nevada update

SPRING 2024

YOUR NEVADA NEWS

Scaling Up to Reach Our Ambitious 2030 Goals

IN THIS ISSUE:

Ash Meadows 40th Anniversary Celebration

Resilient Waters Updates

Sediment Core Research at the Atwood Preserve

Meet Our Western Dry Forests and Fire Program Director

SEE MORE OF THE GOOD YOU MAKE POSSIBLE: **NATURE.ORG/NEVADA**

The Nature Conservancy

Mauricia M.M. Baca
NEVADA STATE DIRECTOR

The Nature Conservancy
Nevada

Nevada Update is the biannual newsletter for friends of The Nature Conservancy in Nevada. If you have questions or feedback, please contact Sara Burleson at sara.burleson@tnc.org.

VISIT nature.org/nevada

/naturenevada
nature_nevada
nature_nevada
The Nature Conservancy in Nevada

ON THE COVER South Ruby Range © Chip Carroon/TNC; **THIS PAGE** Mauricia M.M. Baca © The Nature Conservancy; Nevada lupine © Chip Carroon/TNC.

DEAR FRIENDS,

I know sometimes when we think of the future of our planet, it's easy to imagine the worst, that our environmental problems will keep multiplying. But what if instead of focusing on the problems alone, we focused on solutions and what we need to do to create a vibrant future where we and our planet thrive?

Imagine it's 2030, the climate is finally stabilizing, and our emissions have dropped. Nature is returning to health and biodiversity is making a comeback.

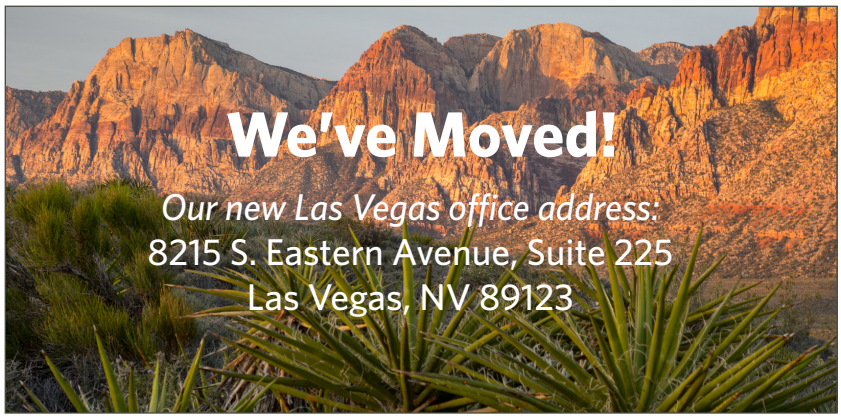
This is the vision behind TNC's ambitious 2030 goals to tackle the interconnected climate and biodiversity crises. These aren't pipe dreams—they are possible, and we have the science, knowledge and tools to make them happen. They are big and bold, but we know we can achieve them if we work together to overcome the barriers to progress. Our approach reflects decades of learning and refining, and the special role TNC can play side-by-side with partners, communities and decision-makers across the globe.

Our goals:

- Reduce or store 3 gigatons of carbon emissions yearly (the equivalent of taking 650 million cars off the road every year)
- Benefit 100 million people who are at risk of climate-related emergencies
- Conserve 9.9 billion acres of ocean area (10 percent of the world's oceans)
- Conserve 1.6 billion acres of land (an area twice the size of India)
- Conserve more than 620,000 miles of rivers
- Support 45 million local stewards who are lighting the way

When I imagine a flourishing Nevada, here's what I see: We're meeting our renewable energy goals and Nevada's economy is thriving, while we've also saved our most special places from development. The Sagebrush Sea is restored and growing, reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire and creating more resilient communities. We're stewarding our forests and protecting drinking water and habitats. We are using water sustainably so that it not only meets our needs but meets those of future generations of people, plants and wildlife. More of our iconic species and breathtaking landscapes are protected than ever.

