

Together, We Find a Way

Oregon Impact Report 2025



From the Director

A livable climate, healthy communities and thriving nature: This is the future The Nature Conservancy envisions. Turning this vision into reality requires that we address the interconnected crises of rapid climate change and biodiversity loss and set ambitious goals to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. TNC recognizes 2030 as a milestone year to make a positive impact for the planet—which is why we have set clear priorities, conservation goals and pathways to get there (see page 4). Our work won't stop in 2030, but the actions we take now are vital to set us on a course for a better future.

How do we get to this future? Together. The only way forward is together. As we reflect on our conservation successes and the path ahead, it is clear that meaningful and durable conservation impact is only possible through strong partnerships and the contributions of many people—including donors, community members, businesses, governments, organizations and more.

To meet this moment, we recently launched a new strategic plan to guide our work in Oregon from now to 2030. This plan identifies a set of conservation priorities that reflect our values, build on our strengths and represent our greatest opportunities to make a significant difference for nature, climate and people. These priorities are part of massive, iconic landscapes that stretch far beyond Oregon, across many Western states and into Canada. This means deep collaboration based on mutual respect and trust—from the halls of government to the heartbeat of local communities—is more important than ever. We must work together at the scales nature demands and our communities depend on.

This work is only possible because of you—our community of supporters, partners and volunteers. Thank you for standing with us in pursuit of our mission and goals. We are endlessly grateful, because together, we are turning bold goals into action and action into lasting impact. We're not just imagining a better future—we're creating it.

As we forge ahead, we invite you to join us once again, for the future of our planet and for future generations. Together, we find a way.

Derek Johnson
Oregon State Director

Film Project with The Klamath Tribes

The Klamath Tribes and The Nature Conservancy share a vision for the future where people thrive as a part of the natural world, protected from the worst impacts of a changing climate. Together, we created Elements, a film series celebrating the Tribes' leadership in environmental and cultural connections to the elements of fire, water, air and their homelands. The stories of Klamath Tribes members—Anna, Charlie, Shuina and Don—explore the experiences of working to bring back beneficial fire, protect endangered fish populations and carry forward cultural traditions.

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COVER An aerial view of Oregon's Blue Pool © Taylor Duncan;
OPPOSITE Derek Johnson © Brady Holden; **THIS PAGE** The Klamath Tribes
 members and scenery in Elements. Featured clockwise: Anna Merritt on a
 prescribed fire; Don Gentry; Shuina Sko; Anna Merritt; and Charlie Wright fishing
 with family. © Brady Holden

Pathways to Our 2030 Goals in Oregon

Oregon's Conservation Framework

The Nature Conservancy in Oregon's strategic framework guides our work through 2030 as we address the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss in Oregon and beyond.





Pathways

- Protect Water and Lands
- Provide Food and Water
- Tackle Climate Change

Programs

- Emerald Edge
- Climate and Renewable Energy
- Leveraging Our Lands
- Columbia Basin Salmon
- Sustainable Water
- Dry Forests and Fire
- Sagebrush Sea

Commitments

- Indigenous Right Relations
- Equitable Conservation
- Evidence-Based
- Collaboration
- Durable Impact

Emerald Edge

Along Oregon's coast, we are advancing estuary and floodplain restoration, helping launch a seaweed aquaculture industry, piloting methods to protect kelp forests and exploring innovative financing for ecological forestry that stores more carbon and enhances habitats. With our colleagues across the Pacific Northwest, we are supporting Tribal sovereignty and strengthening community capacity to proactively adapt to climate change.

Blue Carbon Tools for Coastal Climate Action

Blue carbon—carbon stored in marine and coastal ecosystems like kelp forests and tidal wetlands—is a powerful tool in the fight against climate change. In the Pacific Northwest, these habitats offer a unique opportunity to store carbon while supporting biodiversity and coastal resilience. TNC is working on the Oregon Coast to advance the science needed for restoration projects to deliver the greatest possible climate and ecological benefits.

With support from the Builders Initiative and in collaboration with the Pacific Northwest Blue Carbon Working Group, we recently completed a new mapping tool for Yaquina Bay. This tool shows where carbon is stored in the landscape today and where future restoration could capture even more. By making this information accessible, we're helping land managers and communities prioritize projects that deliver the highest climate returns.

