

Nature Unites Us

OREGON 2022-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN



FROM THE DIRECTOR

I'm pleased to share with you our 2022–2025 Strategic Plan: Nature Unites Us.

With more than 60 years of conservation successes across our state and around the world, The Nature Conservancy has built a legacy of protecting nature so that people, plants, and wildlife can thrive. And our work has never been more urgent.

Our work in Oregon in the coming years will focus on building resilience for nature and people across lands, rivers, forests, and cities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and increasing carbon sequestration. We have carefully chosen strategies to advance these priorities and make meaningful differences at a scale appropriate to the challenges we face.

Grounded in science and powered by the support of our partners and donors, our vision is bold but achievable.

We are working toward a future where all Oregonians benefit equally from clean air and water, our state helps lead the way on climate solutions, and our most critical lands and waters are connected, protected, and managed to sustain nature in the face of climate change.

Oregonians are already experiencing the effects of climate change today, from urban heat to ocean acidification to increasing catastrophic wildfire. We are dangerously close to a point of no return, and we must act now to protect the natural resources on which we all rely.

Despite these challenges, our vision for the future is a hopeful one. We believe in the unifying force of nature.

Tangible solutions exist—we only need to be bold enough to enact them. From Sycan Marsh to the neighborhoods of the Portland metro region, from the sparkling coast to the rolling sagebrush steppe, Oregonians find connection, respite, and common ground in nature. It's time to build on that common ground to shape a future in which nature and people thrive together.

This ambitious plan describes how we can scale up our work, leverage our history of success, and help people and nature thrive. It is also an invitation to join us, with fresh energy and resolve, on the path ahead. Together, we can show that when we protect nature, nature protects us.

Nature unites us.

ON THE COVER A mother and her two young children hike through a meadow. Mt. Hood is in the background. © Danny Warren/iStock; THIS PAGE Jim Desmond © Tim Jewett OPPOSITE PAGE Forest overlook © Makenzie Cooper/Unsplash



Jim Desmond
Oregon State Director



The Nature
Conservancy
in Oregon

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OUR ESSENTIAL PILLARS

**Equity in Science and
Conservation**

**Indigenous Peoples
and Lands**

**Policy and
Advocacy**

CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

CLIMATE CHANGE

**Addressing
Climate Change**



Natural Climate Solutions
Climate Policy
Offshore Energy Siting

**Adapting to
Climate Change**



Urban Tree Canopy
Sustainable Water

HEALTHY LANDS, OCEANS AND WATERS

**Terrestrial
Health**



Innovative Restoration
Resilient Rangelands
Dry Forests and Fire

**Aquatic and
Ocean Health**



Healthy Estuaries
Sustainable Fisheries



THIS PAGE Volunteer naturalists Lois and Dale Derouin enjoy the view at Cascade Head Preserve. © Molly Dougherty/TNC

OPPOSITE PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Plants regrowing just two months after the Bootleg Fire in an area previously treated with prescribed fire. © Mitch Maxson/TNC; Scientists gather at Sycan Marsh Preserve following the Bootleg Fire. © Astrid Sanna; Impacts of the Bootleg Fire at Sycan Marsh Preserve varied widely between those areas previously treated with prescribed fire (left of road) and those without treatment (right of road). © Brady Holden; TNC Oregon Fire Program Director Katie Sauerbrey © Brady Holden

LEVERAGING OUR LANDS

Since 1961, Oregonians have helped The Nature Conservancy protect thousands of acres of special places, from Cascade Head to Zumwalt Prairie. The lessons we've learned through decades of carefully stewarding our preserves, as well as the traditional ecological knowledge of our Indigenous partners, have informed our vision for improving our relationships to Oregon's diverse landscapes at scale. Our preserves also provide invaluable ground to pilot new approaches, observe and adapt to ecosystem changes, and welcome Oregonians to find inspiration and connection to nature.

From Oregon to Zambia

This past year, Fire Program Director Katie Sauerbrey traveled to Zambia to work at Kafue National Park. Fire practitioners from the United States have been traveling to Zambia for more than 10 years to provide training, equipment, and technical support to TNC Zambia staff and their partners in one of the largest national parks in the world. Katie helped take stock of the current state of fire management in the national park and surrounding game management areas and worked with partners to begin to chart a path for the future of fire management in the region.