Our work here in Nevada, with our focus on climate action and resilient lands, waters and people, is directly contributing to these goals. We're scaling the work we do here at home so it benefits us here and everywhere. Thank you for all of your support—let's build a brighter future together.



The Nature Conservancy
Nevada

SCIENCE & NATURE SPEAKER SERIES

Join us for our spring Science & Nature Speaker Series at River Fork Ranch Preserve! Experts from The Nature Conservancy in Nevada and partner organizations will share their expertise on a variety of topics. We hope to see you there!

The fourth Thursday of every month

6-7 p.m.

$10 suggested donation

381 Genoa Lane, Minden, NV 89423

Questions? Please contact Lori Leonard:

lori.leonard@tnc.org

OUR SPEAKERS

MAY 23

Louis Provencher, PhD

Director of Science, The Nature Conservancy

Landscape Conservation Forecasting Applications in the U.S. and Australia

JUNE 27

Laurel Saito, PhD

Water Strategy Director, The Nature Conservancy

Water in the Determining Decade: Groundwater-Dependent Ecosystems in Nevada

JULY 25

Chris Sega

Stewardship Manager, The Nature Conservancy

Lahontan Cutthroat Trout and Conservation at TNC's Independence Lake Preserve

AUGUST 22

Ned Bohman

Biologist, Great Basin Bird Observatory

Pinyon Jays in Nevada

SEPTEMBER 26

Mark Zimring

Large Scale Fisheries Director, The Nature Conservancy

Can Markets Really Drive Conservation?

OCTOBER 24

Thomas Albright, PhD

Nevada State Climatologist, Associate Professor, UNR College of Science

Nevada Springs Are...All About the Weather!

Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge © Chip Carnpon/TNC

Celebrating 40 years of

Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge

"There is a magic about Ash Meadows," says Dave Livermore, founding state director for The Nature Conservancy in Nevada, who was instrumental in TNC's purchase of the property in 1984. "It really captured my soul: the sense of quiet, the expanses, and the miracle of the water itself."

Just 90 miles from Las Vegas, Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge is one of the most biodiverse places in North America. There are 26 endemic species that live here and nowhere else in the world, including the Ash Meadows sunray, which blooms in clusters of vibrant yellow along the refuge's boardwalk, and the bright blue pupfish, which swim playfully in its springs. For 40 years, people have found quiet here among oases of sapphire springs in the desert.

On April 20, TNC and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) held a 40th anniversary celebration for Ash Meadows at the refuge. Supporters flocked to this remarkable desert oasis near Death Valley National Park to celebrate the life that somehow thrives here. It was also a celebration of the people who have helped protect Ash Meadows throughout its history, including Livermore and a small team of conservationists who fought unlikely odds to help save the refuge.

"They recognized the immense value of Ash Meadows," Kaylee Allen, senior advisor for resources in the Pacific Southwest Region of the USFWS, said at the celebration. "It's thanks to their vision, and that of many other partners, that we're here today."

Ash Meadows almost had a different future. If a few visionaries hadn't fought to save it, instead of visiting the springs and pupfish today, we might instead be looking at a 20,000-home subdivision.

"It kind of just rocks you when you think about that," Mauricia Baca, TNC Nevada's state director, said to the crowd. "I am filled with gratitude. Instead of the eradication of 26 species, of the sapphire pools, of the feisty pupfish, we are actually here to celebrate that this place was preserved for generations, for communities, for our children's children."

A "triumph of science"

The Indigenous peoples of Ash Meadows have deep connections to the area. Southern Paiute (Nuwuvi) and Timbisha Shoshone (Newe) peoples have been stewarding this land since time immemorial. The Tribes continue to work in partnership with the USFWS, incorporating Tribal ecological knowledge to manage the landscape.

TNC's first experience at Ash Meadows was protecting 160 acres at Big Spring in 1979 in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Around the same time, the rare Devil's Hole pupfish was threatened by nearby groundwater pumping. Scientists, including Phil Pister of the California Department of Fish and Game and Dr. James Deacon of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, rallied to defend the pupfish. They sent petitions and filed a series of lawsuits that went all the way to the Supreme Court. The Court handed down the landmark Cappaert vs. The United States ruling in 1976, which established a minimum allowable water level for Devil's Hole.

