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in New Mexico

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

The mission of The  
Nature Conservancy  
is to conserve the  
lands and waters on  
which all life depends.



We take this opportunity to acknowledge the ancestral homelands of the Indigenous Peoples of the U.S. Southwest. We pay our respect to these traditional stewards, past, present and emerging, who have been the custodians of these lands and waters since time immemorial.



Dear friends,

After all the challenges of the tumultuous past year, we have now turned our focus to the future of conserving the lands and waters of our extraordinary state. We are excited about our plans to continue to build on our 40-year legacy of conservation accomplishments, including the protection of more than 1.4 million acres of land.

In this report, you will see great examples of conservation successes on the Gila and Mimbres Rivers, along with improvements to our Santa Fe Canyon Preserve. And you will also get a flavor of a few of the innovative programs and projects we have launched this year.

As part of our new Future Forests program, we have designed a massive tree planting project in the Jemez Mountains. Additionally, we launched a science-based climate change initiative identifying and protecting the natural carbon stockpiles stored in the wide variety of habitats and ecosystems throughout our state. Finally, we are building a new Indigenous partnership program to expand on our successful collaborations with the Indigenous communities of the Southwest.

This past year has reinforced our overwhelming sense of appreciation and gratitude for this unique place that we call home, and for you—our members and supporters—for fueling our conservation successes. We still face immense challenges, but we are committed to working to protect our cerulean blue skies, our deserts, our forests, and our streams for future generations of New Mexicans.

Yours in nature,

Terry Sullivan, State Director

# Where We Work

1

## San Juan River

Major Colorado River tributary being restored to once again host 100-pound Colorado pikeminnows and five-foot razorback suckers—and provide improved river access.

3

## Santa Fe Canyon Preserve

Look for more than 140 bird species while hiking a loop trail across 525 acres of forested open space along the Santa Fe River in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

5

## Gila Riparian Preserve

Winter home for migrating neotropical birds and prime example of fragile riparian habitat and verdant gallery woodlands along New Mexico's last free-flowing river.



2

## Rio Grande Water Fund

Post-fire plantings in the Jemez Mountains consider future climate conditions in this ground-breaking collaboration that creates jobs while protecting 600,000 acres of forests that filter drinking water for half of New Mexico.

4

## Harvey Jones Bioswale Demonstration Project

A riverside wetland complex will filter pollution from 4.5 million gallons of stormwater annually while creating wildlife habitat in the heart of New Mexico's urban center.

6

## Milnesand Prairie Preserve

Heart of New Mexico's prairie chicken population, protecting 50+ leks (display grounds), an extraordinary density of birds, and habitat for imperiled sand dune lizards, burrowing owls and more.



# Santa Fe Canyon Preserve

## Improving access for all

20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

TNC has hired a local firm to design and oversee the construction of a new ADA-compliant pathway, so everyone can enjoy nature.



Research shows that spending 30 minutes a day outdoors—whether gardening, taking a short hike or a walk around the block—plays a significant role in human health and well-being. For more than 40 years, TNC has provided opportunities for residents of and visitors to New Mexico to thrive with nature through its land protection initiatives that have safeguarded places like the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge, the Mimbres and Gila River Preserves and the Santa Fe Canyon Preserve (SFCP), an urban oasis only two miles from the state capital's center.

Established in 2000 through a land donation from PNM, the SFCP has grown to 525 acres. After more than two decades of restoration and conservation efforts, what was once the center of the city's hydroelectric industry has been transformed into a green space home to wildflowers, willows, deer, beaver and more than 200 species of birds.

In celebrating the preserve's 20th anniversary in 2020, TNC staff started to think about how we could ensure that it is more accessible to a greater segment of our community. We recognize that many barriers make it difficult for everyone to enjoy time in nature.

Because all people, regardless of their physical abilities deserves access to nature, TNC has hired Surroundings, a local firm, to design and oversee the construction of a new ADA-compliant pathway. We are grateful to friends like The Frost Foundation, Albertsons | Market Street and board members Julie Melton and Bob Moss for supporting this project!



### ONLINE

Learn more about our preserves at [nature.org/newmexico](https://nature.org/newmexico)

And thanks to generous grants from PNM and Albertsons | Market Street, the preserve's 1.5-mile loop will be upgraded with new interpretive signage next year, connecting to the city's 22-mile Dale Ball Trail system. On the loop trail, you can experience one of the only riparian areas along the Santa Fe River—a wonderful place to spend 30 minutes of outdoor time!

