

# OHIO

Annual Report 2020



## The Nature Conservancy in Ohio

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## DEAR FRIEND OF CONSERVATION

Last year was anything but normal. As I reflect on it, can you believe that I feel hopeful? I am encouraged by the tenacity and positivity of our Nature Conservancy staff, board and members like you. While our goals are ambitious, there is a powerful spirit of hope as we work together to conserve the lands and waters upon which all life depends. You'll see it in all of the stories you read here.

The adoption of H2Ohio and passage of the Great American Outdoors Act are revolutionary. There's no other way to describe these two pieces of legislation. They show that nature can unite us, as people from across the United States recognize the importance of the lands and waters that belong to all of us—and back that up with funds to protect them.

Moreover, because of your passion for Ohio, we reconnected fragmented forests and grew our partnerships with farmers to better address the climate crisis. We reestablished native plants, and we restored waterways. When the COVID-19 crisis arrived, together we rediscovered that nature is always here to heal and replenish us. We have never had more visitors to our preserves.

2020 also reminded us that uncertainty and change are inevitable. Nature already knows this, and species adapt by moving in search of food, water and shelter. At TNC, we have tried to do the same: observe and adjust. Our staff members are working from home for their safety and the safety of our partners and donors. Our conversations have moved online or outdoors. We've implemented cost-saving measures across our organization.

What hasn't changed: our commitment to conservation, and our need for your support. The stories in this report involve moments of breathtaking dedication to our state—by our legislators, our partners and you. Let's continue drawing strength from nature, using its resilience as a guide as we learn and adapt, strive for success and share hope for better times.

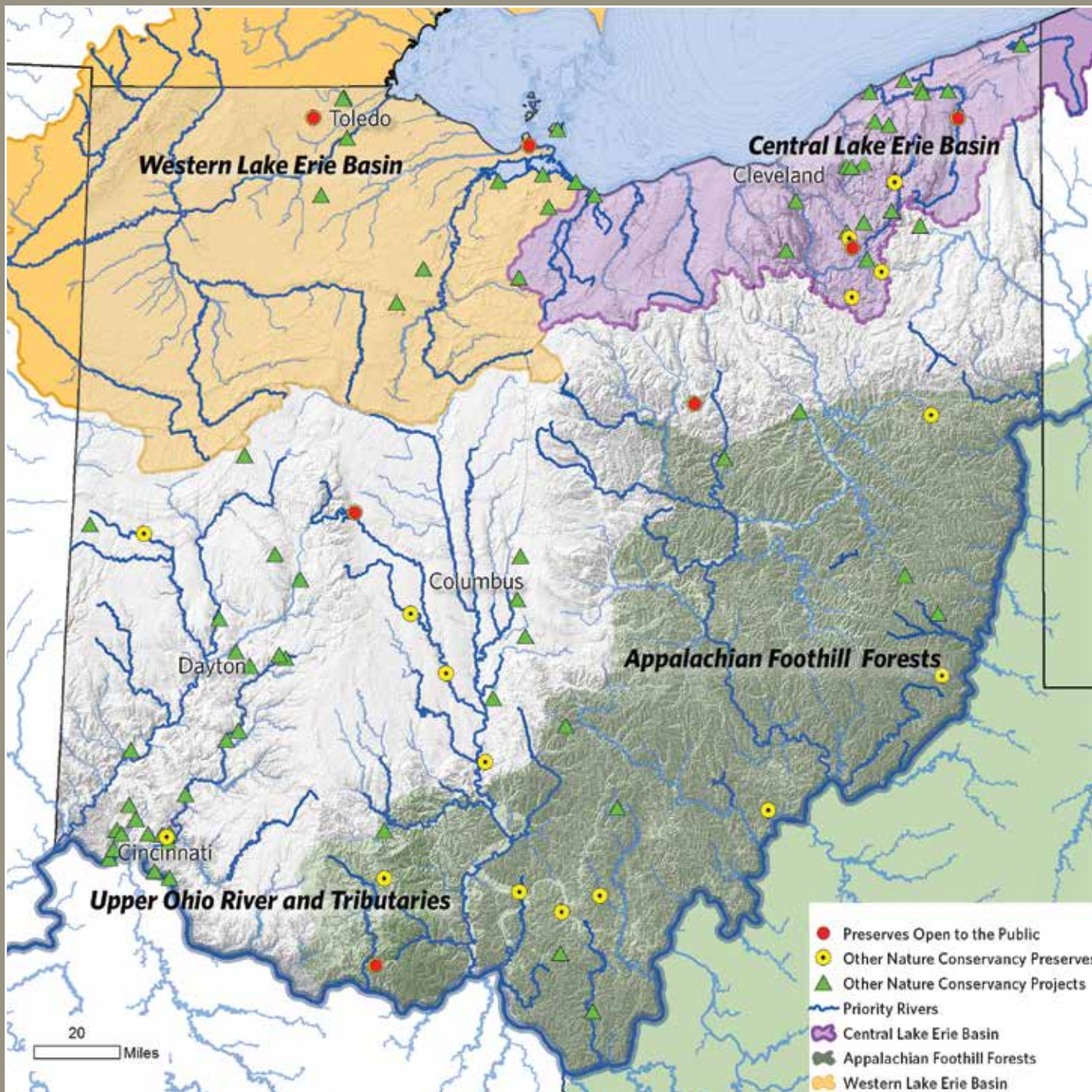
Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Stanley".

