public lands across the West, our community sprang into action. TNC supporters like you sent more than 100,000 messages to federal lawmakers, while our trustees and staff personally urged their members of Congress to keep public lands in public hands. We also joined forces with sportsmen and key influencers to engage 18 Republican Senators who were considering a vote to sell off these lands. Thanks to our voices, your voices, and the voices of many others, the provisions to sell off public lands were removed from the budget reconciliation legislation.

Advocating for strong conservation policies is nothing new for TNC. For decades, our policy team has built trusted relationships with elected officials across the political spectrum—championing legislation, programs, and funding that align with our mission to protect the lands and waters that sustain us all.

“Policy is one of the most powerful tools we have to protect Nevada’s beautiful landscapes and precious natural resources,” says Jaina Moan, external affairs director of TNC in Nevada. “These legislative victories show how science-based advocacy can help shape the future of conservation, not just in Nevada, but across the nation.”

Protecting and conserving nature isn’t just a matter of common sense. It’s the smartest investment we can make.

LOCAL

Nevada's Policy Wins in 2025

From Washington, D.C. to Nevada's wide-open spaces, TNC in Nevada is turning policy into progress. During the 83rd Nevada State Legislature, our policy team made meaningful progress in protecting natural resources through two major policy victories. These wins reflect the state's commitment to sustainable water management and conservation funding.

Groundwater Protection Legislation

Nevada passed two critical water bills—Assembly Bill 104 and Senate Bill 36—that created a new program to help address the long-term overuse of groundwater. The legislation established the Voluntary Water Rights Retirement Program, which allows farmers, ranchers and other water users to sell their water rights to the state if they choose to do so. Once purchased, those rights are permanently retired, meaning the water stays in the ground to help restore balance in areas where too much has been pumped. This helps protect aquifers and the ecosystems that depend on them. TNC in Nevada supported this effort by providing science that showed how declining groundwater levels are threatening sensitive habitats. In addition, the chapter's science and advocacy efforts helped build support for the legislation and shape a program that benefits both people and nature.

\$20 million appropriation for the Conserve Nevada Grant Program

As part of a larger \$217.5 million conservation bond package, Nevada allocated \$20 million this year to the Conserve Nevada Grant Program, an initiative that funds projects to protect the state's natural and cultural resources. The program has helped fund over 200 projects since it was created in 2002, including projects at TNC's McCarran Ranch and River Fork Ranch Preserves. Conserve Nevada grants support efforts like habitat restoration, land conservation and trail improvements to help communities across Nevada care for the places they value most. The Nevada chapter worked to secure funding by coordinating with nonprofit partners, engaging state leaders and keeping conservation priorities front and center throughout the legislative session.

“Policy is one of the most powerful tools we have to protect Nevada's beautiful landscapes and precious natural resources. These legislative victories show how science-based advocacy can help shape the future of conservation, not just in Nevada, but across the nation.”

JAINA MOAN
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR
TNC IN NEVADA



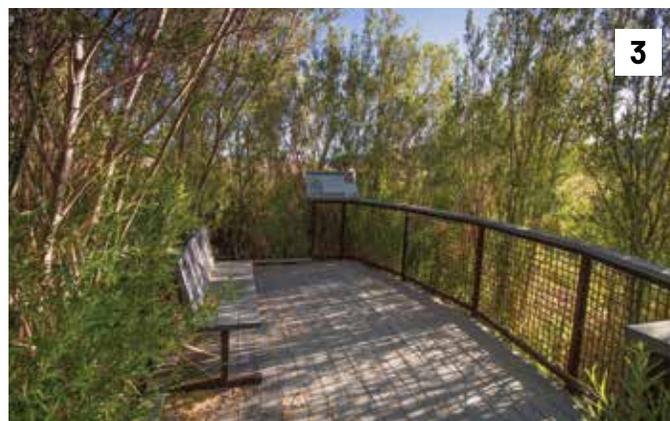
TNC staff and partners at the Nevada State Capitol during the 2025 legislative session. Left to right: Maurícia Baca, Trustee Robert Gifford, Mickey Hazelwood, Senator Nicole Cannizzaro, Jaina Moan, Laurel Saito, Trustee Jennifer Satre © Jack Giesea

Through the Lens: Nevada's Natural Wonders

These images are the result of years of dedication and visual storytelling from **Chip Carroon**, our amazing volunteer photographer.