New signage will provide visually impaired visitors and Spanish-speaking visitors with an opportunity to learn about the cultural and historical significance of the landscape and spend time in nature. When complete, the SFCP signage will be the only trail signage in Santa Fe with Braille features. These updated, multi-lingual

interpretive trail signs will include narratives describing plants and wildlife that call the preserve home as well as important historical and cultural information.

Ultimately, our aims are to continue to protect the extraordinary natural attributes of the preserve, but also to enhance the preserve, enabling accessibility and usability for all communities to enjoy this beautiful, urban green space. By designing and constructing this new pathway with upgraded interpretive signs, we are creating opportunities for a greater number of community members to experience the preserve to learn and love nature for their own well-being.

30



minutes a day outdoors—whether gardening, taking a short hike or a walk around the block—plays a significant role in human health and well-being.



# Taking Climate Action

## Cooling our cities as the climate heats up

CLIMATE

Each action we take gets us one step closer to a better future for us and for nature.



Imagine you are in Albuquerque waiting for the bus, standing in one of our 300+ days of sunshine and it's 102 degrees Fahrenheit. What would you give for a little shade or maybe a nearby cooling station?

This is increasingly common for many people, not just in Albuquerque, as our temperatures continue to rise. Heat island effects amplify and compound impacts of climate change for our neighbors in cities across the state as deadly extreme heat events become more common.

Building on previous heat island mitigation work and utilizing a technical assistance grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), TNC teamed up with the City of Albuquerque and the Wilderness Society to complete the next generation of heat mapping. Small sensors were attached to cars and bikes that navigated routes across the city three times a day to complete a high-resolution map of extreme heat, street by street. This will help us understand how heat patterns change between neighborhoods and over time.

These data will inform where to place neighborhood cooling stations, so people without access to air conditioning can seek refuge. Developing new sheltered bus stops will make public transit more usable. And identifying where to plant new trees, develop green spaces, and install shade structures will improve the equitable distribution of these resources.



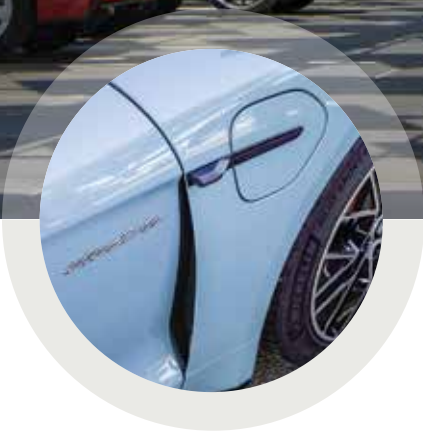
### ONLINE

Learn more about cooling our cities at [nature.org/newmexico](https://nature.org/newmexico)

The climate crisis requires us to act swiftly, simultaneously reducing emissions and adapting to changing rainfall and temperature patterns. With each passing day, the body of scientific information on just how to do this grows, guiding our work to protect climate vulnerable lands, waters and wildlife, while building climate resilient communities.

It is often difficult to find hope given the multitude of climate change impacts to people and to nature, but each action we take gets us one step closer to a better future for us and for nature.

THIS PAGE The sun peeks through the clouds above the Sandia and Manzano Mountains near downtown Albuquerque. © Brandon Stephenson via Flickr Creative Commons; OPPOSITE PAGE Example of a solar installation doubling as shade for a parking area. © Dave Lauridsen INSET LEFT TO RIGHT More auto manufacturers are creating electric vehicles, including Ferrari. © Roberto Rosales; No lines at the pump if you use these charging stations for electric vehicles in Albuquerque. © Sarah Hurteau/TNC; Planting trees in strategic locations will help cool the city. © Roberto Rosales



# Working Together for Nature

## Restoration returns resilience to forested landscape

The collective efforts to manage our overgrown forests have helped to mitigate the impacts of four potentially serious fires.



Forest restoration is working! The Nature Conservancy-led Rio Grande Water Fund (RGWF) is improving forest and watershed health to prevent megafires, protect water for one million people, enhance wildlife habitat and support outdoor recreation. The collective efforts to manage our overgrown forests have helped to mitigate the impacts of four potentially serious fires.