Explore and Learn More

After a two-year hiatus, the volunteer naturalist team is back on duty! Naturalists greet and share their knowledge with visitors on weekends between April and October at Cascade Head, Camassia Natural Area and Tom McCall Preserve. This year, 28 volunteer naturalists helped enhance visitor experiences at these special places on more than 50 days.

The Science of Forest Restoration at Sycan Marsh Preserve

Last summer, the Bootleg Fire burned across more than 413,000 acres of southern Oregon, making it the third largest wildfire in Oregon history. Nearly 15,000 of those acres were on The Nature Conservancy's Sycan Marsh Preserve. Thanks to more than 15 years of proactive dry forest restoration on and adjacent to the preserve, this "living laboratory" provided the stage for a powerful experiment testing the effectiveness of dry forest restoration treatments in the face of extreme wildfire.

In mid-July, 20 people gathered for a three-day workshop at the preserve to learn from the results of the fire and share scientific knowledge to support management of resilient dry forests in a changing climate. The group, including early career to senior scientists representing TNC, academia, state and federal agencies, and The Klamath Tribes, came together to continue building our research partnership and to advance ongoing science aimed at understanding the effectiveness of dry forest restoration efforts in the wake of this extreme wildfire.



LEARN MORE

To learn more about Sycan Marsh and the Bootleg Fire, watch the short film "Through The Fire" at [nature.org/bootlegfire](https://www.nature.org/bootlegfire).



OUR ESSENTIAL PILLARS

As we work to address the planet's greatest needs, we recognize that the well-being of nature and people cannot be separated, and how we work is as important as what we achieve. We are committed to examining all dimensions of our work through the lenses of three cross-cutting pillars:

EQUITY IN SCIENCE AND CONSERVATION

We aspire to be intentional and thoughtful about benefits and burdens, historic injustices, and unintended consequences to ensure that conservation actions are enhancing health and well-being and not causing harm. We understand that conservation outcomes will be more durable if they are equitable.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LANDS

Our interactions with Tribes and Indigenous communities must honor their unique history and relationship with the land. We also seek to learn and grow with traditional ecological knowledge, pairing it with Western science when invited and when appropriate, to strengthen conservation.

POLICY AND ADVOCACY

We are enhancing our ability to use policy and advocacy effectively to advance conservation outcomes.

We bring a distinct voice to policy discussions, based on our on-the-ground expertise, demonstration projects, and science. We want to use that voice to maximize our impact for the collective good of people and nature in Oregon.





Spending in a Way That Counts

One way the Oregon Chapter is working to make our practices more equitable is do more business with diverse vendors. Dedicated volunteer Craig Graugnard has helped research new businesses to meet our needs, along with a variety of other projects. With Craig's help, nearly half of our spending on vendors was with businesses owned by women and BIPOC owners.

Conservation Policy in Action

Passage of the Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, in combination with comprehensive wildfire legislation enacted by the Oregon legislature in 2021, will drive important policy shifts that accelerate ecological forest restoration and wildfire risk reduction. TNC is engaged at local, state, and national levels to guide the rollout of forest restoration policy and funding, including providing science and technical input in the U.S. Forest Service's 10-year Confronting the Wildfire Crisis Strategy, which will invest \$3.4 billion in wildfire resilience funds to the western United States.

