

# Idaho

2025 Annual Impact Report





## From the Director

Dear Friend,

This year marks the 60th anniversary of The Nature Conservancy in Idaho—a milestone that invites both reflection and renewed purpose. Over the decades, our work has touched nearly every part of the state, from the rugged Owyhee Canyonlands to the winding South Fork of the Snake River and the dense forests of North Idaho.

Together with our partners and supporters, we've helped conserve more than 460,000 acres of land and water that sustain wildlife, communities and livelihoods.

While much has changed in the world around us, one thing remains constant: our enduring

commitment to conserve the lands and waters we cherish. We remain focused on local, on-the-ground work that addresses Idaho's most pressing environmental challenges, while expanding our work on priorities that drive regional impact, including forest health and prescribed fire, restoration of the Sagebrush Sea, and recovery efforts for salmon.

As you'll see from the stories in this report, our impact is tangible. We've surpassed a decades-long goal of protecting 100,000 acres in the Pioneers-to-Craters landscape, helped shape the future of farming with a new agricultural partnership with students, and rallied an

extraordinary wave of support to safeguard public lands, among other wins.

Together, we are proving that lasting change is possible. Yet we know our work is far from over. The decades ahead will require bolder action and deeper commitments to the places we love. Thank you for your steadfast support in creating a future where people and nature thrive.

Mark Menlove  
Idaho State Director

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# The Nature Conservancy in Idaho

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The Nature Conservancy acknowledges that the lands and waters of this place we know as Idaho are the ancestral homelands of many Indigenous peoples. Today they are represented by the Coeur d'Alene, the Kalispel, the Kootenai, the Nez Perce, the Shoshone-Bannock and the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes. We are deeply grateful to these Indigenous peoples, past and present, who have stewarded these lands and waters since time immemorial. We affirm our responsibility to honor Tribal sovereignty, culture and heritage, and to work in allyship to ensure a future where all people and nature thrive.





## Silver Creek Preserve

### Building on a legacy of community-based conservation

The Nature Conservancy has made tremendous progress on the Silver Creek Enhancement Plan launched in 2020, thanks to the collaborative effort of the community and our visionary supporters. We enhanced the visitor experience through infrastructure upgrades and the reimagined Conservation & Education Center, welcomed our first Conservation Education Coordinator and completed critical habitat restoration—and our work is just beginning.

Our commitment to steward the Preserve to a more resilient, sustainable and thriving future is unwavering. In the years ahead, we will continue to build on Silver Creek's legacy as a model for how to solve Idaho's toughest conservation challenges through innovation and community engagement.

### Connecting Youth to Nature's Wonders

Silver Creek Preserve is a special place to see people and nature thriving together. During her first season as the Preserve's Conservation Education Coordinator, Emma Drucker had the privilege of facilitating students' connection to Silver Creek in many meaningful ways.

In collaboration with nearly 20 schools and non-profits, the Preserve hosted more than 400 students from across Central Idaho, welcoming many first-time young visitors to experience the wonders of the unique spring-fed ecosystem. Children collected and classified water bugs, focused their binoculars on yellow warblers, watched moose wandering in the creek, examined moths under microscopes, conducted stream meander experiments, and helped native plants flourish.

"Each day that I led students at the Preserve, I witnessed the joy they felt in helping nature and the peace they found in learning that they are held by nature in return," says Drucker.

Idaho needs these young conservationists—and young people need nature, too. As Drucker reflects, "While the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss are complex and daunting, sometimes the solutions are as tangible and beautiful as small hands cradling a willow shoot and placing it gently into the soil."

### Protecting Freshwater and Wildlife Habitat

Thanks to the incredibly generous support of our donors, TNC acquired a 1,461-acre property adjacent to Silver Creek Preserve, deepening our nearly 50-year commitment to this special place. Located in the heart of an ecologically and culturally important landscape, this strategic purchase protects freshwater streams and wildlife migration corridors that are vital to the ecosystem's health.

Over the coming years, TNC will launch restoration projects that will improve fish and wildlife habitat and water quality—not just on the property, but throughout the Silver Creek system. Plans include stream, wetland and riparian restoration, installation of wildlife-friendly fencing, sagebrush habitat rehabilitation, native plantings and more. The property has more than 1,000 acres of agricultural lands that will be revitalized using regenerative agriculture practices, in partnership with TNC's agriculture advisors, to support healthy soil and clean water.

Since 1976, TNC, partners and landowners have protected more than 13,500 acres in the Silver Creek landscape through conservation easements in one of the most successful stream conservation efforts ever undertaken for public benefit and a model for community-based conservation.

## Increasing Fire Capacity

### Crews stationed from home locations have sustainable options

When she was a kid, Kris Sherrill was terrified of fire. While her brother warmed his hands within feet of a bonfire, she lingered on the far perimeter. So how did she end up on a fire crew in the Panhandle of Idaho?

“Once I saw how beneficial fire was and how preparation could save people’s homes, it made sense,” says Sherrill. It also tied in perfectly with her degree in disaster management.