The most recent example was the lightning-sparked Medio Fire that started in August of 2020 in the Santa Fe National Forest. The fire burned where the Forest Service had carefully and selectively removed many small trees that would have otherwise served as fuel for the fire. In addition, a highly trained team of forest firefighters had already performed a closely managed controlled burn in the same area to reintroduce “good fire” to the forest and remove excess fuels.

As a result of this proactive work, the Medio Fire was brought under control before it could cause widespread damage to important cultural resources and recreational assets on Forest Service land and on Tesuque Pueblo land – and before it could harm our local watersheds. This type of active management supports forests that are resilient to low-severity

fire and helps prevent the extreme “megafires” that wipe out towns and forests on a scale of hundreds or thousands of square miles.



### ONLINE

Learn more at [nature.org/newmexico](https://www.nature.org/newmexico)

To further ensure “good fire,” is on the landscape, TNC advocated for the passage of the Prescribed Burning Act, House Bill (HB) 57 during New Mexico’s 2021 legislative session. HB 57 was bipartisan-sponsored legislation in the State House and Senate. It passed nearly unanimously and was signed into law in March 2021. HB 57 established conditions for private landowners to use the tool of prescribed burning on their land. Fire knows no boundaries and HB 57 will help ensure prescribed burning is used on private lands to complement the already occurring use of this tool on state, federal and tribal lands.

To build and strengthen our work with Indigenous partners, we hired our first-ever Indigenous partnerships program director, John Waconda, of the Pueblo of Isleta. This new program is designed to support and partner with Indigenous Peoples to create a shared future of healthy lands, waters, and communities.

THIS PAGE Fires that burn under controlled conditions improve wildlife habitat, create healthy forests and reduce the risk of catastrophic fires. © Mary Huffman/TNC; OPPOSITE PAGE One hundred signatory partners have joined TNC’s Rio Grande Water Fund. © Sean O’Neill & Kyle Stepp; NSET LEFT TO RIGHT TNC hired John Waconda as its first Indigenous Partnerships program director for New Mexico. © Courtesy of John Waconda; Kayaking in the Rio Chama River © Paul Tashjian; Sandhill cranes © Glenn Seplak





Waconda is coming out of retirement from the U.S. Forest Service because—as he says, “there’s work to be done.” He sees opportunities to build more bridges with Indigenous partners to create a more sustainable future by protecting our land and water, together.

“As the state’s regional restoration partnership coordinator, I immersed myself in tribal communications so local community members had a good understanding of the RGWF and how it would benefit people and nature,” he said. “This work will enable me to employ my knowledge, skills and experiences in a way that helps me and my people.”



**4,000 acres**

of seedlings are being planted by volunteers in Bandelier National Monument and the Santa Clara Pueblo watershed.

# Forests for the Future

## Fighting fire with proactive practices

### FORESTS

One of the best things we can do to combat climate change is to plant trees.



Catastrophic wildfires across the western U.S. have become commonplace. Forests dense with small trees combined with hotter and drier conditions mean people, water, wildlife, and local economics face an uncertain future.

“In large part, what we do now will determine the forests of the future,” said Anne Bradley, TNC’s in forest director for New Mexico.

In 2014, more than 600,000 acres of unhealthy forests stood in northern New Mexico alone. As fires burn hotter, they kill trees and destroy local seed sources. Several locations in our state show fire scars so severe, trees cannot regenerate on their own.

One such place is the Jemez Mountains. In 2011, the Las Conchas Fire burned 150,000 acres and subsequent floods filled our reservoirs with ash and sediment. Water deliveries were halted. As climate change threats intensify, we must rely on science and innovative solutions to help us create hardier forests that can adapt and survive. Without help from people, it will take generations for our forests to grow back.

“We’re excited to see the TNC-led Rio Grande Water Fund increase the scale of forest restoration to prevent severe fires,” Bradley said. “Now we must plan for the long game, which is where reforestation comes into play.”

When we think about bringing our forests back to life, we need to address hotter and drier weather, which is expected to increase in the future. That is the primary focus for TNC partner Dr. Owen Burney, superintendent of the New Mexico State University’s John T. Harrington Forestry Research Center in Mora. He’s leading a study designed to grow trees that are the most drought-resistant that can be planted on scarred land.

“One of the best things we can do to combat climate change is plant trees,” Burney said. “Trees naturally store carbon, which can remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Other actions include renewable energy policies and electric vehicles.”