The Yaquina Bay tool builds on a similar tool developed for Coos Bay. In other estuaries, we're working with partners to create a spatial data layer of what's been restored in the last decade. Capturing how conservation actions have changed the landscape allows for more accurate calculations of blue carbon,

helps practitioners inventory progress over time, and provides information for use in government permitting and decision making. The updated information is already being used to inform blue carbon work and salmon recovery planning in key watersheds.

These efforts are touching down in the Siuslaw River Estuary, where TNC donors supported a new land acquisition last year. Following a 20-year effort by many partners, 75% of the estuary is now in conservation status. This landscape offers a rare opportunity to study blue carbon across a range of conditions—from mature wetlands to newly restored sites to areas slated for future restoration. As one of a few long-term blue carbon monitoring projects on the Oregon Coast, it will help to ground-truth emerging carbon calculators and provide a model for others to follow.

Together, these efforts are helping Oregon lead the way in blue carbon science—providing tools, data and strategies to guide restoration and inform action in coastal ecosystems around the world.







Climate and Renewable Energy

We are crafting and implementing strong climate policies in Oregon, taking a regional approach to energy siting that prioritizes climate impact, community benefits and intact landscapes. Through collaboration and technical support, we're empowering community organizations and Tribal governments to advance climate action and funding access.



Climate Action Rooted in Community

Connecting Canopies is an initiative created by local partners—The Blueprint Foundation, The Intertwine Alliance and The Nature Conservancy—to improve the equitable distribution of urban trees and their many benefits. We're working to bring together neighborhoods, government, partners and businesses to create inclusive and sustainable action plans for urban tree planting and stewardship.

To support the planting and care of more urban trees, The Blueprint Foundation is leading a pre-apprenticeship program that offers career training and pathways into the green workforce. Now in its fourth year, the program continues to evolve while staying rooted in community leadership. Recent improvements to the application and training process—including a competitive interview system and a more structured curriculum—have deepened participant engagement and laid the groundwork for clearer outcomes.

This year, TNC joined as a training partner, offering participants insight into conservation careers and tools. Senior Conservation Analyst Shonene Scott led a hands-on workshop using TNC's new Urban Tree Canopy Mapping Tool, which helps communities visualize and plan for more equitable tree coverage across the Portland metro region.

With nearly \$750,000 in new funding from the Oregon Department of Forestry, TNC will continue supporting workforce development and expand outreach using the mapping tool in the coming years. Outreach efforts are underway in jurisdictions like Portland, Milwaukie and Gresham, in partnership with community-based organizations including Friends of Trees, the TIA Coalition and Living Cully.

Together, these efforts are growing a more inclusive urban forestry movement—one rooted in fairness, data and community-driven action.



Oregon's Path to a Clean Energy Future

Oregon is a climate leader, and TNC is working alongside state partners to help turn that leadership into lasting impact. Over the past year, our Climate and Energy Team has contributed expertise in science, policy, and land stewardship to advance policies and planning that support a fair, science-based transition to clean energy.

From the coast to the high desert, our team has leaned into four key efforts:

1. Charting Oregon's Energy Future

Through active participation in the Oregon Energy Strategy's advisory and policy workgroups, TNC is helping identify solutions to long-standing barriers in clean energy siting and transmission. Our goal: ensure that Oregon's energy roadmap reflects ecological priorities and community voices, while accelerating the shift to renewables.

2. Guiding Offshore Wind Development

As Oregon explores offshore wind, TNC is at the table to help minimize impacts to coastal ecosystems and communities. Our engagement in the state's Offshore Wind Roadmap Roundtable supports thoughtful planning that balances innovation with stewardship.

3. Elevating Natural Climate Solutions

On Oregon Department of Energy's Natural and Working Lands Advisory Committee, TNC is contributing scientific and policy expertise to help the state build its first land-based net carbon sequestration inventory. This foundational work will guide how we measure and scale natural climate solutions across forests, farms and rangelands—identifying practices that store carbon, support biodiversity and strengthen rural economies.