In 1978, the 12,613-acre site at Ash Meadows was purchased by a developer with plans for a major subdivision. Pister and Deacon again teamed up with local environmental groups to save it, joined by Dr. Don Sada of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Sada's work resulted in a federal listing of the Amargosa pupfish, the Big Springs pupfish and several native plant species as endangered species. But development activities went forward, new roads destroyed rare plant habitat and springs were diverted. Friends of Ash Meadows petitioned The Nature Conservancy to help.

The prospect of acquiring this place, the "holy grail" of biodiversity, seemed daunting, Livermore says. "There was a little bit of a David and Goliath feeling about it," he explains. "How in the world would a small, limited staff have a chance against such odds?"

The pressure was on Livermore, who then served as TNC's Great Basin field representative, assisted by Steve McCormick, director of protection for TNC in California and later TNC's president and CEO. They needed to persuade the landowner to sell at a reasonable price and to find the funds to pay for the purchase.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP *Members of the team who helped to save Ash Meadows reminisce about how it all came together on a panel at the Ash Meadows 40th Anniversary Celebration on the refuge on April 20, 2024. From left: Gary Scoppettone, Dave Livermore, Steve McCormick, Don Sada and Susan Cochran Levitsky; Supporters of Ash Meadows gather to celebrate the refuge; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Project Leader Kevin DesRoberts and TNC Nevada State Director Mauricia Baca speak. © Pahrump Photography*

Negotiations lasted more than a year. Ultimately, TNC bought the property for $5.5 million together with a $1 million low interest loan extended to the developer. Nevada Sen. Paul Laxalt helped secure $5 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Richard King Mellon Foundation provided the $1 million loan and TNC raised the $500,000 balance needed from supporters around the country including the Goodhill Foundation. The property was then transferred to the USFWS and became a national wildlife refuge. Against unlikely odds, Ash Meadows was saved.

But the work wasn't over. The USFWS had to restore the refuge to bring its ecosystems back to life after years of development and to manage it, a monumental task they have accomplished with partners over the past four decades.

"Before it came to us, there were those that put scars on this land," said Cynthia Martinez, Chief of Refuges at USFWS. "They re-channelized the springs. They put up ponds with nonnative species in them that were detrimental to our native fishes here. We have worked to put this system back together, to put it back to a naturally functioning ecosystem. We didn't do it alone —we've done it with many partners throughout our history. There have always been people coming together to protect this amazing place."

A moment to celebrate and look forward

The fight for Ash Meadows' survival is far from over. The refuge and surrounding natural areas continue to be threatened by development, groundwater diversions for agriculture, invasive species, poorly sited renewable energy and other pressures.

One of these pressures is lithium mining, which could impact the water in Ash Meadows' springs and the endangered species that live there, like the Ash Meadows Amargosa pupfish and the Ash Meadows speckled dace. Last summer, after the BLM approved exploratory drilling for lithium, TNC staff scrambled to commission and complete a study to better understand the possible impacts of exploratory boreholes near Ash Meadows. In a rare instance, we expressed our opposition to the proposed exploration. Our study was one of the things that led the BLM to rescind its approval pending a National Environmental Policy Act review.

We have also commissioned a hydrogeologic review which showed that activities outside the refuge could significantly impact the groundwater flows that feed its springs. We are working together with partners and the community to ensure that Ash Meadows remains protected.