Finding ways to give trees the best chance of survival means planting the best seedlings—those conditioned for drought—in the best places. We are using a science-based approach to move various native tree species from their previous habitats into higher elevations and areas with more shade to increase their chances for long-term survival and to study how and where they successfully reproduce. To truly have an impact, we need to significantly increase the scale and pace of the reforestation pipeline – seed collection, nursery production and tree planting.

THIS PAGE Dr. Owen Burney plays a pivotal role helping us grow tree seedlings that will be resilient to climate change. © Courtesy of NMSU; OPPOSITE PAGE Healthy ponderosa pines in the Jemez Mountains © Anne Bradley/TNC; INSET TOP TO BOTTOM Birds like the yellow-rumped warbler live in the Jemez Mountains. © Matt Williams/TNC; Fires that burn under controlled conditions improve wildlife habitat, create healthy forests and reduce the risk of catastrophic fires. © Mary Huffman/TNC; Flowers and burned log © Alan W. Eckert



# Julia Peters

For 10 years, Julia Peters has served as a dedicated trustee for TNC in New Mexico and, sadly, we bid her adieu this year, as she transitions off our board. Her energy and devotion to the role, most recently as board president, will be difficult to match, and she leaves TNC a better organization on stronger footing for those who follow her.



Her contributions, beyond her generous financial investments in our work, can be characterized by innovative ideas, strategic thinking and most valuably, her tireless efforts to increase the visibility of TNC's work locally and nationally.

We are grateful to Julia for all she has helped us to accomplish over the past decade and we also extend our thanks to her partners at Avalon Trust—Christine McDermott and Andy

Wallerstein—who have not only supported Julia's engagement with TNC but have also contributed to important conservation initiatives over the years, including the Rio Grande Water Fund and tree planting activities in the greater Albuquerque area.

## Our thanks to Julia and the Avalon Trust team for believing in our mission.

THIS PAGE Julia Peters, Andy Wallerstein and Christine McDermott of Avalon Trust © Peter Ogilvie  
OPPOSITE PAGE Wetlands at Valles Caldera National Preserve © Alan W. Eckert

To make a gift of any kind to The Nature Conservancy is an act of generosity. To make a long-term gift—one derived from the work of a lifetime—is to make a commitment beyond measure.

If you are interested in becoming a Legacy Club member by naming The Nature Conservancy in New Mexico as a beneficiary of your will, trust, retirement plan, life insurance policy or financial accounts, please contact Sallie Hoefer: 505-946-2029 or [sallie.hoefer@tnc.org](mailto:sallie.hoefer@tnc.org).

### Give the Gift of a Lifetime

The Legacy Club is a group of Conservancy supporters who have made a lasting commitment to conservation by making a life-income gift with TNC or by naming The Nature Conservancy in New Mexico as a beneficiary in their estate plans. The Legacy Club is a way for us to recognize this profound contribution to The Nature Conservancy's future.

### Create Your Conservation Legacy

For more than half a century, thousands of bequests and planned gifts have provided vital support for the lands and waters you care about. Today you can help continue this tradition by making a lasting commitment to TNC. When you join The Legacy Club, you help ensure that the conservation work we pioneer today will continue long into the future.

### Legacy Club Benefits

- *Nature Conservancy* magazine, our award-winning quarterly publication;
- The semi-annual newsletter, "Legacy";
- TNC's annual report;
- Trip invitations offering participants a unique and up-close look at our work;
- Invitations to special events; and
- Exclusive discounts and offers.

*If you have already included The Nature Conservancy in your long-term plans and would like your gift specifically designated for New Mexico projects, please speak to your advisors about including the following statement in your paperwork: The Nature Conservancy, a nonprofit corporation, organized and existing under the laws of the District of Columbia, and with principal business address of 4245 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 100, Arlington, VA 22203-1606 (tax number 53-0242652).*

# THANKS

The Nature Conservancy's accomplishments are only made possible by the many individuals, organizations, businesses and foundations that made gifts to our vital conservation programs during fiscal year 2020 (July 1, 2020—June 30, 2021). Every gift plays a crucial role in our work—for people and nature. We thank you for your commitment to our mission.\*



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Baby trees being grown in nurseries will be replanted in the Jemez Mountains. © Collin Haffey/TNC  
 INSET A male fox plays with his pup. © Ian Murray/TNC Photo Contest 2018



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