Bill Stanley  
State Director, The Nature Conservancy in Ohio

# WHERE WE WORK

Our vision is of a world where people and nature thrive together. The Nature Conservancy encourages people of all races, ethnicities, genders and sexual orientations to visit our preserves and has a zero-tolerance policy for racism and discrimination.





# WATER

## Momentous funding established

The words describing H2Ohio seem inadequate. Historic. Massive. Unprecedented. H2Ohio, established by Governor Mike DeWine in July 2019, is all of these and more.

In its first two years, H2Ohio could provide \$172 million to improve water quality. Of that amount, \$46 million is for nature-based solutions, such as creating and restoring wetlands and floodplains. The Nature Conservancy is implementing \$6 million in wetland restoration projects at Maumee Bay State Park and in Sandusky Bay.

As with so much of TNC's work, H2Ohio started with an audacious idea in response to a real need. It is supported by three crucial pillars: science, partnership and policy.

TNC demonstrated that natural ecosystems improve water quality and filter nutrients before they get to waterways and fuel the growth of harmful algal blooms. Perhaps most significantly, TNC created science-based maps showing precisely where to invest money for the largest impact in the Western Lake Erie Basin (see sidebar).

H2Ohio also represents one of TNC's greatest strengths as a convener. Our closest allies in H2Ohio are the Ohio Farm Bureau and the Ohio



Environmental Council. Though their missions differ, these partners share our vision for a funded, data-driven program that ensures safe and clean water for all Ohioans. Legislators could not ignore our united approach.

In 2014, TNC began promoting the need for a comprehensive plan with business leaders, agricultural groups and other nonprofits. In 2016, TNC met with both gubernatorial candidates to advocate for a statewide, multi-faceted approach

to clean water. The candidates agreed. Governor DeWine made H2Ohio part of his platform and initiated it mere months after taking office.

While the initial momentum of H2Ohio has been tempered by the pandemic, the program is already being put to work. Current projects will restore or enhance more than 3,500 acres of wetlands. Further, by summer 2020, 1,900 farmers managing 1.1 million acres across 25,000 farm fields had applied for funding; the Ohio

In 2019, the Ohio Mitigation Program had its five-year anniversary, acquired 200 acres in conservation land, identified eight new restoration projects and, in its first stream and wetland mitigation project, restored more than one mile of stream and 1.7 acres of wetlands. \$5 million in new credit sales put the program at the \$25 million mark.