- 1 Harrison Pass, Ruby Ridge flowers
- 2 Lupine at sunrise near Slide Creek
- 3 Torrance Ranch Preserve along the Amargosa River
- 4 Lake Lahontan
- 5 Aerial photo of the Virgin River just south of Bunkerville at sunset
- 6 Truckee River
- 7 Ruby Valley
- 8 Pronghorn antelope





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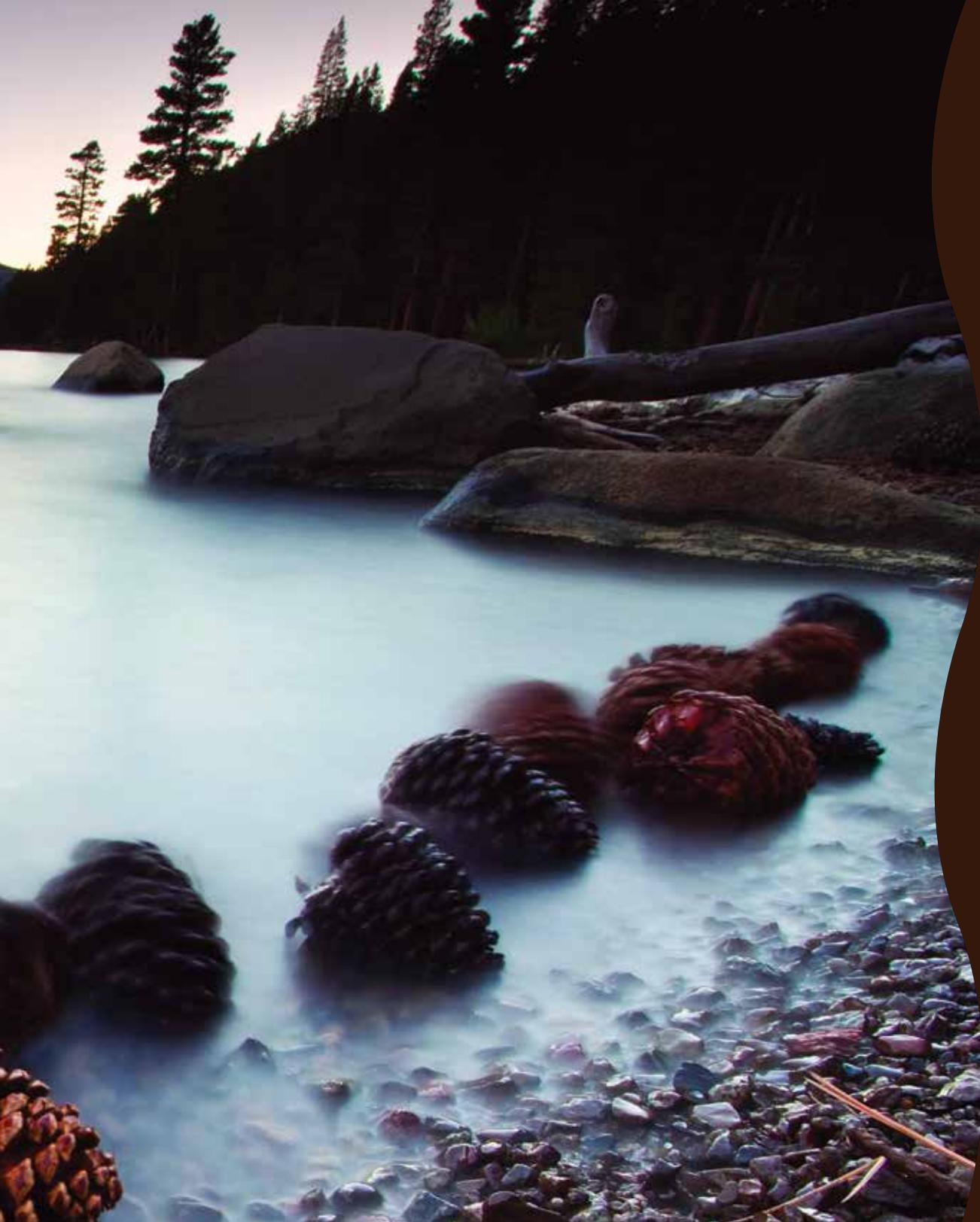


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Our Preserves are Here for You

Across TNC in Nevada's network of preserves, you can find inspiration, adventure and a sense of belonging. Whether you seek solitude on a quiet trail, the thrill of discovery through birdwatching or a hands-on way to give back through volunteerism, these special places serve as powerful entry points into conservation. Plan your next trip by visiting [nature.org/Nevada](https://www.nature.org/Nevada) and scroll to the preserves section.



Stay on top of TNC in Nevada's conservation work and cool things happening at preserves across the state when you subscribe to Nature News.