4. Supporting Smart Solar Siting in Eastern Oregon

TNC joined the rulemaking advisory committee with a diverse group of stakeholders led by the Department of Land Conservation and Development to help identify areas in Eastern Oregon where solar development is least likely to conflict with important ecological or community values. Through this process, we helped shape a new pathway for counties to site projects more efficiently in their communities. Our team continues to work with state and local partners to support implementation and to address remaining barriers to clean energy development.

Each of these efforts reflects TNC's commitment to collaborative, science-informed climate action—grounded in Oregon's diverse landscapes and shaped through partnership with those working closest to the land. By supporting state-led planning and local implementation, we're helping Oregon lead the way toward a clean energy future that works for people and nature alike.





Leveraging Our Lands

We are stewarding TNC lands with a climate-forward approach to enhance biodiversity, demonstrating scalable conservation strategies and working in right relations to support Tribal homeland connections.

Prescribed Fire for People and Place

Last fall, TNC and our partners returned fire to the Willamette Valley landscape, continuing a long tradition of ecological stewardship through prescribed burning. These efforts are part of a collaborative approach to restoring the valley's meadows and oak woodlands—ecosystems that once depended on frequent, low-intensity fire to thrive. They also offer a powerful opportunity to reduce wildfire risk, build community support for prescribed fire and grow the skilled workforce needed to apply prescribed fire at scale.

At Willow Creek Preserve, we completed three burns totaling 38 acres and assisted on seven partner-led burns across the southern valley, for a total of 194 acres treated. These burns help maintain open habitats, limit encroachment by woody species

and support rare native plants like Kincaid's lupine, Willamette daisy and Bradshaw's lomatium.

At Coburg Ridge Preserve, TNC has been steadily restoring oak savanna and woodland since acquiring a conservation easement on the land in 2007. After years of thinning and conifer removal, we successfully reintroduced fire to 15 acres of oak woodland in 2022 and completed additional upland meadow burns in 2016 and 2022. Plans are in place to return fire to those meadows again this fall.

This work is made possible by a growing team of trained fire practitioners. Across the Oregon chapter, 42 staff members hold fire qualifications, enabling TNC to lead and support burns safely and effectively.

Their expertise strengthens partnerships with local agencies and helps ensure that burns are conducted with care—minimizing smoke impacts and protecting public health while restoring fire-adapted ecosystems.

Prescribed burns are helping communities across the Willamette Valley care for the landscapes they know and love. They reduce the risk of severe wildfires, support vibrant wildflower displays in spring and help sustain the region's natural heritage. Through the Rivers to Ridges partnership and close coordination with the City of Eugene and Lane Regional Air Protection Agency, TNC is part of a shared commitment to steward these lands in ways that reflect both ecological science and community values.



Reconnecting with Homelands at Juniper Hills

This spring, TNC staff joined members of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs at Juniper Hills Preserve in Central Oregon to explore opportunities for collaboration, including hunting and root and plant gathering in the area. The gathering provided time for Tribal reconnection with preserve lands, which lie within the Tribes' homelands and border Bureau of Land Management lands where they hold treaty rights. During a tour of the preserve, meaningful exchanges took place about future partnership and Tribal engagement, and involvement at the preserve and other TNC land holdings as places for Tribal members to practice their ancestral rights of food gathering and provide input on its stewardship.

Partners in Stewardship: Northwest Youth Corps

In an ongoing partnership to engage the next generation of conservationists, TNC is proud to work with Northwest Youth Corps to steward preserves and natural areas across Oregon. This regional organization provides youth and young adults the opportunity to learn, grow, and experience success in a challenging education and job-training experience that builds skills for lifelong success—and a deeper connection to the land.

Crews have supported trail maintenance at Cascade Head Preserve, helped clean up restoration sites at Juniper Hills Preserve, and even joined our prescribed fire modules, completing training and working with a variety of partners to put more good

fire on the ground. Their contributions supported Northwest Youth Corps in securing state funding for fire preparedness work during the most recent legislative session.

Each project includes an educational component, from informal mentorship to career panels where crew members learn about conservation pathways and hear directly from professionals in the field.

"In my experience working with Northwest Youth Corps, the culture of the crews is really inclusive and democratic," says Sophie Linden, Willamette Basin steward. "It just feels really good to be a part of."