Sherrill is part of a team uniquely based out of a permanent location near key project sites in North Idaho. This new approach replaces the traditional model of seasonal work that often brought people in from outside the area to work for five or six months. Instead, the team enjoys stable, year-round employment, working alongside a consistent crew for most of the year.



Kris Sherrill on a controlled burn assignment. © Sarah Nagel

They work close to home during the spring, summer and fall months, and then spend time during the winter months assisting on projects outside of Idaho, gaining valuable experience and skills in other parts of the country on 14-day assignments once a month.

TNC’s fire network and training coordinator Jeremy Bailey believes this full-time, place-based work pattern is more sustainable than the boom-and-bust cycle of six months on, six months off. That could have a big impact—currently, the attrition rate for Forest Service fire crews is 45 percent.

**“By keeping our crew together, learning to rely on each other, it’s easier for us to jump into new situations without a lot of adjustment time.”**

— Kris Sherrill, Prescribed Fire Practitioner

Whether out thinning forest in advance of a burn or digging a perimeter fire break, Sherrill thinks this new approach is also a lot more efficient.

“By keeping our crew together, learning to rely on each other, it’s easier for us to jump into new situations without a lot of adjustment time.” She hopes to continue doing this work, saying, “I have the best of both worlds, I can spend the day playing with fire, then go home for the night!”

# 21.5k

Number of TNC crew hours spent on forest treatments across Idaho in 2025

## Follow the Flames Audio Tour

In 1988, the nation watched as record-breaking hot temperatures, dry conditions and high winds produced unprecedented—and largely uncontrollable—wildfires that burned across Yellowstone National Park. By the time the fires were out, more than 1.2 million acres had been consumed by flames within the Greater Yellowstone Area.

Over time, we have learned about the restorative power of fire and how what was once considered the destruction of our nation’s most treasured park was a natural cycle of regeneration and renewal.

A new self-guided audio tour, “Follow the Flames,” produced by the Greater Yellowstone Fire Action Network, with support by TNC, travels through 10 unique stops in the park that share what happened and what was learned from the Summer Yellowstone burned.



Listen at:  
[travelstorys.com/tours/follow-the-flames](https://travelstorys.com/tours/follow-the-flames)

Or scan this QR code





## Achieving a Milestone

With new easement, TNC surpasses an ambitious goal in Central Idaho

After nearly two decades of dedicated conservation efforts in Central Idaho, The Nature Conservancy has achieved a major milestone: the protection of more than 100,000 acres between the Pioneer Mountains and Craters of the Moon National Monument. A newly secured conservation easement on a large 5,368-acre ranch enabled TNC to officially surpass this ambitious goal, deepening protections in a landscape renowned for its ecological richness and climate resilience.

Situated in the heart of the Pioneers-to-Craters landscape, this property is home to a working

cattle ranch, as well as to rangeland pastures, wet meadows, sagebrush expanses, mountain foothills and a network of braided creeks that support a diversity of wildlife, including pronghorn, sage grouse, sandhill cranes and elk.

This conservation easement is part of a mosaic of protected public and private lands, helping ensure that important wildlife habitat—including ancient pronghorn migration routes—remains protected, connected and intact.

The Pioneers-to-Craters area was identified by TNC scientists as one of the more climate-resilient landscapes in the Pacific Northwest, where plants and animals are most likely to find habitat to survive even as the climate changes. Recognizing the significance of this area for conservation, TNC set an ambitious goal in 2007 to conserve

**“Easements like this safeguard lands from the threat of development, which can have devastating impacts on habitat and wildlife.”**

— Tess O’Sullivan, Land & Water Protection Program Manager

100,000 acres of private lands that provided vital connections to public lands. With that goal now realized, TNC’s work in this landscape will continue by supporting landowners and partners with stewardship and continued conservation.

“We’re honored to work alongside landowners who choose to protect their land through voluntary conservation easements—preserving a legacy for their families, communities and the natural world,”



# 100K

Number of acres TNC  
has helped protect  
in the Pioneers-to-  
Craters landscape

says Land & Water Protection Program Manager Tess O'Sullivan, who has led TNC's protection work in this landscape.

Landowner Glenn Schumacher echoes that sentiment. "Linda and I would like to thank The Nature Conservancy for teaming up with us to protect these wide-open spaces for future generations," he says. "We look forward to working with The Nature Conservancy to promote good land stewardship and wildlife protections while maintaining ranching traditions."

"Easements like this safeguard lands from the threat of development, which can have devastating impacts on habitat and wildlife, including herds of pronghorn that have migrated through this region for thousands of years," says O'Sullivan. However, the benefits of easements extend beyond property

lines: Preserving essential habitat on private lands also enhances the value of nearby public lands by providing landscape connectivity and greater ecosystem diversity that public lands alone could not fully support.

This landscape-wide success—made possible through partnerships with the Pioneers Alliance, Wood River Land Trust, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, landowners and supporters like you—is more than just a number.

Every acre protected represents the promise of a healthy future for the people, plants and wildlife that live here—from safe migration across ancient routes and habitat preserved for at-risk species, to ranching traditions carried forward.

