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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,

This year, I celebrated my 30th anniversary with The Nature Conservancy. Over the past three decades, I have had the privilege to work on projects in every corner of our state. But a recent trip to the northeastern corner of New Mexico reminded me of how grateful I am to have had this wonderful opportunity.

In September, we convened a group of trustees and staff to celebrate our purchase of the Bartlett Mesa Ranch, located outside of Raton on the border of Colorado. As part of our meeting, we went on a field trip where we hiked from Bartlett Mesa Ranch across the border to the adjacent Fishers Peak State Park in Colorado—a park that TNC in Colorado helped establish four years ago.

Walking between the two properties made a profound impact on me. Having grown up in Colorado, I could not help but reflect on the trajectory of my life and career, and how these projects tied together my home states and my career in conservation.

But more importantly, these projects also represent our expansive organizational vision to link together critical lands in the Southern High Plains and to conserve vast areas of grasslands – both here and around the world.

Thirty years. Hundreds of conservation projects. And thousands of extraordinary people like you. Thank you once again for your insights, support and generosity.

Yours in nature,

Terry Sullivan, State Director

Where We Work

1

San Juan River

This year, the Jicarilla Apache Nation, the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) entered a new agreement to lease over 6.5 billion gallons river water from the Nation to the NMISC.

2

Rio Grande Water Fund

More than 100 signatory partners support this collaborative effort to restore, replenish and reforest 600,000 acres of forests that filter drinking water for half of New Mexico.

3

Bartlett Mesa Ranch

Dramatic clifftop views of Sugarite Canyon and endless vistas across the Rocky Mountains and the Great Plains provide habitat to incredible native wildlife.



4

Gila River Preserve

Community partners have collaborated with TNC for more than 15 years to restore the southwest's last free-flowing river that attracts birds, fish and other wildlife.

5

Harvey Jones Bioswale Demonstration Project

A new channel built this year with trees and vegetation on the riverside will filter pollution from 4.5 million gallons of stormwater annually while creating wildlife habitat in Corrales.

6

Santa Fe Canyon Preserve

Improvements coming in 2023 include new interpretive trail signs in multiple languages, an ADA-compliant pathway and an audio tour for this popular preserve that attracts 30,000 visitors annually.

Grasslands Protection

LAND

Spend a little time in open grasslands and you'll fall in love.

The protection of Bartlett Mesa will help TNC reach its ambitious goal to protect 30% of the Earth's land, freshwater and oceans by 2030.



Standing in the high plains among short grasses, high mesas, rugged canyons and big vistas with wind gently brushing past your ears will offer perspective and calm.

To preserve the beauty and biodiversity, protect wildlife corridors and build resilience, TNC in New Mexico and the Trust for Public Land (TPL) purchased the 2,224-acre Bartlett Mesa Ranch this past June. Located just outside of the small northeastern town of Raton, the parcel is part of a network of lands and waters called the Southern High Plains, spanning five states (New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas) and includes 30 million acres of intact grasslands, forests and riparian corridors teeming with wildlife.

The protection of Bartlett Mesa will help TNC reach its ambitious goal to protect 30% of the Earth's land, freshwater and oceans by 2030.

“Developing solutions for people and nature is at the heart of our work. This collaboration supports conservation, rural communities and recreation,” said Terry Sullivan, TNC New Mexico’s state director.

Third-generation rancher Mary Lou Kern sold the property so it would remain whole.



ONLINE

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

“Bartlett Mesa Ranch is a unique and beautiful property with deep historical significance to my family,” said Mary Lou Kern. “The transfer of ownership to TNC and TPL is bittersweet as this land will change purpose after decades of grazing cattle. I’m comforted by the assurance this special land will be preserved for future generations to enjoy and treasure.”

The long-term vision for this property is to expand the adjacent Sugarite Canyon State Park and one day connect to nearby Fishers Peak State Park in Colorado.