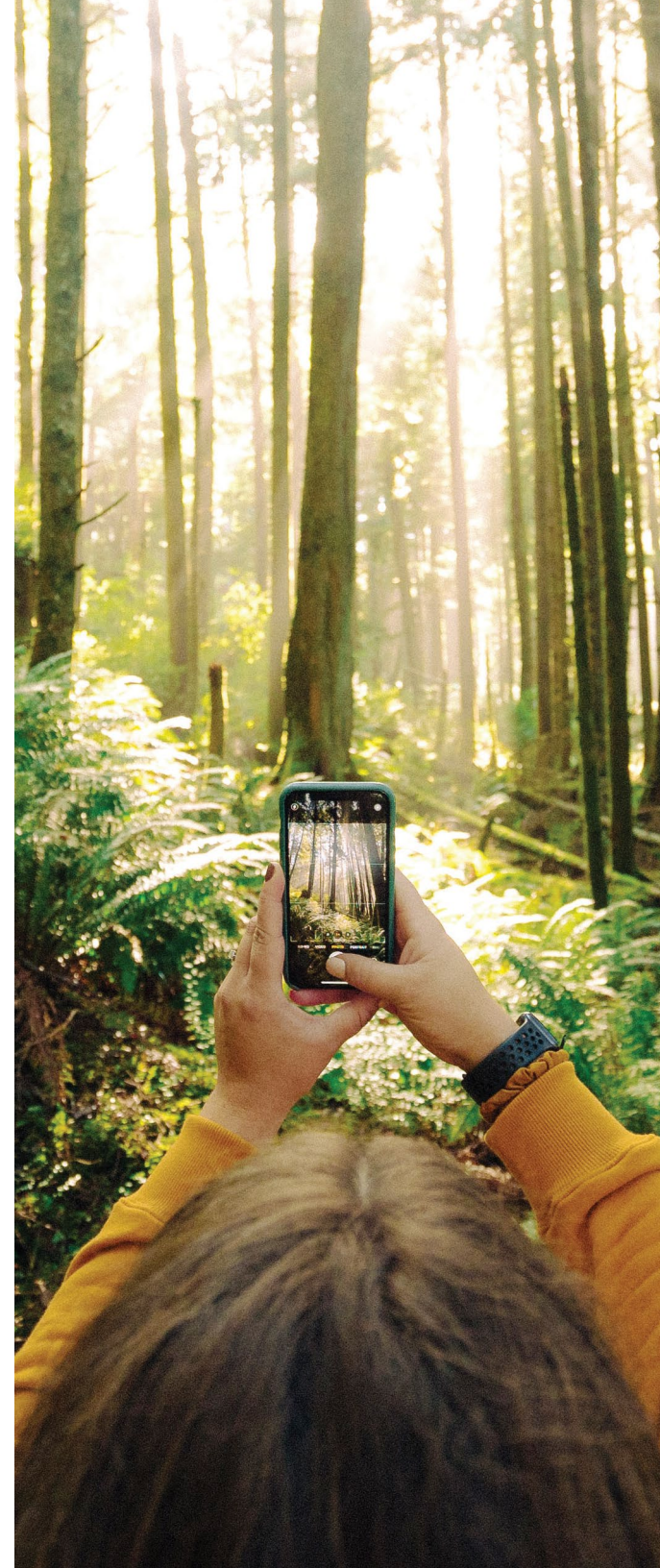
TNC and The Klamath Tribes

Collaboration is central to successful conservation. Among so many other lessons, the devastating impacts of the Bootleg Fire provided yet another powerful reminder of the importance of true partnership and teamwork.

The impacts of Oregon's Bootleg Fire on TNC's Sycan Marsh Preserve and large swathes of the historical Klamath Reservation were devastating in unrestored areas of the forest: mile upon mile of blackened forest without a living tree in sight. But the restored forest areas, such as the Coyote Project on and adjacent to the Preserve or the Black Hills Project north of Beatty, which were treated with ecological thinning and prescribed fire, withstood the most severe impacts of this extreme wildfire. Here, a thriving green forest remains, a living reminder of the power of restoration and our role to help forests weather a rapidly changing world.

Tribal Council and other members of The Klamath Tribes, upon seeing the staggering contrast between the restored and unrestored forest areas, renewed their commitment to applying more restoration on tribal land and more broadly across their historical reservation to protect its people and uphold Tribal culture.

Even after years of partnership, the landscape-altering event of the Bootleg Fire brought our communities even closer together, and we now work together to seek out shared solutions to forest resilience in the Klamath Basin. We are growing the capacity and a shared vision for forest restoration together.



CLIMATE CHANGE

The days of debate around climate change are long gone. Here in the Pacific Northwest and around the world, we are already experiencing its impacts. Longer, hotter and drier summers. Larger, more extreme weather events. Dangerous urban heat effects. Increasing risks to water security.

We recognize the urgent need for action. What we do between now and 2030 will determine whether warming can be slowed enough to avoid the worst of climate change's impacts. We must drastically cut emissions and remove carbon pollution from the atmosphere. Fortunately, nature holds many answers. By investing in nature to protect and restore key habitats and carefully managing farmland and forests, we can store vast amounts of carbon.

Climate science drives our conservation priorities. In Oregon, the coming years will see more opportunity for TNC to engage with climate policy design and implementation, advance natural climate solutions, improve community health through urban canopy projects, and protect Oregon's sustainable water future.

Together, we can limit some of the future warming and the many dangers it poses—but only if we act now. This is our moment.