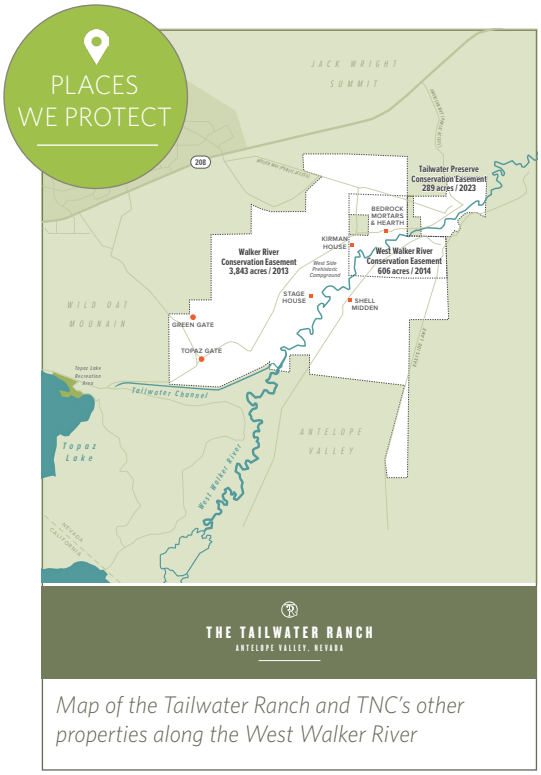
"So many of us care about Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. This is a place that we have to be vigilant about," Baca said. "It is critical that we consider this water as a shared gift for all, and that we speak for the plants and animals that cannot speak for themselves. I hope that people and nature continue to thrive together in this special place."

"Nature unites us," Livermore says. "People from a lot of different backgrounds and points of view come together in a wonderful way to protect natural resources. I think this is what Ash Meadows teaches us."

LEARN MORE about Ash Meadows at *tinyurl.com/ashmeadows40.*

New Conservation Easement on the West Walker River

We received a new 285-acre conservation easement in Douglas County, Nevada thanks to a generous donation from the owner, CCT Founders, LLC. The property is located along the West Walker River and includes approximately 6,000 feet of river corridor as well as riparian and sagebrush habitat. TNC's acquisition of this easement will prevent inappropriate floodplain development and protect habitat for many wildlife species, including the greater sage-grouse and Lahontan cutthroat trout.



Map of the Tailwater Ranch and TNC's other properties along the West Walker River

Unsustainable development and large wildfires are the biggest threats to this reach of the West Walker River system. Nevada is one of the fastest growing states in the country, and Douglas County is an increasingly popular destination for home buyers due to its rural setting and proximity to the Reno-Tahoe area. The region is also already experiencing the loss of important winter and migratory sage-grouse habitat from wildfires fueled by non-native cheatgrass. The acquisition of this easement will prevent the development of this area, protect its important floodplain function, and protect critical wildlife habitat from fragmentation. This is the third easement the landowners have donated to TNC, and it will increase our ability to protect ecosystems in this area.

"Adding this proposed conservation easement to two other easements TNC already owns along the West Walker River will increase the acreage and connectivity of important habitat," says Heather Giger, strategy director for land and stewardship at TNC in Nevada. "Sound management of the property and habitat improvement projects will also increase through good working relationships with the landowner and agency partners with similar organizational missions to protect and improve river health and conserve wildlife habitat. Acquiring this easement adds to our previous properties in the Walker system and continues our thoughtful engagement in this area."

This project also supports TNC's ambitious global 2030 goals to save healthy lands for a healthier planet, conserve the world's freshwater and tackle carbon emissions by:

- Permanently protecting nearly 300 acres of riparian and sagebrush steppe habitat through a conservation easement that joins a larger protected network of 4,500 acres.
- Conserving 1.1 river miles of the Walker River from unsustainable floodplain development, which helps to preserve water quality, endangered fish species habitat and compatible recreational uses. In total, nearly 5.5 miles of the West Walker River will be protected through this conservation easement and two adjacent easements.
- Protecting naturally resilient floodplains that buffer core riverine and riparian habitats from increased degradation caused by climate change.

Developing an elevationally distributed array of conserved areas along the West Walker River has also increased connectivity between the Sierra Nevada and Great Basin ecoregions and should help accommodate the expected shift of species and ecosystems in response to climate change.