Columbia Basin Salmon

We are supporting Tribal Nations who are leading restoration and recovery efforts in the Columbia Basin to create a future in service to the healthy and abundant salmon populations that are essential for upholding Tribal treaty rights and food sovereignty, ecosystem health and economic benefits for the entire region.

Uplifting Indigenous Leadership in the Columbia Basin

The Columbia River is the lifeblood of the Pacific Northwest. For millennia, it has shaped the lands and cultures of people in the region; first and foremost, for Indigenous Peoples who hold Columbia River salmon at the heart of their lifeways and traditions. In addition to its cultural significance, the river supports agriculture, energy, recreation and other industries vital to the region's economy.

In the face of biodiversity loss and climate change, the future of the Columbia River Basin and its many gifts depends on creating comprehensive solutions that restore salmon abundance, sustain communities and usher in a clean energy transition.

This spring, TNC convened members of our Oregon, Washington and Idaho Boards of Trustees on a journey through the Columbia Basin to see first-hand the complexity and opportunity for salmon recovery and clean energy transformation.

At the Dalles Dam, Sammy Matsaw Jr., Columbia Basin Program director, shared the history of Celilo Falls, a vital fishing ground and center for trade and gathering for Tribes that was flooded by the dam. While the Dalles remains a key source of hydropower, its construction brought devastating impacts that are continuing today. Despite this loss, Tribal communities continue traditional fishing practices adjacent to the dam and into the tributaries, from using dip nets on platforms to spearing salmon for their families.

We also visited towering wind turbines and caught a glimpse of nearby solar arrays—promising sources of renewable energy. However, these innovations come with tradeoffs, including changes to land use and concerns that energy produced locally is used elsewhere. Tribes, whose homelands and treaty rights are central to this landscape, are too often left out of energy planning conversations. Responsible siting is essential to balance between benefits for communities, climate and conservation.

TNC is working to change that. We are collaborating with Inter-Tribal agencies to develop opportunities for early engagement in the siting process and identify siting solutions that reduce barriers to clean energy development while respecting cultural heritage and the ecological integrity of the land.

This year, working in partnership with the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission and member Tribes, TNC was a co-applicant on a federal grant to restore and protect cold-water refugia for salmon, and helped amplify Tribal priorities in Congress. As TNC continues to build our partnerships with Tribes and First Nations, we will continue to support habitat restoration and renewable energy planning and advocate for policy change.

Together, we can restore salmon, reimagine energy, and renew our relationship with the Columbia Basin.

Welcome Sammy Matsaw Jr!

Sammy Matsaw Jr. joined TNC this year as Columbia Basin Program director. Matsaw is a husband, father, and a proud member of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, and on his mom's side, Oglala Lakota. His journey began after graduating from Shoshone-Bannock Junior/Senior High School, leading him through 10 years of military service as a combat veteran, including deployments to Kosovo and Iraq. Following his service, he earned a Bachelor's in Ecology, then a Master's in Conservation Genetics, from Idaho State University, and later a Ph.D. in Water Resources from the University of Idaho.



Matsaw has worked as a Research Scientist and Programs Manager for the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes' Fish & Wildlife Department and served as Treasurer on the Tribal Business Council. Together, Matsaw and his wife Jessica, co-founded River Newe (Shoshone for People), a nonprofit focused on intergenerational learning with Tribal youth on land. Matsaw feels honored to lead the Columbia Basin Program and bring his blend of scientific expertise, leadership, and Indigenous lifeways in service of people and the environment.







Sustainable Water

We are leveraging partnerships to implement water-smart policies, providing science to guide climate adaptation and working with communities to meet water needs for people and nature.

Old Water, New Insights: Planning for a Changing Climate

A key to Oregon's water future lies in understanding how renewable our water sources are—how recently they fell as rain or snow, and how likely they are to endure as the climate changes. To answer that question, TNC staff spent two years gathering and testing 200 water samples from across the state, visiting farms, springs, domestic wells, public drinking supplies and our own preserves.

By analyzing the chemical composition of the water, our team was able to estimate the age of each sample—some dating back 30,000 years. Ancient water shows signs of resilience to climate change, but it's difficult to replenish once it has been depleted. In contrast, newer water sources are actively recharged but are more vulnerable during droughts and dry seasons.