**CLICK:** Visit [nature.org/H2Ohio](https://www.nature.org/H2Ohio) to learn more about what H2Ohio means for clean water, the economy and human health.

Department of Agriculture had expected only hundreds would apply. This simultaneously proves the need for such a farsighted solution and illustrates that our leadership is more important than ever.

We have begun planning to create an advisory board, develop evaluation strategies and determine how to permanently fund this groundbreaking program. Ohio's future depends on it.

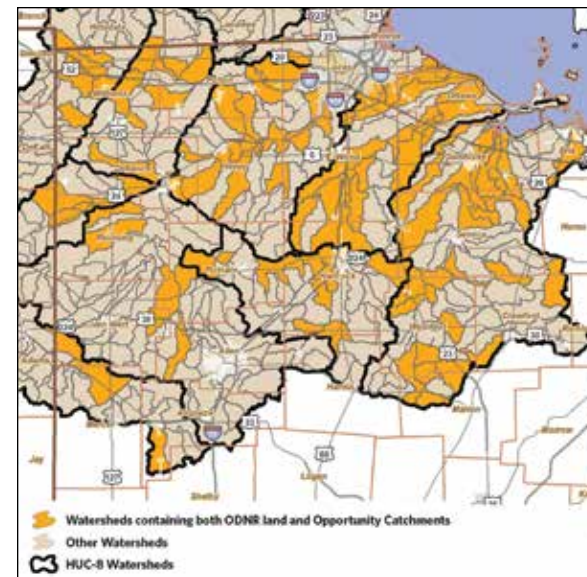
## Mapping the future

Nature Conservancy staff brought H2Ohio to life, showing legislators where to responsibly invest taxpayer dollars.

The team created maps of the Western Lake Erie Basin that identified agricultural land with no slope and poorly drained soils in watersheds that are high nutrient contributors. The maps identify locations where H2Ohio practices—like wetlands, two-stage ditches and buffers—are most needed and will do the most good.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources used the maps to focus their efforts and target spending. In a few years, they will use a similar mapping process to evaluate their progress.

This combination of mapping, targeting and priority setting has become a powerful tool for TNC. In Ohio, the next analysis is already queued up: mapping opportunities in the Scioto and Great Miami rivers and other parts of the Mississippi River basin.





# LAND

## Connections stand the test of time

Progress over the past year manifested two of The Nature Conservancy's most deeply held beliefs: that adding to existing protected properties increases resilience and ecological health; and that local economies and individual lives are improved when TNC lands are opened for exploration.

Positive relationships at state and federal levels are crucial in turning these beliefs into reality. We may never again see such a profound culmination as the passing of H2Ohio in July 2019 (page 4) and the Great American Outdoors Act in August 2020 (page 7).

Conservation planning like this requires a long view, taken over years and decades rather than months. The unexpected social and financial uncertainties related to COVID-19 show why this is a smart approach. The relationships TNC builds—whether with federal agencies or county commissioners—will allow us to enhance landscapes across Ohio for generations to come.



**CLICK:** Can't make it out to a preserve? Check out this virtual naturalist hike at Snow Lake at [nature.org/lucianashpreserve!](https://nature.org/lucianashpreserve!)

### The Edge's Newest Addition

The addition of the 163-acre Judge Tract represented an important step toward a long-term vision to protect and connect land in the Sunshine Corridor region, a land bridge between the Edge of Appalachia Preserve and Shawnee State Forest. Linking the two will mean 90,000+ acres of contiguously protected forest, supporting warblers, timber rattlesnakes, black bears and other species requiring large landscapes. It will also be a more resilient landscape where plants and animals can re-establish in new locations as they adapt to a changing climate.