TNC Around the State

TNC at Cowboy Poetry in Elko

We had a great time at The Western Folklife Center's annual National Cowboy Poetry Gathering last winter and loved connecting with you. Liz Munn, our Sagebrush Ecosystems Project Director, spoke on an inspiring panel about regenerative agriculture. © *Kristen McInnis/TNC*

Volunteer Tree Planting

In March, volunteers from MGM planted more than 1,000 trees along the Amargosa River. The trees are already starting to leaf out! Thank you, volunteers! *Trees along the Amargosa © Matt Rader/TNC; MGM Volunteers © MGM Resorts International*

Dr. Katharine Hayhoe at Lake Tahoe

TNC Nevada Trustee Kirk Hardie and his wife, Lindsay Hardie, hosted a dinner for Dr. Katharine Hayhoe, TNC's Chief Scientist, at their home in Incline Village in late January. Dr. Hayhoe, who was in Lake Tahoe for the annual Operation Sierra Storm Meteorologists' Conference, participated in a whirlwind tour of the Lake Tahoe region, including public speaking engagements at the Tahoe Environmental Resource Center and the South Lake Tahoe Public Library. About a dozen TNC supporters had the opportunity to gather around the Hardies' fireplace with Dr. Hayhoe to discuss climate communications and The Nature Conservancy's 2030 goals. Thank you to Kirk and Lindsay for a special evening!

THIS PAGE *Ruby Valley © Chip Carroon/TNC; Memory Ranches © Chip Carroon/TNC;* **OPPOSITE PAGE** *New conservation easement on the West Walker River © Heather Giger/TNC*

New Research from our Sustainable Waters Strategy

GDE STRATEGIES REPORT

Building on the Nevada Indicators of Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems database and stressor and threat report, we recently completed a report on strategies for managing and sustaining groundwater-dependent ecosystems (GDEs). The report lists 10 strategies that collectively are likely to address almost all of the stressors and threats and improve the resiliency of GDEs over the long term. Learn more about the strategies here.

Our 10 Strategies
SCIENCE/MONITORING
Strategy 1: Increase understanding of co-benefits of GDEs, including carbon dynamics
Strategy 2: Increase monitoring and reporting over space and time
POLICY
Strategy 3: Enact policies to reduce current excessive groundwater withdrawals and overappropriation
Strategy 4: Enact policies to prevent future groundwater withdrawals that would negatively affect GDEs
Strategy 5: Include requirements for maintaining or protecting GDEs in regulations, codes and laws for land and water management and economic development
MANAGEMENT
Strategy 6: Consider GDEs in permitting, guidance and large-scale planning documents to identify and prioritize areas for protection and management of GDEs
Strategy 7: Increase the pace and scale of restoration of GDEs in time and space
Strategy 8: Incorporate collaboration to manage and sustain GDEs
EDUCATION/OUTREACH
Strategy 9: Increase awareness of the value of GDEs and the need to protect and reduce impacts to them
Strategy 10: Increase communication about GDEs

AGRIVOLTAICS FEASIBILITY STUDY

With proper planning and some additional infrastructure, the best approach could be implementing agrivoltaics and retiring water rights simultaneously in Diamond Valley, according to a new report we published in partnership with Eureka Conservation District and Eureka County. Agrivoltaics is the term for agriculture located adjacent to or underneath solar panels. In the study, "Resolving Groundwater Overuse: Feasibility of Agrivoltaics Coupled with Groundwater Rights Retirement," we explored the viability and socioeconomic benefits and tradeoffs of retiring groundwater rights while at the same time implementing agrivoltaics.

READ the reports at ***groundwaterresourcehub.org/where-we-work/nevada***.

Digging *into the* Past
at the Atwood Preserve

One visit to the Atwood Preserve is all it takes to prove that it's special: a green oasis in the desert, home of the headwaters of the Amargosa River, the first place the river appears along its mostly underground journey to its end in Badwater Basin, California. But new research from our science team shows that it is even more significant than we thought.