This forthcoming study will help Oregon plan water use with renewability in mind—protecting ancient, irreplaceable sources and managing newer ones with care. It's a step toward long-term resilience, rooted in science and shared responsibility across generations.

Celebrating Donté Jackson

Our water renewability study got a critical boost from Donté Jackson, an Oak Tree Fellow with TNC's Culture and Engagement team. He brought vital data management capacity to the effort, along with fresh insights, thoughtful questions and a keen eye for detail. His contributions—from building a robust sampling database to supporting field work and landowner engagement—strengthened our science and outreach.



Dry Forests and Fire

We are driving collaborative forest restoration across the West, using thinning, prescribed fire, science and policy to restore ecological health and resilience, while building workforce capacity and partnerships across Oregon.

Restoring Balance: Fire Resilience in Action

In a landmark victory for wildfire resilience, The Nature Conservancy and a broad coalition of partners helped secure \$43 million per biennium in dedicated funding through Oregon House Bill 3940, along with \$21 million in one-time support via House Bill 5006. This investment marks a turning point for Oregon, creating a durable funding source to support long-term strategies to reduce risk and prepare communities for wildfire. From ecological thinning and prescribed fire to defensible space, home hardening and community risk reduction programs, these funds will help Oregon begin to shift from a reactive response to a proactive forest and fire resilience strategy.

This legislative achievement was grounded in decades of forest and fire science and on-the-ground experience. TNC and our partners have long demonstrated that proactive forest restoration, including ecological thinning and prescribed fire, is essential to reducing wildfire risk and restoring ecosystem health. After the 2021 Bootleg Fire swept across 12,000 acres of Sycan Marsh Preserve and parts of the historical Klamath Reservation, the contrast was striking: overgrown forest stands were devastated, while nearby areas that had been actively restored remained alive and vibrant. This real-world evidence reinforced the value of science-based stewardship and helped shape the case for sustained investment in wildfire mitigation. Building on that foundation, TNC is actively working with partners

to develop and integrate new science, such as incorporating data on forest vulnerability to changing climate conditions, the importance of connectivity and core habitat for wildlife, and the positive and negative impacts of wildfire on forest resilience into future restoration plans, ensuring that our actions today support resilient forests into the future.

Turning science into action also requires a skilled workforce ready to meet the scale of restoration needed across vast fire-adapted landscapes. That's why TNC helped launch the Oregon Fire Partnership, a five-year catalyst project building prescribed fire crews in three priority landscapes: Southern Oregon, the east slope of the Cascades and the Northern Blue Mountains. Led by skilled TNC fire practitioners, these crews are collaborating with Tribal partners, local organizations and state and federal agency staff to gain hands-on experience and qualifications in prescribed fire. Their work is advancing ecological goals while growing the capacity of communities to steward their forests and reduce the risk of extreme wildfires.

One standout example is this past spring when the Oregon Fire Partnership and TNC staff joined partners to carry out a prescribed burn on the Deschutes Land Trust's Metolius Preserve near Camp Sherman. The 50-acre burn was the result of years of planning, including prior ecological thinning and mowing, designed to reintroduce fire to a landscape that had gone without it for too long. By mimicking natural fire

cycles, the burn helped reduce the risk of extreme wildfire while improving habitat for native plants and wildlife and increasing the health and resilience of a fire-adapted forest—one that can better withstand future wildfires. The burn was a collaborative effort with the Oregon Department of Forestry, Deschutes National Forest/Sisters Ranger District and other partners, conducted during the Central Oregon Prescribed Fire Training Exchange, a cross-organizational training program co-led by TNC. Overall, the project exemplifies how science, workforce development, training and community collaboration come together to restore balance to Oregon's forests.





Sagebrush Sea

We are collaborating in Oregon and across this iconic western landscape to keep the last large, intact rangelands connected, productive and resilient by partnering with the people whose lives, livelihoods and cultural identities intertwine with the land.