### Partnering for Protection

More than 25 years ago, TNC declared Darby Creek a "last great place," or one of the country's few remaining wild areas undisturbed by human impacts. At its headwaters, Darby Creek is narrow enough to jump across, but the health of even a small part of a stream affects the whole watershed. Longtime partner Honda of America Mfg., Inc. donated 90 acres to TNC containing a half-mile stretch of Big Darby Creek, helping to protect one of the most diverse streams in the Midwest.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Judge Tract © TNC; Wayne National Forest © ODNR; Helen C. Black Trail at Cedar Falls © Southern Ohio Photography; Trillium at Big Darby Creek Headwaters © Randall Schieber; Jennifer Morris learns about rare habitat protected. © TNC; Revitalizing nature at a City of Warren Park © Derrick Cooper/TNC

## Landmark funds for country's landmarks

In August 2020, the most significant conservation legislation of the last 50 years was signed into law. The Great American Outdoors Act provides \$900 million each year to fully fund the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund and \$1.9 billion annually for the next five years for deferred maintenance on national parks and other public lands. TNC members, including from Ohio, sent more than 2.6 million messages to Congress in support of this landmark legislation.



## The trail to ecotourism

Last fiscal year, we celebrated the opening of two new trails. The Helen C. Black Trail was completed at the Edge of Appalachia Preserve in Adams County. Created at the request of county commissioners, it is already one of TNC's most visited locations in Ohio. And the Barbara A. Lipscomb Trail at Snow Lake, part of the Lucia S. Nash Preserve in Geauga County, offers unmatched views of one of Ohio's finest remaining glacial wetlands.



## Hello new CEO

When Jennifer Morris accepted TNC's top job in May 2020, she committed to visit every state. This summer, Morris saw restored wetlands at the Great Egret Marsh and Kitty Todd Nature Preserves and discovered how, along the shores of Lake Erie, TNC works with partners at unprecedented scales to conserve a landscape stressed by development and agricultural runoff. The visit highlighted Ohio's ability to protect the places that sustain our citizens, while addressing global challenges like climate change.



## Restoring a community treasure

The Northeast Ohio restoration team revitalizes nature alongside the Mahoning River, part of a broader regional effort to reimagine the Mahoning River Corridor as a state-like park. TNC works throughout the state, on our own preserves and partner lands, to improve the health of our natural areas for the benefit of people and nature.



# OUR YEAR IN PHOTOS 2020

## INCREASING SUPPORT FOR CLEAN ENERGY

Videos featuring four municipalities and two school districts showed how using renewable energy saves money and combats climate change. Last fiscal year, the digital ads we placed resulted in more than 16,900 new visits to our Choosing Clean Energy website.

© TNC

The Nature Conservancy

[Learn More](#)

Perrysburg, Ohio is saving money by using solar energy to power its traffic safety signs.



## RESTORING OUR NATURAL AREAS

Last year, TNC restoration teams helped improve the health of more than 1,300 acres across the state. Sites included our own preserves, such as the Edge of Appalachia, Big Darby and Kitty Todd, and partner lands, including those within the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, the city of Warren, Shaker Lakes and Walnut Beach in Ashtabula.

Dickcissel © ODNR

## FUNDING FOR CONSERVATION

The Great American Outdoors Act is the most important piece of conservation legislation that has passed in a generation. TNC and its members were prominent voices in its passage.

Cuyahoga Valley National Park © Shutterstock





## HEALTHY FORESTS FOR A HEALTHY CLIMATE

Working Woodlands, launched in Ohio at the Edge of Appalachia Preserve, incentivizes the protection and sustainable management of forestland, an important natural solution in the fight against climate change.

© TNC



## SHARING OHIO'S BEAUTY

The benefits of spending time in nature are far-reaching. New trails completed last year provide even more scenic places for visitors to enjoy.

Snow Lake © Terry Seidel/TNC

## DEDICATED TO STEWARDSHIP

Nature kept volunteers company this year as they worked independently to complete important stewardship and monitoring work across the state.