THIS PAGE LEFT TO RIGHT Mary Lou Kern © Courtesy of Mary Lou Kern; TNC, TPL and the City of Raton worked with landowner Mary Lou Kern to purchase the 2,224-acre Bartlett Mesa Ranch south of the Colorado border near Fishers Peak State Park. © Brad Cory/TNC; OPPOSITE PAGE © Brad Cory/TNC; Lesser Prairie Chicken chick © Tish McDaniel/TNC



Freshwater Renewal

Water is the magic ingredient that brings us life.

WATER

Our work to restore the last free-flowing river in the Southwest includes protecting more than 1,200 acres of riparian and wetland habitat on the Gila River Preserve.



With increasingly arid conditions, a changing climate and population pressures, our source of life is at risk. Working with partners to implement innovative conservation measures, we are providing hope and progress, particularly with two projects TNC led this last year.

A successful example of this is the Harvey Jones Project in Corrales. This public-private, multi-year partnership reconnects native vegetation in a historic floodplain with groundwater by creating a series of channels that naturally filter pollutants from stormwater before it is carried into the Rio Grande. These wetland channels, replanted primarily with willows, slowly filter water and improve 10 acres of riparian habitat for fish, birds and other wildlife. The wetlands utilize existing waterflows on site, which include a wastewater outfall for the City of Rio Rancho that releases up to 5 million gallons of water each day and an additional 4 to 5 million gallons a year in stormwater run-off.

This project serves as an important demonstration site in a popular spot for recreationists, showcasing the many benefits of multi-agency coordination and

green stormwater infrastructure to communities in the greater Albuquerque area. We aim to use this project as a model of how we can scale our work by rethinking how we can put existing water to use to benefit people and nature.

Further south on the southern edge of the Gila National Forest, our work to restore the last free-flowing river in the Southwest includes protecting more than 1,200 acres of riparian and wetland habitat on the Gila River Preserve. This special place provides numerous benefits, including important wildlife habitat and capturing sediment before it enters the river.



ONLINE

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

“Restoration, recovery and regeneration. This preserve has it in abundance,” said Mike Fugagli, who bands birds at the preserve with his wife, Carol Ann. “Very little cottonwood forests could be found along the floodplain about 15 years ago. But now, we have multiple stringers of cottonwood forests all over this preserve. It’s a neat area, and it’s becoming a premiere birding spot in North America while this restoration continues.”

THIS PAGE Carol and Mike Fugagli use TNC’s Gila River Preserve for bird banding studies. © Courtesy of Carol Ann & Mike Fugagli; OPPOSITE PAGE Martha Cooper explores the riparian restoration that took place at the Gila River Preserve. © Michael Matosich/TNC; INSET, LEFT TO RIGHT A water gauge on the Gila River Preserve allows scientists to track the flow of the river. © Michael Matosich/TNC; Crews first removed 18,000 yards of dirt to lower one channel and create two new channels that move stormwater from Rio Rancho to the Rio Grande to lessen sediment and erosion at our Harvey Jones Bioswale Demonstration Project. © Southern Sandoval County Flood Control Authority; Sandhill cranes along the Rio Grande near Albuquerque. © Roberto E. Rosales



2022 Wildfires by the Numbers

Land, Water, Our Future

WILDFIRE

When faced with tragedy, we must learn and adapt. This year's unprecedented fires are a wake-up call to our new reality.



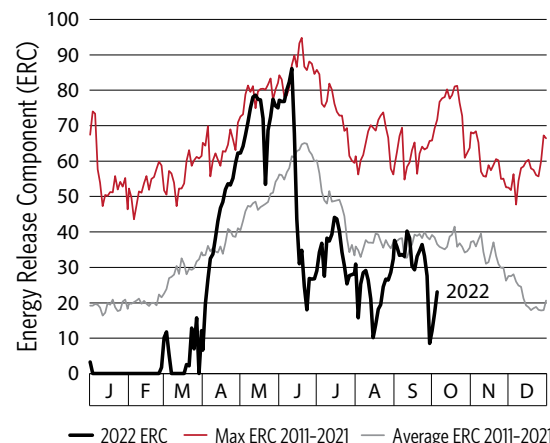
Wildfire is an essential part of New Mexico's forests. Historically, ponderosa pine and dry, mixed-conifer forests experienced low-intensity fires every 5 to 15 years, burning across the forest floor clearing debris and returning nutrients to the soil while leaving the tree canopy above intact.