Springs, Fire and the Future of Oregon's Rangelands

In dry, working landscapes like Oregon's high desert, springs are lifelines—for ranching operations, wildlife and the broader ecological health of the region. That's why spring restoration has become a key element of our work, particularly at Trout Creek Ranch, where TNC supported the Oregon Desert Land Trust (ODLT) to acquire the land and where we have been working in partnership with them ever since. With over 160 miles of streams and 680 springs, this place offers a rare opportunity to pilot new approaches that balance water needs for cattle with the preservation of unique habitats that support threatened species.

This summer, TNC and ODLT brought together key partners—including Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Harney Soil and Water Conservation District and the Bureau of Land Management—to explore collaborative solutions. Spring restoration projects are a balancing act: preserving water for wildlife while meeting the needs of ranchers and making it available at the right times. Together, we're navigating complex questions and building buy-in. The goal is to develop practical, scalable strategies that can be shared across Oregon's rangelands.

We're also working with communities to strengthen wildfire preparedness across these dry landscapes. In recent years, rangeland fires have taken a heavy toll, and there's growing interest in shifting some restoration capacity toward proactive planning—before fire occurs, when there are more options for better outcomes. By supporting local fire protection associations and encouraging science-informed strategies, we're helping build a more resilient future, led by rural communities who know and care for these special landscapes.

CLOCKWISE Trout Creek Ranch © Jason Greene; Cottonwood Creek at Trout Creek Ranch; Pueblo Mountains at Trout Creek Ranch © Owen Baughman/TNC







Volunteer Programs and Community Engagement

We are connecting people and nature to have more impact together.

Opening Trails and Opening Doors

As sunset colors stain the distant ridges and the wind picks up, people who have spent the afternoon soaking in the peace at Zumwalt Prairie Preserve in northeast Oregon head back to their cars. Some undoubtedly wish they didn't have to leave.

John Helmer doesn't—because he lives here.

For a month or two each year, John and his wife Normandy are volunteer caretakers. It's not a vacation for the Helmers. John spends long days improving trail accessibility, fixing fences and signs, leading tours, restoring historic buildings and tackling the occasional plumbing problem. Meanwhile, Normandy focuses on historical research, writing, art and assisting with many maintenance tasks.

John's passion project is documenting trail conditions so visitors with mobility or health challenges know what to expect. He measures the width, slope and elevation gain of each trail and notes everything from trip hazards to shade availability to the locations of benches, drinking fountains and accessible parking. Soon these detailed descriptions will be posted on our website.

His interest in accessibility was sparked years ago when he was leading tours at the Willamette Confluence Preserve. He noticed that some visitors with limited mobility were deeply moved just to be near the river. "A woman got off the bus and said, 'This is so incredible. I haven't seen a river in years.'" After training in accessibility guidelines, he began documenting trails for TNC.

"In a lot of ways, what makes it successful is using my imagination," he explains. "It's about coming in and looking at it with fresh eyes." While John describes trails as specifically as possible, he avoids assigning them a difficulty rating. "I try to just describe it so the person can make the decision themselves," he says.

John also helps facilitate electric track chair outings for people who use wheelchairs or have other mobility challenges. His work is helping shape a future where more people can experience nature on their own terms. We're grateful to John and Normandy for their efforts to care for special places and make sure everyone can enjoy them.



Celebrating a Milestone on the Headland

This summer, we had the joy of celebrating volunteer naturalist Hathaway Cornelius' 80th birthday right where he wanted to be—on the trail at Cascade Head Preserve. Hathaway and his spouse Nancy Bowen have been sharing their love of this special place with visitors since 2005, contributing over 1,400 hours of service and countless moments of connection.

Hathaway requested this shift a year in advance, hoping to mark the day doing what he loves most. With help from fellow volunteers, we surprised Hathaway at the start and end of his shift with coffee, fresh-picked blueberries and heartfelt appreciation. In a follow-up note, he shared that he was overwhelmed by the celebration and added, "hopefully I'll be up on the Head for yet a few more years." If you see Hathaway and Nancy on the headland, please join us in thanking them for two decades of dedication.



FROM LEFT Hathaway Cornelius and Nancy Bowen © Molly Dougherty/TNC; Zumwalt Prairie © Carla Axtman

WHY I VOLUNTEER

"Pivoting from my tech profession, I decided to spend more time outside and give back to organizations like TNC. I want to make conservation part of everyday life, preserve nature and lean into experiential volunteer projects."