Luna moths © Laurie Lowe



## ONLINE CHAMPIONS

Nine Ohio chapter Board of Trustee members participated in the first-ever virtual advocacy day in April, helping TNC promote policies that protect and enhance Ohio's beautiful natural areas.

© David Ike

# CLIMATE

## Farmers harvest benefits for agriculture, water and the planet

**“Five years ago, if you’d asked a room of farmers to talk about climate change, you would have been asked to leave.”**

—Janelle Teeters Mead, CEO,  
Ohio Federation of Soil and Water  
Conservation Districts

From record-setting heat waves to flooded fields and overflowing city sewers, the impacts from climate change can be severe. For farmers and the agriculture industry, adapting to the effects of climate change is not new. They have been on the frontlines for more than a decade.

There is good news, however. We don’t have to choose between the economy and the environment, or between productive agriculture and water quality. Part of the solution lies right beneath our feet—in the soil of Ohio’s farmlands.

In April, The Nature Conservancy held one-on-one conversations with 12 leading agriculture



groups. They shared insights on farming practices that reduce soil disturbance and thus keep stored carbon from being released. They explained how Ohio’s farming families are affected by climate change and spoke forthrightly about legislation related to the issue.

These conversations will guide TNC’s strategies and policies to help Ohio’s agricultural lands and waters adapt to a changing climate.

It takes years of relationship building within the agricultural community to create the mutual respect and trust required to combat this huge challenge. The process proved its value before, with the 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program.

TNC also began participating in a national pilot program to create carbon markets, in which farmers would receive credit for practices that allow the soil to better store carbon.





We plan to create a pilot in Ohio in 2021. The work follows on the heels of the Working Woodlands Program launched last year in southeast Ohio, which demonstrates the carbon reduction and financial benefits of healthy forest management.

When tackling a complex phenomenon like climate change, TNC's approach is deliberate: follow the science, build trusting relationships and show results. It works in Ohio and it works around the world.



## 8 million acre target

In 2020, the number of facilities certified through the 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program grew nearly 25 percent, servicing more than 2.8 million farm acres. Statewide conversations and the new H2Ohio program are important steps to reaching our goal of enrolling 8 million acres by 2025 and advancing whole-farm sustainability, including cover crops, soil health and water management operations.

# THANKS

The Nature Conservancy in Ohio is deeply grateful to the many individuals, corporations and foundations that have generously supported our conservation efforts, both locally and globally.

The following supporters contributed \$5,000 or more to TNC between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020. Although space does not permit us to list all gifts to TNC, each contribution, no matter what size, has a direct impact on our critical work to protect people and nature.

## \$500,000-\$1,000,000

Anonymous  
Estate of Ralph W. Aldenderfer  
Estate of Ms. Margaret J. Daniel  
Estate of Ms. Charlene Hosticka  
The Tadd and Nancy Seitz Family Fund Endowment

## \$250,000-\$499,000

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## \$25,000-\$99,999

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Barb and Karl Warnke  
Mr. and Mrs. Brian Williamson  
Dr. Roy Wayne Wolfram  
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## New or Increased Planned Gifts

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Julz A. Brown  
Kathy J. Burkholder  
Charles H. Clemminshaw  
Joan Cochran  
Renee A. Crider  
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Robert Hermann and Donna D. Hermann