Fire suppression has extended the time between fires allowing vegetation and fuels to accumulate. When a fire burns in these dense forests, it burns hotter and bigger, killing many trees along with the seeds stored underground.

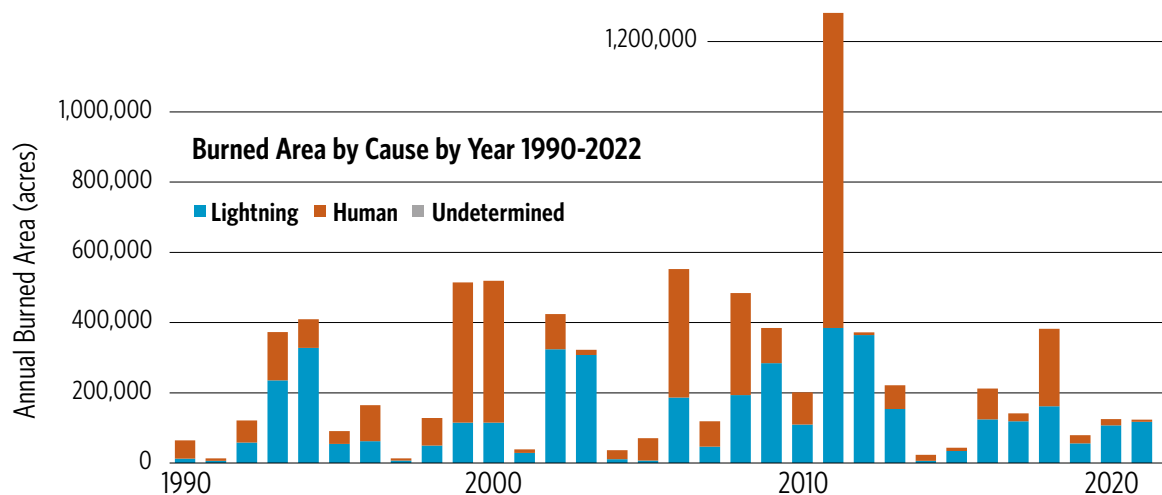
In addition to the increase in tree density, climate change has increased the number of hot, dry and windy days, allowing fires to burn over much larger areas and for a longer part of the year.

Restoring our forests to support low-intensity wildfire will protect our forests, water supplies and communities.

Average and Max Daily Fire Hazard 2011-2022



Fire hazard measured at a weather station near Truchas, NM recorded near max hazard, far above average, during May and June. Energy Release Component (ERC) is an indicator of the dryness of vegetation and fuels.