Independence Lake is home to a TNC in Nevada Preserve. The surrounding alpine forests offer exceptional recreation, including hiking, fishing, kayaking and bird watching in the beautiful Sierra Nevada. © Ian Shive



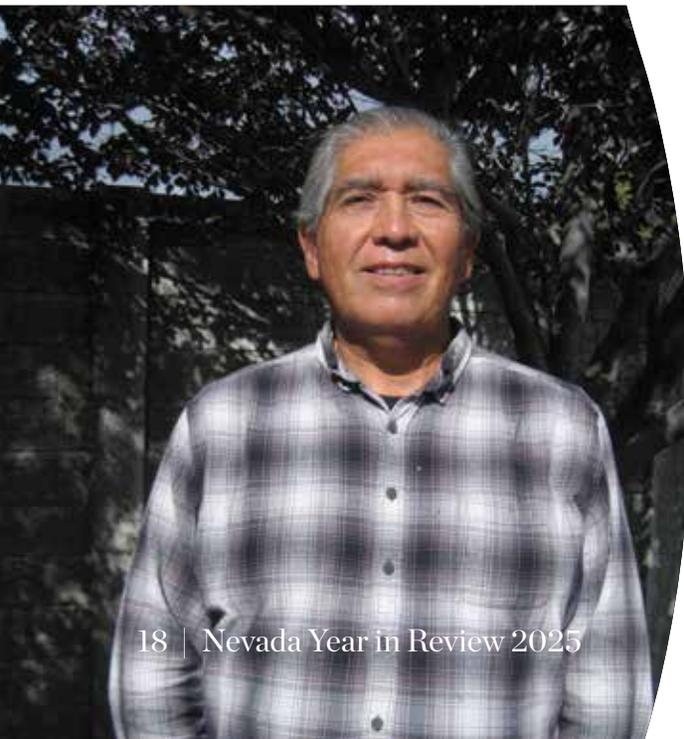
Fueling Funding to Drive Conservation Outcomes

Stefanie Givens, the chapter's new development director, is a passionate conservationist...and fundraising. She holds a BS in geology and began her career as a naturalist in California, where she developed educational programs informed by local Indigenous educators, emphasizing stewardship and cultural connection to the land.

Prior to joining TNC, Givens held several leadership roles, including executive director of the North Lake Tahoe Historical Society, and director of development for the University of Nevada, Reno. She calls her role at TNC her "dream job" and has quickly immersed herself—visiting preserves, meeting with trustees and donors, and collaborating with the Nevada development team to enhance outreach and donor engagement.

Givens launched the Nevada Impact Fund, an unrestricted resource supporting urgent conservation needs, innovation and core operations. Her leadership has already inspired \$500,000 in gifts.

After attending the multi-Business Unit Trustee meeting in Wyoming, Givens returned energized and deeply connected to the work in the Sagebrush Sea, ready to share TNC's impact with donors and partners across the state.



