

# 2026 Legislative Session

## TNC in Mississippi

As the Mississippi Legislature convenes, The Nature Conservancy aims to work with the lawmakers to strengthen conservation efforts, empower local and rural communities, and foster deeper connections to nature.

Our mission is to advance conversations towards long-term, bipartisan, and innovative solutions that support the Nature Conservancy's Mississippi Strategic Plan and 2030 goals.

## Legislative Priorities

### 1. Funding for Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund (MOST)

- Established during the 2022 Legislative Session as a funding mechanism to encourage investment in outdoor recreation and conservation projects across Mississippi with a competitive grant process available to state agencies, counties, municipalities and nongovernmental entities.
- The initial investment included a \$10 million appropriation for FY23 which was followed with another \$15M in FY24, \$12M in FY25, and \$12M in FY26.
- The fund is governed by a Board of Trustees who are appointed by the Governor (4) and Lt. Governor (3). The program allows for improvements to both state and local parks; restoration of public lands and waters for outdoor recreation and wildlife conservation; working partnerships on private agricultural and forest lands to support soil, water, and habitat conservation.

### 2. Waters of the State (Sackett vs EPA)

- With the recent changes to Waters of the United States via Sackett vs EPA, there is much uncertainty for how this unfolds under state authority.

- TNC will support policies that allow for continued protection of our state's water resources, as they are essential for all aspects of life, without unreasonable limitations that negatively impact economic sustainability.

### **3. Coastal Restoration**

- Mississippi's seafood industry and coastal economy has repeatedly suffered due to impacts from a variety of natural disasters, including freshwater inflows from Bonnet Carre' Spillway, hurricanes, and oil spills.
- TNC will support policies that promote and protect a sustainable fishing environment for the MS Gulf Coast through partnerships, management systems, pilot projects, and increased funding for oyster restoration enhancements, including promoting and investing in off-bottom aquaculture.

### **4. Gulf of America Energy Security Act Projects**

- Our state is uniquely positioned to receive federal resources from outer continental shelf energy exploration, which provides Mississippi with tremendous opportunities to restore and protect our coastline.
- TNC supports projects that enhance coastal conservation, restoration, and provide resilience to our coast.

### **5. Restore Ballot Initiative Process**

- TNC supports restoring a citizen led process that allows for a reasonable number of collected signatures to amend/create state law.

### **6. Natural Resource Management**

- Advocate for continued and enhanced investments in natural resource protection and management through the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks, Mississippi Forestry Commission, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources and Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality.

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