Last fall, scientists from TNC and the Desert Research Institute (DRI) collected sediment cores in the wet meadow by the bunkhouse at the Atwood Preserve. They used radiocarbon dating to age them. When the results came back this spring, they showed that the wet meadow is more than 4,000 years old, similar in age to ancient bristlecone pines.

"A wet meadow is a really unique habitat for the Mojave Desert," says Michael Clifford, TNC Nevada's conservation scientist, who worked on the project with Dave Rhode from DRI. Funding for the project came from TNC in California, as part of a Bioblitz for scientists held last May at the Atwood Preserve.

There are only a couple of other large wet meadows (a type of wetland) in the Mojave Desert, including at Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge and in Tecopa, California. They are more common in the Great Basin, which rubs up against the Mojave Desert at the Atwood Preserve. In wet meadows, grass-like sedges and rushes and water-loving grasses dominate due to a steady supply of groundwater seeping through feet of organic soils. Saline meadows are much more common in the area.

"This meadow is special in terms of its representation in the Mojave Desert," says Louis Provencher, TNC Nevada's director of science.

Clifford and Provencher speculate that in the past, intense geologic activity in the Walker Belt along the Nevada-California border might have opened fissures that allowed flows from the deeper aquifer to the surface. Frequent earthquakes in the area likely changed the flow of water and turned springs on and off around the Atwood Preserve, possibly changing past wet meadows to existing saline ones as they dried out. The drying out of wet areas could indicate that long-term climate change was occurring, as warming temperatures can slowly affect the groundwater's head pressure, or it could be a result of flood events that moved soils around and caused waters to back up and create meadow habitat.

"This research gives us a little more perspective and context for places in time...it gives us some guidance on what restoration projects should look like and how management should be done in the future."

MICHAEL CLIFFORD, *TNC Nevada Conservation Scientist*

There are many interesting possibilities, Provencher says.

"We know this movement of springs can and has happened with earthquakes—that's been demonstrated in many places," he says, referencing a 5.2-magnitude earthquake near Beatty decades ago that moved spring flows at Torrance Ranch Preserve from the boardwalk to closer to the highway. "The Amargosa River is old, much older than [the wet meadow], and the question is what happened 4,000 years ago? This area is geologically very active. What really happened back then?"

Discovering the age of ecosystems like the wet meadow at Atwood Preserve and what they may have looked like in the past

Dave Rhode and Cedar Briem from the Desert Research Institute and TNC Nevada Conservation Scientist Michael Clifford operating a machine to extract sediment cores at the Atwood Preserve © Matt Rader/TNC

can help scientists understand how resilient they are to external factors like climate change are and how to best manage the landscape. For example, a wet meadow is a distinct ecological system whose steady water regime without high flood events and water-saturated organic soils prevent the establishment of riparian trees, Provencher says. Properly taking care of this unique ecosystem can also protect the species that live in and depend on it, including sandhill cranes, avocets, white-faced ibis, meadowlarks, Amargosa toads, dragonflies, butterflies and possibly meadow voles.

"I think this research gives us a little more perspective and context for places in time," Clifford says. "If we get some idea of what the fire history and vegetation history are like, it gives us some sense for how resilient the area may be, or if it has been the same. It gives us some guidance on what restoration projects should look like and how management should be done in the future."

An 'incredible amount of soil'

How does one go about getting sediment cores? With "backbreaking labor," Clifford jokes. A coring system is mounted to the back of an ATV. Clifford, Rhode and others did the work in November last year when water levels from summer rainstorms had gone down enough for an ATV to be able to access the meadow. One-meter long cores are collected by the machine hammering into the ground and pulling up a tube full of sediments, followed by sinking another tube down the same hole until the full depth is reached. The samples are then taken back to the lab, where they are sliced into one-centimeter round segments resembling cookies or brownies made of mud. Scientists then search for organic materials in the soil, like seeds or leaves. These materials are packaged up and sent to another lab for radiocarbon dating.