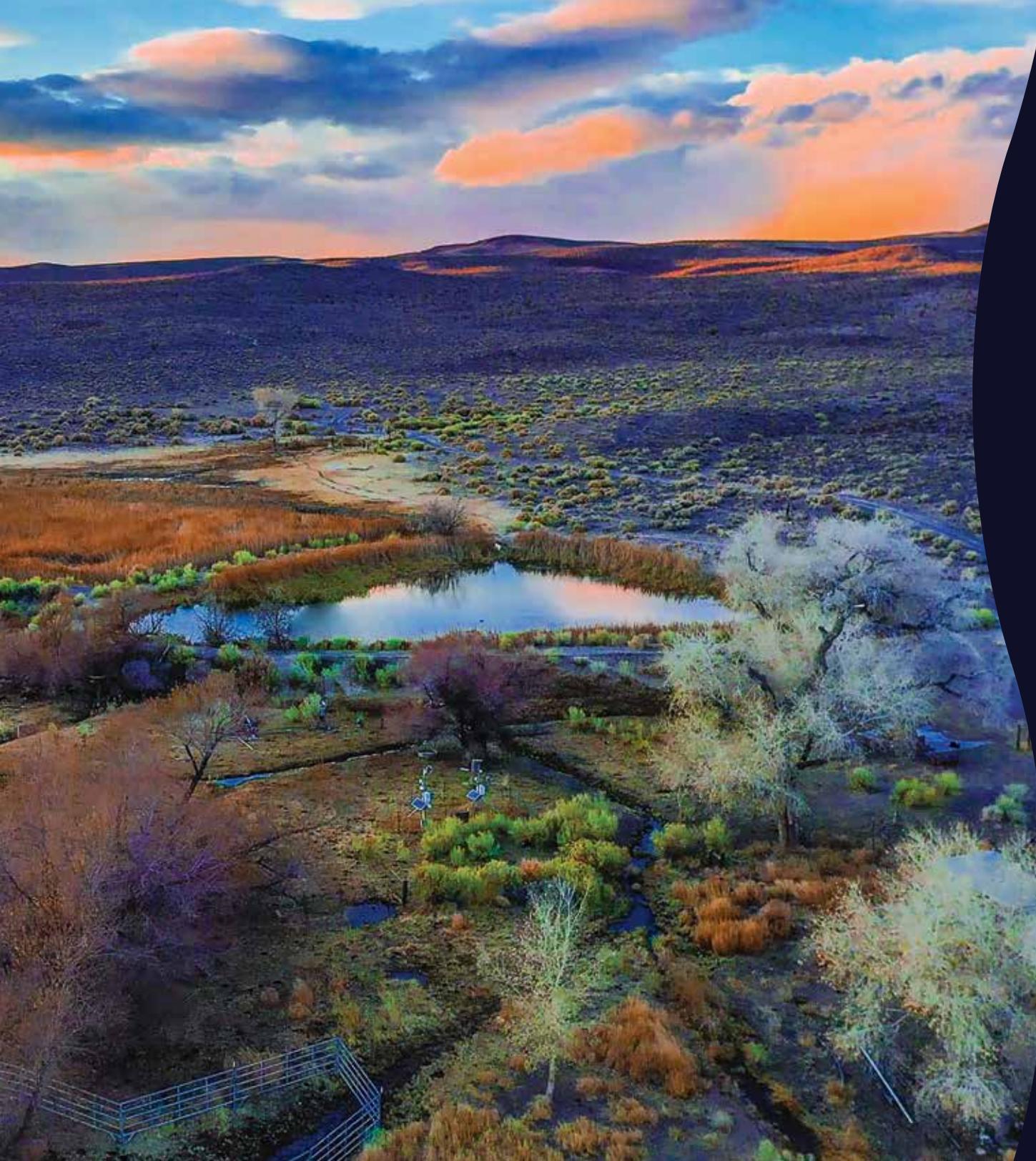
Growing Connections: Nevada's Restoration Tribal Collaboration

Mervin Wright Jr. joined The Nature Conservancy this year as the Nevada restoration Tribal liaison. He lives on the Pyramid Lake Paiute Reservation in northern Nevada, where he has lived all his life. He brings with him a Master of Science in hydrology, a Bachelor of Science in agriculture and years of experience and service in Tribal governance, natural resources and cultural resources.

Wright is expanding capacity to integrate Indigenous Knowledge into restoration, support Tribes entering the plant materials market, and address plant material needs for Tribal restoration projects. He has reached out to many Tribes, including the Summit Lake Paiute and Yerington Paiute and has more meetings on his calendar with the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, among others.

Wright is also finding ways to strengthen collaboration and normalize coordination between TNC in Nevada and Nevada Tribes. He's currently drafting Tribal Native Plant Restoration Plans through active engagement to ensure that Tribal interests and values are reflected. These plans will explore seed production opportunities and offer tailored seed menus and mixes to support restoration goals.

*LEFT: Photo courtesy of Stefanie Givens; Mervin Wright © Sarah Byer
RIGHT: Amargosa River Valley © Chip Carroon*



Remembering Robert Gifford

Robert Gifford first came as a trustee to The Nature Conservancy with the Minnesota Chapter and became the Chair of the North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota Tri-State Chapter (2005-2010). Later, he served with the California Chapter as a founding member of the California Leadership Committee (2012-2021), and most recently gave his time as a trustee to the Nevada Chapter (from 2021 to this year). Robert brought his decades of experience as a corporate leader and combined it with a deep love of nature. He never missed an opportunity to share his passion with community leaders and elected officials. He passed away in August 2025. He will be deeply missed.





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Leaving a Legacy

Kirk Hardie's love for nature began in childhood, shaped by summers spent exploring California ranches and the Sierra Nevada with his family. These experiences sparked a lifelong commitment to conservation.

"As I got older, it became clear that if I wanted future generations to enjoy nature as I had, we needed to double down on protecting the planet," says Hardie, member of The Nature Conservancy in Nevada's Board of Trustees.

Drawn to our science-based, bold approach, Hardie made his first gift to TNC in 1995. He joined the

Board in 2020, bringing a passion for environmental education and a deep connection to Nevada's landscapes.

He's also a Legacy Club member, having made a planned gift to TNC. "I hope to make TNC's work easier and more successful, whether that is putting them in touch with someone I know, lending insight into a topic, or helping to raise funds," says Hardie.

An avid birder, Hardie enjoys hiking, traveling, and cooking. He lives in Reno with his wife Lindsay, their two children, and two dogs.

Lupines at sunrise near Slide Creek © Chip Carroon