Inflation Reduction Act | In August, the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, the most ambitious piece of climate legislation to ever pass the U.S. Congress, was signed into law. Independent estimates project that the legislation will put the United States on track to cut greenhouse gas emissions by roughly 40%, bringing the nation significantly closer to our commitment of 50% emissions reductions by 2030.

The bill includes about \$369 billion in clean energy and climate investments over the next 10 years. It also includes an unprecedented \$25-billion investment in a range of agricultural and forest-focused natural climate solutions, recognizing the important role that nature can play in addressing climate change.

Economic research commissioned by TNC shows that in Oregon, the climate and energy provisions in the bill are expected to drive over \$5.7 billion of investment into our state, and every year for 10 years Oregon will see 8,200 jobs, \$93 million in local, state, and federal tax revenue and \$757 million in value added to the state economy.



Addressing Climate Change

Natural Climate Solutions

Protection, restoration, and improved land management of natural and working lands—or natural climate solutions—can store more carbon while providing wildlife habitat and community benefits. A study produced by The Nature Conservancy in collaboration with Portland State University found that if statewide emissions targets are met, natural climate solutions could offer as much as 67% of the additional mitigation needed to reach net zero emissions in Oregon. We're working to champion natural climate solutions by providing science, supporting demonstration projects, and advocating for new policies. We aim to achieve a 50% increase in natural climate solutions projects on public and private land by 2025.



Climate Policy

Science tells us that the most urgent global threat we face today is climate change, and we're already experiencing a range of its consequences right here in the Pacific Northwest, including urban heat, ocean acidification, and more frequent and severe wildfire. To ensure that Oregon is a leader in addressing the challenges of climate change, we're working with partners to advance policies that reduce emissions and increase carbon storage. By providing science and leveraging our relationships, we can help shape renewable energy development policies that avoid negative impacts to habitats and communities. We are also working to support the role of Indigenous peoples and Tribal governments in climate decisions. Together we can help meet our state goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2035.

Offshore Energy Siting

Oregon's highly valuable offshore energy resources are creating growing pressure to site new developments, and current federal policy allows developers to claim sites without proactive consideration of important habitats. The state and federal government have agreed to begin a planning process to identify places where energy development could be sited with the least negative impacts, and we are supporting this process with science and technical assistance. We're working to ensure that, by 2030, offshore renewable energy developments are sited to protect the most important habitats.

Planting trees along rivers and streams is one of the most promising natural climate solutions in Oregon and can also improve habitat for fish and other animals. For example, our restoration work at the Willamette Confluence included planting 100,000 trees and 200,000 shrubs, which we estimate could sequester upward of 4,600 metric tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere each year, or the equivalent of the annual emissions of 1,000 passenger vehicles.



THIS PAGE FROM LEFT Hiking at Cascade Head Preserve © Jennifer Emerling; Frost on blackberry leaves © Robin Thompson/TNC Photo Contest 2019; Exploring an old-growth forest @ Nikolaj Lasbo/TNC; Caspian tern © Duke Coonrad/TNC Photo Contest

Adapting to Climate Change

Urban Tree Canopy

The Portland metro area is experiencing extremely hot summer days more frequently, which leads to poor air quality and increased health risks. Due to a history of racial injustice in Portland, heat islands are disproportionately concentrated in overlooked and underinvested neighborhoods that have experienced persistent environmental inequity. To improve the equitable distribution of trees and the many benefits they bring, a group of local partners—The Blueprint Foundation, Urban Greenspaces Institute, Portland State University, and The Nature Conservancy—have launched an initiative called Connecting Canopies. We’re working to bring together neighborhoods, government, partners, and businesses to co-create an urban tree stewardship model that is community-led and data driven. Together we’re centering BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) communities to help enhance and expand the urban tree canopy where it is most needed. Our goal is for the Portland metro region to be on a trajectory to achieve and maintain at least a 40% cover of healthy tree canopy by 2030.

THIS PAGE Water sample © Devan King/TNC; OPPOSITE PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Volunteers work at Mt. Tabor Park, overlooking Southeast Portland. © Brady Holden; Volunteers at Mt. Tabor Park © Tim Jewett; Saint Johns Bridge in Portland © Cynthia Liang/Shutterstock

Sustainable Water

Oregon is running out of usable water—a problem deepened by overallocation, aging infrastructure, growing demand, and the increasing duration and frequency of drought due to climate change. Oregon’s water management is hindered by information gaps, limited management tools, and outdated policies. We’re working to improve Oregon’s water security by filling critical information gaps, engaging with community-based planning processes to use new water management tools, and collaborating with partners to develop water-smart policies and practices. By 2040, we aim to help secure sustainable drinking water for the 70% of Oregonians who rely on groundwater for drinking.