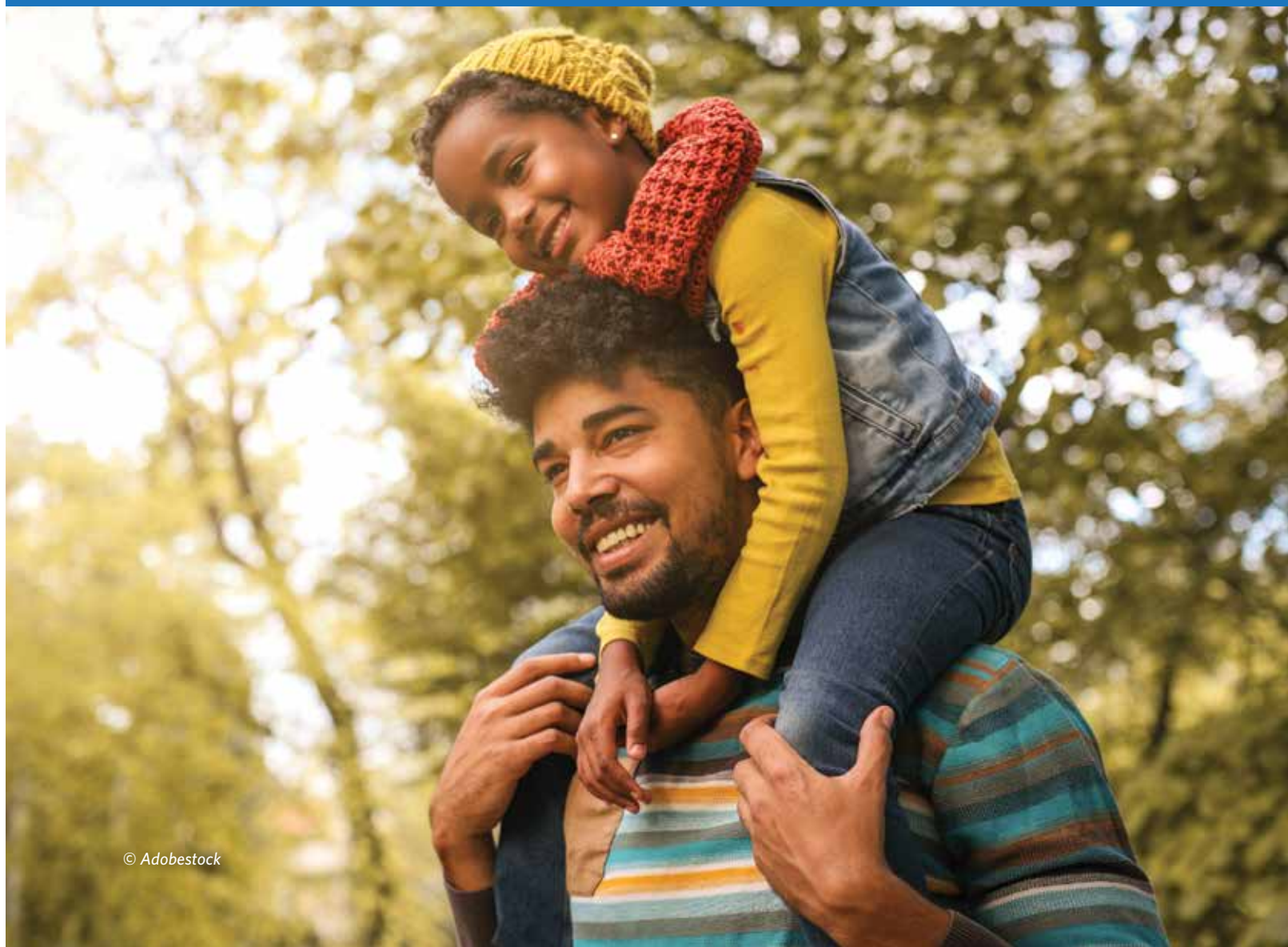


# LEAVE A LEGACY

Make a lasting commitment to conservation by including The Nature Conservancy in your will or estate plans. If you so choose, gifts can be designated to our work in Ohio, other states or an international program that aligns with your passions. To learn more, contact Alan Monroe at (614) 967-8877 or [alan.monroe@tnc.org](mailto:alan.monroe@tnc.org).

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# PRIVATE DONATIONS AMPLIFY IMPACT



Many public grant programs require private dollars as a match. Your support of The Nature Conservancy directly translates into more dollars for conservation and yields significant benefits for our state's lands and waters. In fiscal year 2020, we finalized 17 public grant agreements totaling approximately \$8.5 million. This funding came from multiple sources including the Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, H2Ohio Fund, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Forest Service.