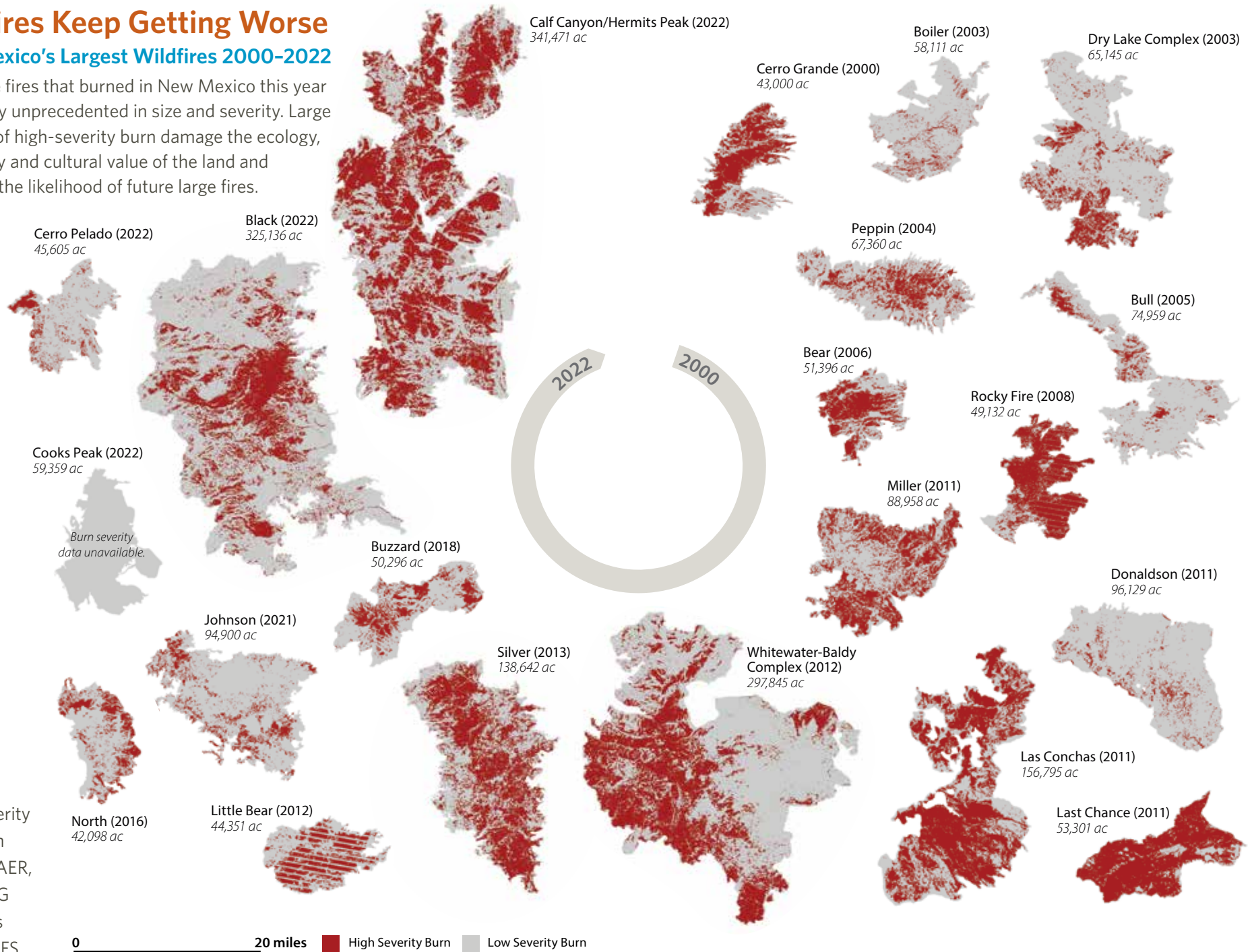


Citation:
Burned area data from SWCC Intelligence Section.

Big Fires Keep Getting Worse

New Mexico's Largest Wildfires 2000-2022

The large fires that burned in New Mexico this year were truly unprecedented in size and severity. Large patches of high-severity burn damage the ecology, hydrology and cultural value of the land and increase the likelihood of future large fires.



Citation:

Burn severity data from MTBS, BAER, and RAVG programs of the USFS.

Partnerships for a Sustainable Future

Native peoples learned to live with and manage fire for centuries and to use it in ways that enrich their communities.



New Mexico is leading the way when it comes to engaging with Indigenous partners, thanks to the respected and imperative work of John Waconda. The chapter's first-ever Indigenous partnerships director is making a difference in our forests, water, policies and soon, on farms in the Land of Enchantment.

Native peoples learned to live with and manage fire for centuries and to use it in ways that enrich their communities. However, the inability to do so on a large scale has caused tension and a deep loss of connection to the land.