Conservation Policy in Action | The Nature Conservancy helped lead the passage of a Conservation Drought Resilience Package in the 2022 legislative session, providing \$25M in funding for projects focused on improving data, habitat connectivity, and streamflow protection and restoration around the state. This work is in addition to the \$350M in water funding awarded in the 2021 session. TNC was instrumental in making Oregon the first state to have federal incentives for groundwater-dependent ecosystems and is engaged in ongoing work to advance sustainable management of the state’s water resources.



HEALTHY LANDS, OCEANS, WATERS

For more than 60 years, The Nature Conservancy has been a trusted leader in protecting the lands and waters upon which all life depends. From our very first Oregon preserve, the 26-acre Camassia Natural Area in West Linn, to our most recent collaborative conservation win—Trout Creek Ranch that protects more than 500,000 acres near the Pueblo and Trout Creek Mountains in southeastern Oregon—we recognize the power of place and the importance of preserving biodiversity. Over the years, the scale of our work has grown, but our commitment to science and on-the-ground conservation work remains central to our mission.

We believe in a future where people and nature thrive together, and that means striking a balance to provide for and sustain our communities while also protecting the nature that makes it all possible. Clean air and water, healthy habitats and working landscapes—what's good for nature is good for Oregonians.



Trout Creek Ranch | The Nature Conservancy recently supported Oregon Desert Land Trust in acquiring Trout Creek Ranch, a 16,645-acre property in southeast Oregon that includes livestock grazing permits on nearly 500,000 acres of private land. Together, we're working to establish one of the largest conservation areas in Oregon. Home to California bighorn sheep, pygmy rabbit, greater sage-grouse, pronghorn antelope, and Lahontan cutthroat trout, Trout Creek Ranch covers a wide range of elevations and provide climate-resilient connected habitat between more than one million acres, including Steens Mountain Wilderness and the Hart Mountain and Sheldon National Wildlife Refuges. These lands are part of the rich heritage of the Northern Paiute people, support a local ranching community, and are increasingly valued by the public for recreation—including access to the Oregon Desert Trail. Looking forward, we'll be working together to establish regional conservation goals, test breakthrough habitat restoration techniques, and develop new, collaborative land management strategies that benefit both wildlife and people.

THIS PAGE Trout Creek Ranch © Mark Darnell;
OPPOSITE PAGE Lupines in bloom at Zumwalt
Prairie Preserve © Carla Axtman



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Susan Brown

Our volunteers share their time and talents with us in a wide variety of ways, including helping care for our preserves across the state. In the Willamette Valley, Susan Brown recently celebrated a remarkable 25 years as a dedicated volunteer steward at Cogswell-Foster Preserve. Susan has diligently provided field reports on plants, wildlife, and the general condition of the site for over two decades while also serving as an important and valued ambassador for TNC by building trust with neighboring landowners. Susan worked to maintain site access, marked property boundaries, and has been instrumental in organizing volunteer events. "Cogswell-Foster holds a special place in my heart after spending numerous hours in the solitude of its borders over so many years," she says. "I have always honored to play a role in preserving even a small portion of our native Willamette Valley of the past."

Terrestrial Health

Innovative Restoration

The vast, open spaces of the high desert stretch across more than a dozen states, creating a “sagebrush sea” from the Dakotas to California. This rugged, iconic landscape is being lost at an alarming rate: it has already shrunk by half and continues to decline at over one million acres each year. Increasing wildfire clears a path for invasive annual grasses like cheatgrass, whose fast-germinating seeds crowd out the native species needed to sustain both wildlife and cattle. Experiments with new seeding techniques in Oregon, intended to significantly improve the outcome of restoration efforts, have grown to a collaboration with colleagues across six states and an industry partnership to produce new seed types for land managers. We’re working to apply innovative restoration seed techniques to 100,000 acres of western rangelands by 2030.