The depth of the cores at the Atwood Preserve was surprising. The deepest part of the meadow that came back with the date of 4,000 years ago was from 4-5 meters (approximately 16 feet) deep.

"That's an incredible amount of soil," Clifford says.

After the sediment cores have been collected, the samples can also be used to answer additional questions. They can be used to look at charcoal to see how often meadows were burned naturally or by humans and what the fire return was like. Plant macrofossil and pollen analysis can be used to look at plant life in the cores, to give both an in-place and regional look at what plant life was like and how it's changed over time, or if it's remained the same.

Another study might already be in the works. University of Nevada, Reno faculty Ben Sullivan and TNC's Nevada Water Strategy Director Laurel Saito sampled the wet meadow's soil and discovered it has a high ability to store soil carbon, greater than other investigated wetlands. The next steps will be to do some basic manual processing of the cores. At the end of May, DRI will publish a detailed report and share more details on their findings.

Imagining a desert river's past

For Provencher and Clifford, it's fascinating to imagine what the Amargosa River could have looked like in the past. The river originated in the early Pleistocene at least 1.5 million years ago. It likely flowed a similar path as it does today at least 130,000 years ago when the climate was between glacial periods and colder, even supporting subalpine limber pine.

A few questions they are asking: What did the Amargosa River look like during the last glacial maximum, when it was much colder and received more precipitation? Was it once a fully free-flowing river? Underneath layers of sediment in the desert, could we find remnants of the original channel, and even evidence of the riparian trees that grew beside it? Are the other wetlands and wet meadows in the upper Amargosa River also 4,000 years old?

"That's the fun part of this—there's a lot of speculation," Clifford says.

LEARN MORE about the science we're doing at the Atwood Preserve at ***tinyurl.com/TNCatwood.***

SCALING UP
Forests and Fire Efforts

Meet Terra Rentz

Western Dry Forests and Fire Program Director

Terra Rentz *leads the execution of the unified Western Dry Forests and Fire Program. The program is working to meet TNC's 2030 goal of placing 50 million acres of dry forest in western North America on a path to increased health and resilience. These forests, which historically experienced frequent fire, need improved management to restore their health, and we need to increase Tribal access and comanagement of these lands.*

She joins TNC from the Washington Department of Natural Resources, where she was the Forest Resilience Division Manager and later the Strategic Advisor for Forest Resilience, Regulations, and Aquatic Resources. She holds a Master of Public Administration in Public and Nonprofit Management from Syracuse University and is concluding a Master of Science in Fish and Wildlife Biology and Management from SUNY–College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Outside of work, you will find her indulging in live music, exploring the mountains and rivers of Montana with her family, or filling the freezer from coastline to garden.

Tell us about your background and why you're passionate about this work.
My professional training is in wildlife management and policy, and over the years that has evolved to an ecosystem focus. I had more and more opportunities relating to forests, which led to my last position at Washington State's Department of Natural Resources, where I helped develop their forest health and resilience division. What makes me most excited about stepping into TNC's Western Dry Forests and Fire Program is that we're at this really unique stage where we're building something new. I'm looking forward to scaling up the work that's being done at the state level to try and build an impactful and durable system for TNC.

How is this program different from what TNC has done in the past?
The issues that we're grappling with, like wildfire, are not confined to state boundaries. We need to look at the landscape as a whole and figure out where to best prioritize our resources, energy, and people to effect change at

Prescribed fire can help keep forests healthy and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire, as shown in this photo at Independence Lake. © TNC

scale. For example, at the state level we might create a relationship with a national forest and try a new technique or opportunity to do forest treatment work, but it would typically remain a pilot project. With this program, we're scaling up to see if we can apply lessons learned to more forests, test ideas across landscapes, and share resources to take advantage of our strengths and fill in gaps across the region.

What are you working on right now that excites you?
We're at the stage where we're really defining our identity as a program. That means identifying our priorities, how we're weighing them, and how we will accomplish them. This program was driven by TNC staff across the West noting that this is a space where we can work better together. It's being led by the experts, the people who have invested in this work for years, and being advanced by a really fantastic and experienced team. That bodes well for the long-term success of what we are trying to accomplish.