"I'm concerned about losing tradition and culture and being able to protect and preserve the forest and its many resources," John said. "We want the best for our children. I want to leave our homelands in better shape than what I had."

Alongside partners, the Indigenous Partnership Program accomplished a lot this past year, including:

- Collaborating with Taos Pueblo as they develop a cultural fire plan that will protect their tribal wilderness area and community, secure clean water, provide medicinal plants and support cultural traditions.

- In partnership with Jemez and Santa Clara Pueblos, planting 100,000 drought-resistant seedlings in the Jemez Mountains where the Las Conchas Fire burned 150,000 acres in 2011, with the goal to create a forest that will adapt to intensifying climate change.

- Joining a new collaborative of scientists and Indigenous leaders from across the Western states, which will advocate for the kinds of policy solutions needed to encourage the kind of fire that people, communities and ecosystems need.

Today, John is working with the Pueblo of Jemez on a five-year, multi-state, virtual fencing pilot project to support economic and ecological benefits for ranchers, farmers and rural communities. Virtual fencing is an innovative technology that offers land managers increased precision and flexibility in how they graze cattle.

Finally, as the western U.S. is facing critical drought and water shortages across the Colorado River Basin, TNC, the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC) and the Jicarilla Apache Nation signed a monumental water agreement. The deal will allow the NMISC to lease up to 20,000 acre-feet of water per year from the Jicarilla Apache Nation, which will benefit fish and increase water security for New Mexico.

THIS PAGE TNC NM Indigenous Partnerships Program Director John Waconda, of the Pueblo of Isleta, came out of retirement for this new role. © Roberto E. Rosales
 OPPOSITE PAGE Sunset lights up the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in Taos. © Michael Matosich/TNC; INSET, TOP TO BOTTOM Volunteers rescued drought-hardened seedlings for reforestation planting. © Collin Haffey; The San Juan River is a major waterway of the Colorado River Basin. © Erika Nortemann/TNC; Sandhill cranes descend on a pond at New Mexico's Bosque del Apache. © Roberto E. Rosales



Phoebe Suina

TNC New Mexico Trustee Phoebe Suina has spent her life working to improve the lives of her people through environmental advocacy, protecting natural resources and disaster relief. From the Pueblos of San Felipe and Cochiti, Phoebe was named as one of the “10

Women of the Century in New Mexico” by *USA Today* in 2019 as part of a celebration of the 19th Amendment.

The paper described Phoebe as a woman on a mission to safeguard her people and New Mexico’s natural treasures during the post-fire monsoons.

Her career highlights include managing multi-million-dollar emergency and assistance projects for the Federal Emergency Management Agency as well as environmental compliance and remediation for the Department of the Interior

and Los Alamos National Laboratory. Today, she owns High Water Mark Consulting, which focuses on strategies that secure and clean water for New Mexicans.

Suina earned bachelor’s degrees in environmental engineering and engineering sciences and a graduate degree in engineering management, all from the Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth College.

“For me, nature is home,” she said. “Nature provides strength, guidance and sustenance.”

THIS PAGE Phoebe Suina of Cochiti Pueblo is an entrepreneur, philanthropist and member of TNC’s Board of Trustees for New Mexico. © Bob Rodriguez

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 Paul Blaney: 415-205-1163 or paul.blaney@tnc.org.

Give the Gift of a Lifetime

The Legacy Club is a group of TNC 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 TNC’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 2021 (July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022). 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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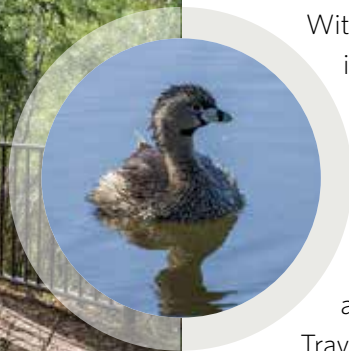
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Improvements are underway at our Santa Fe Canyon Preserve to make it more accessible to visitors.
 © Tony Bonanno; Pied-billed grebe © Erika Nortemann/TNC



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