These grants are supporting the removal of invasive plants, monitoring and treatment of pests and pathogens, research on endangered species like the Allegheny woodrat, restoration of key wetland areas and outreach and education with farmers. TNC's track record for success and your continued support help us leverage private donations to secure competitive public grant funding and advance our mission across the state. Thank you.

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



# FINANCIAL RESULTS

(July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020)

WE CARRY OUT OUR WORK WITH A DEEP COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY.

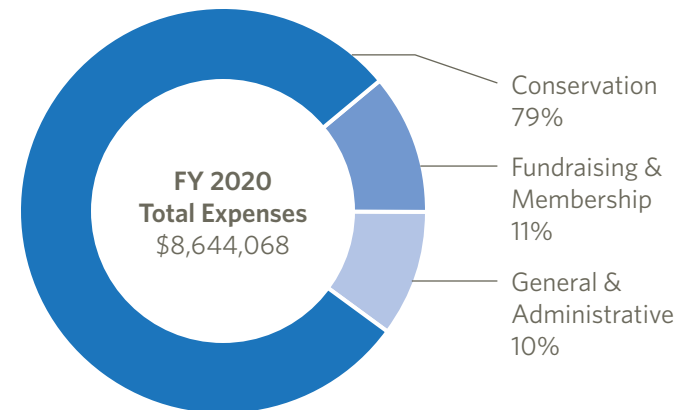
As a leading global charity, we hold ourselves accountable to our members, the public and all creatures that rely on the world's natural resources. And we seek to make use of every dollar donated to The Nature Conservancy with careful attention to effectiveness and efficiency.

We are able to accomplish so much because we make wise use of our resources. With 79 percent of our funding going directly to our science-driven conservation work, you can be confident that any investment in TNC will be put to good use, and for the benefit of all.

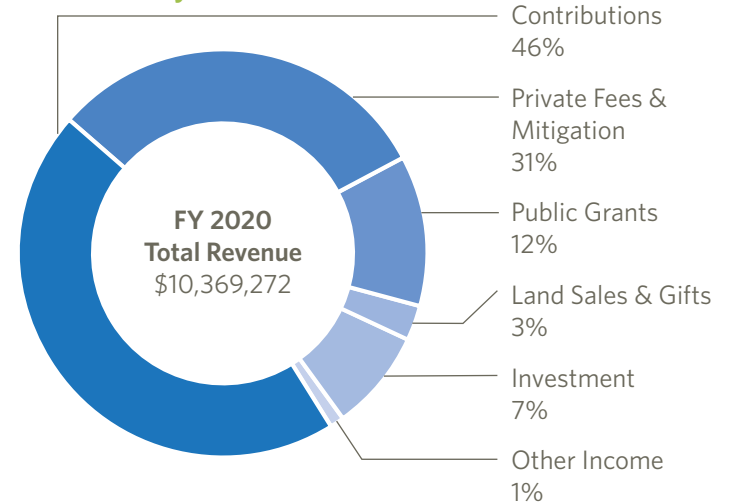
## THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IN OHIO STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION






Assets	At June 30, 2019	At June 30, 2020
Cash & Investments	\$24,736,218	\$28,027,081
Endowment Funds	\$17,190,246	\$17,472,075
Conservation Lands	\$44,644,346	\$45,438,103
Other Assets	\$2,162,572	\$1,090,518
	<b>\$88,733,382</b>	<b>\$92,027,777</b>
Liabilities	\$20,345,523	\$21,818,406
Net Assets	\$68,387,859	\$70,209,371
	<b>\$88,733,382</b>	<b>\$92,027,777</b>

### Programmatic Efficiency



### Funding by Source



-  Learn more about our work at [nature.org/ohio](https://nature.org/ohio)
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YOU