What motivates you as you pursue this work?
Ever since I was a little girl, I have been driven by wanting to have a big impact on the environment. I grew up in Alaska, and being connected to the environment was really important to me. My whole career I have been working toward spaces that give me more and more of an opportunity to influence things at scale. There are different ways people see how the world connects. One thing I pride myself on is being able to see a big-picture system and how it fits together, so to be in a space that allows me to do that every day is really inspiring.

LEARN MORE about TNC's Western Dry Forests and Fire Program at *tinyurl.com/westernforestsandfire*.

OPPOSITE PAGE Lodgepole pine forest west of Cameron Pass on highway 14 in the Colorado State Forest area of Colorado's North Park region © Mark Godfrey/TNC; Terra Rentz © The Nature Conservancy; THIS PAGE Erica Baker © Courtesy Erica Baker

Q & A with Erica Baker

Associate Director of Development in Northern Nevada

Tell us about your background. How did you become interested in conservation at TNC?
Helping people, animals and causes by raising critical funds to achieve their mission has always been fulfilling work for me. As the Special Events Manager at the Nevada Humane Society, I was a part of turning our local shelter into a no-kill facility. For the Alzheimer's Association, I raised significant funds for research so that one day we can find a cure for the disease. And for Step 2 (a local nonprofit helping women with substance use disorders and domestic violence intervention), I worked closely with donors to acquire funds to help more women become clean and sober and reunite with their children. As a second-generation Nevadan, I am honored to help our community and the causes that are important to me, and I am excited to continue my efforts with The Nature Conservancy. I have always been passionate about our planet, and I am looking forward to doing my part in ensuring that there is a future planet for the next generation.

What are you most looking forward to in your new role?
I am looking forward to meeting volunteers, staff members and especially the donors who make it possible for us to do the work. I am excited to learn as much as I can about the organization and pass that information on to the community.

What do you like to do for fun outside of work?
Outside of work I enjoy running with my running group. We meet up four mornings a week to run various distances and catch up. I have been in the group for 12 years. We train for anything from half marathons to marathons to triathlons to just day-to-day life. I also love spending time skiing, camping, hiking and traveling with my husband and two kids. My teenagers are very active in sports, and I love being their number one fan. If I'm not on the ball field or pool deck, you can find me with a good book cuddling with my two dogs.

Do you have a favorite outdoor place in Nevada?
My favorite place to be in Nevada is Lake Tahoe. Whether it be skiing in the winter, hiking in the summer or relaxing on the beach, I am most at peace and happy on the crystal-clear blue lake. We camp at Nevada Beach every year and I appreciate the time to slow down and be in the moment with my family. Also, my husband and I are planning to hike the entire Tahoe Rim Trail this summer.

What is a fun fact about you?
How about two! I'm proud of my Basque heritage. I grew up Basque dancing and listening to my grandfather and his friends tell stories around the table at Louis Basque Corner about their homeland. My grandfather came to this country as a sheep herder and later became a landscape architect. His love of the outdoors and gardening was passed down to my father and later passed down to me. I also qualified for the Boston Marathon in 2019.

The Nature Conservancy
Nevada

The Nature Conservancy in Nevada
639 Isbell Road, Suite 330
Reno, NV 89509
775-322-4990

8215 S. Eastern Ave. Suite 225
Las Vegas, NV 89123

nevada@tnc.org
nature.org/nevada

Like us at facebook.com/naturenevada
Join us at @nature_nevada
Follow us at @nature_nevada
Connect with us at The Nature Conservancy in Nevada

Independence Lake, NV © Chip Carroon/TNC

Protecting nature in Nevada is easier than you think through a gift of stock, bonds or mutual funds. Your gift can be put to work immediately, and may provide a charitable income tax deduction and help you avoid paying tax on capital gains.

(877) 812-3698 stock@tnc.org nature.org/stockgifts