SANDRA FARRELL
*digital communications and
management strategist*

WHY I VOLUNTEER

"How can I get to not only enjoy the beautiful landscapes and nature that I have in front of me but continue to make sure it is set up for somebody else. The generational wealth, if you will, of nature. That is a huge thing that we should start to keep in mind."

JAYSON MOORMAN
guide for Adventures with Disney

Protecting the West: A Malencik Family Legacy

Dean Malencik sits surrounded by large-scale photographs of rugged mountain landscapes—images he’s captured on a lifetime of fishing trips across the American West. The texture and grandeur of his favorite ranges—the Tetons, San Juans and Sawtooths—stand out over crystalline mountain lakes.

Dean was introduced to flyfishing at age 10 by his brother Bill, a career land manager who spent decades working for public agencies. Now, inspired by Bill’s legacy and a lifetime spent outdoors, Dean is making a \$1 million gift to The Nature Conservancy to support conservation across the West.

“I was always interested in conservation because of my brother. It’s that simple,” Dean says.

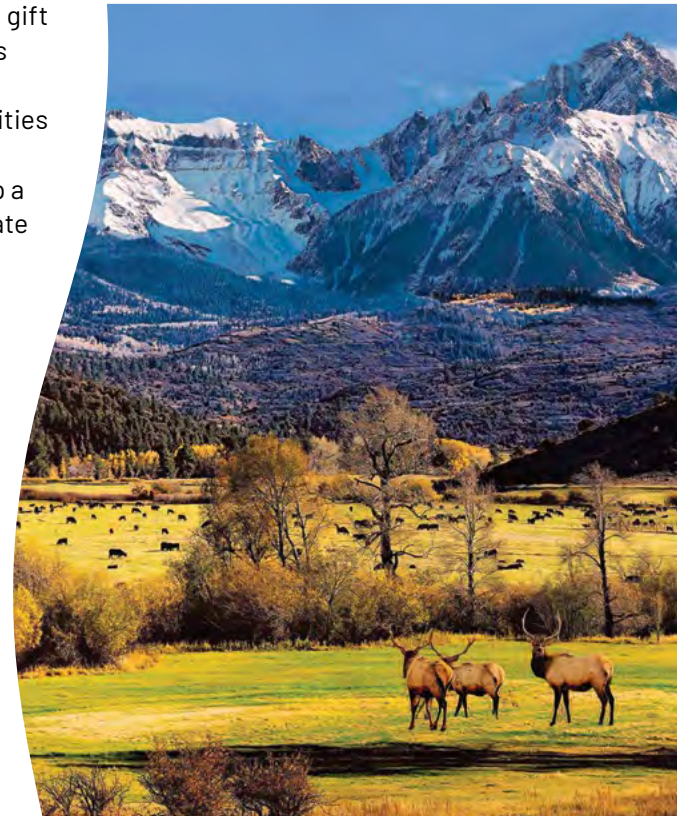
Bill Malencik spent 36 years with the Bureau of Land Management and was once the youngest district manager in BLM history in Durango. Throughout his career, he prioritized his work on the ground, turning down promotions to stay close to the land—and later, to care for their mother.

Bill encouraged Dean to pursue an education, even going back to school himself to earn a master’s degree in forest management. That example stuck with Dean. He tied and sold fishing flies to put himself through college and became a chemist who managed research labs that won Nobel Prizes for their innovations.

Dean’s gift is a match, designed to inspire other donors to follow his lead. He hopes to encourage more people to care for the wild places that he’s enjoyed on fishing trips and collecting beach agates with his wife, Sonia.

Dean had already planned to leave a \$1 million gift to TNC in his estate plan. He also understands the urgency of the threats facing our planet. After hearing about TNC’s conservation priorities across the western United States, and the potential to inspire other donors by setting up a matching opportunity, he decided to accelerate his gift and make it during his lifetime so he could have a bigger impact now.

“I can’t go on trips anymore for fishing or photography,” he says. “But I can look back on the places I’ve been, and hopefully someone like me is out there enjoying them also.”







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Sparks Lake, Oregon © Taylor Duncan

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in supporting
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Contact Angela Querfeld at
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Bee on a wildflower © Jason Nuckols/TNC