Resilient Rangelands

In the face of invasive annual grasses, more frequent drought, and increasingly severe wildfire, The Nature Conservancy is working to advance sustainable grazing and land management practices that promote resilience to climate change in Oregon’s rangelands and communities. We’re partnering with the Bureau of Land Management to deliver tools in a community of practice that unites public land managers across disciplines and geographies. We’re also working to foster trust, cooperation, and the sharing of best practices among private landowners in collaborative working groups. Our preserves will continue to be important places to demonstrate new techniques, and where we can work with our neighbors to restore habitat and reduce wildfire risk at a larger scale. By 2030, we’re working to help improve or maintain one million acres of public and private sage-steppe and grassland with sustainable practices.

Dry Forests and Fire

Oregon’s dry forests evolved with smaller fires burning frequently across the landscape. These low-intensity events create the disturbances that many plants and animals need to thrive and leave an open patchwork of large, older, fire-adapted trees. More than a century of fire exclusion has left one third of Oregon’s dry forests—over six million acres—in dire need of restoration. Now, unhealthy forest conditions and a changing climate have led to unprecedented wildfires and smoke that threaten our forests, communities, and public health. We’re working to catalyze a fundamental shift in forest restoration and create a shared understanding of the need to use beneficial fire in the right places at the right times. By bringing together the many voices and wide expertise needed, we aim to support ecological restoration on an additional 750,000 acres by 2025.

THIS PAGE Pronghorn © Greg Burke; OPPOSITE PAGE FROM LEFT Different seed pellets used to restore native bunch grasses in the sagebrush steppe © Brady Holden; Monitoring restoration efforts at Juniper Hills Preserve @ Brady Holden



Bringing Land Managers Together | An important part of our work to improve rangeland health is working closely with public land managers across the sagebrush steppe to advance evidence-based decision-making. In partnership with the Bureau of Land Management, we facilitate a Community of Practice, a cross-district forum for specialists to compare notes on the Land Health Assessment and Evaluation process, which is a federal framework for assessing landscape conditions and identifying necessary management actions. During monthly virtual meetings, participants collaboratively explore new approaches and tools to make the Land Health process more robust, efficient, and transparent. Volunteer Kathy Hoozeboom-Pot plays an essential role as co-producer for these complex virtual meetings. TNC's Sagebrush Steppe Conservation Specialist Anya Tyson says, "Kathy's steady presence is critical to the success of our highly interactive virtual meetings—she's simultaneously attentive to the needs of individual participants and the many tech details, and she never fails to capably capture the key takeaways of each meeting."

Aquatic and Ocean Health



Healthy Estuaries

Tidal wetlands and estuaries—where rivers and oceans meet—are some of the most ecologically rich and complex areas on earth. Although estuaries provide critical habitat for juvenile fish and help protect communities from storm surges and flooding, today only 17% of Oregon’s tidal wetlands remain in healthy condition. We are working to protect and restore estuaries with acquisition and restoration projects and by improving the connectivity of estuaries on working lands. Updating infrastructure like tide gates can improve fish access in the winter while giving farmers and ranchers more control over their lands during the growing season. We aim to protect and restore 1,350 acres of tidal wetlands by 2025.

Sustainable Fisheries

The West Coast’s fisheries are already experiencing the effects of climate change, including ocean acidification and warming waters, which threaten iconic species like Dungeness crab as well as the livelihood of our coastal communities. More adaptive fisheries are better prepared to withstand these impacts and can help protect marine species and critical habitats. We’re partnering with fishery managers to evaluate the best available science and collaboratively plan for different climate change scenarios. We’re also working to incorporate climate change into state fishery management plans and exploring ways we can help implement emerging ideas like improving gear to reduce fishery carbon footprints, updating data collection, and strengthening supply chains. We aim to ensure there are no new overfished species due to climate change impacts by 2025.

THIS PAGE Wetland restoration at Winter Lake near Coquille. © Jack Fisher; Loons © Bruce Moffat/TNC Photo Contest; OPPOSITE PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Monitoring at Winter Lake near Coquille. © Jack Fisher; Replacing tide gates and restoring wetland habitat at Winter Lake allows juvenile salmon and other species opportunity to grow larger and healthier. © Brady Holden; Measuring juvenile salmon © Chris Crisman





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Watching in awe of a rare thunderstorm in Oregon © Sarah Alvarez/TNC Photo Contest 2019

We all benefit when we invest in nature—and TNC is using cutting-edge science, partnership, and practical solutions to conserve the natural resources on which we all depend.

Interested in supporting conservation in Oregon? Contact Jan Kurtz at jan.kurtz@TNC.ORG