## Sagebrush Sea

Immerse yourself in the beauty of the Sagebrush Sea ecosystem, and learn more about this remarkable place.



Watch our video by  
scanning the QR code  
or visiting [nature.org/  
SagebrushSea](https://nature.org/SagebrushSea)

## Reviving Waterways

### Solutions rooted in nature

As the West grapples with historic drought, exploding wildfire seasons, and the declining health of our natural systems, water and land management is being reshaped through something called low-tech process-based restoration (LTPBR).

This hands-on approach uses simple, natural materials like wood and rocks to build structures that slow water, reconnect streams to their floodplains and breathe new life into degraded riverscapes.

In Idaho, Riparian Restoration Project Manager Toni Ruth is coordinating collaborative, partner-driven LTPBR projects with the Bureau of Land Management and local communities. This fall, crews installed more than 100 LTPBR structures on creeks in the High Divide landscape that straddles the Montana-Idaho border, restoring natural processes that benefit wildlife and rural livelihoods.



# Flat Ranch Preserve

## Working for people and nature

Purchased by The Nature Conservancy in 1994, the Flat Ranch Preserve near Island Park is a showcase for community education and a place where sustainable ranching exists hand-in-hand with conservation. As development pressure grows within the Greater Yellowstone, Flat Ranch conserves a critical oasis of wildlife habitat and migration pathways in this vital ecosystem.

Land Steward J.B. Miller is also proud that the Preserve protects four miles of the Henry's Fork River. "This was a major win for saving some of the most important and biologically diverse habitat in the Greater Yellowstone not only for wildlife, but for the public to continue to enjoy."

Through years of slow but committed outreach to neighbors, TNC also has helped protect more than 2,000 acres of nearby private land through conservation easements.

### Counting Plant Species

The wealth of native plants—and particularly the important wetland habitat—on Flat Ranch are in large part what accounts for the diversity and numbers of wildlife that frequent the Preserve.

This year, that included a spectacular bloom of mule's ear and camas—the latter a plant collected for traditional uses by local Tribes. Keeping track of the different plants and their relative health and numbers is no small task.

Identifying grasses takes an especially keen eye and attention to detail. Thankfully, our hard-working interns from Washington and

Lee University in Virginia—when not dealing with fences and fighting invasive weeds—have been learning to identify both native and non-native plants on the preserve.

**"This was a major win for saving some of the most important and biologically diverse habitat in the Greater Yellowstone..."**

— J.B. Miller, Land Steward

In addition, an annual survey of grasses was conducted with a botanist contracted by TNC. We are pleased to report that the Preserve is nearly free of all invasive weeds. These surveys are an important way of staying on top of conditions on the ground, since healthy populations of native plants is the best defense against invasive plants.

### Friendly Fences

Thanks to the help of our invaluable volunteers, nearly all of the fences at the Flat Ranch are now wildlife-friendly, enabling wildlife to move unobstructed across Preserve during their spring and fall migrations. But accomplishing this task is labor-intensive.

Leading into the late fall migration season, sections of the fences are laid down on the ground so that wildlife can easily step over them. This is especially helpful for pronghorn and young deer and elk that cannot jump over normal fences. Then, in the spring before arrival of the cattle, those fences must be erected again.

This past year, volunteers from the Henry's Fork Wildlife Alliance, along with TNC staff and interns, helped put up and lower fences.





## Acting for Public Lands

### Bipartisan support keeps lands in public hands

In a resounding win for conservation, Idahoans and Americans nationwide defeated a federal proposal to sell up to 3.3 million acres of public lands, thanks to an extraordinary wave of bipartisan support and grassroots action.

From industry leaders to outdoor enthusiasts, Idahoans of all stripes stood united in defense of our shared landscapes. Polling conducted in July 2025 revealed that 96 percent of Idaho voters, across political affiliations, believe public lands should remain in public hands. This overwhelming consensus reflects a deep-rooted value: Public lands are central to Idaho's identity, economy and way of life.

TNC played a pivotal role in this victory, generating more than 100,000 messages to Congress in support of public lands, including more than 750 phone calls from Idaho voters to our Senators. Outreach to Idaho Representative Simpson and Senators Crapo and Risch was especially instrumental. Their public opposition to the sell-off led to the withdrawal of the federal land sale provision from the budget bill. For now, public lands are staying in public hands.

This moment is a testament to what is possible when communities, lawmakers and conservation organizations work together. It's also a reminder that the threats remain. Proposals for federal land transfers to states, rollbacks to land management programs and staffing, diminished capacity for maintenance and upkeep, and renewed attempts to privatize public lands remain active concerns. Our External Affairs team continues in their efforts to meet these challenges and to ensure that the protection of Idaho's public land is a top priority for policymakers.

But today, we celebrate. We celebrate the power of collective action, the strength of Idaho's conservation community, and the enduring commitment to stewarding our public lands—ensuring they remain accessible, protected and public for today's communities and tomorrow's caretakers.

# 96%

Idaho voters who support public lands in public hands

## Expanding Influence Across Idaho

### Policy Fellow will support solutions for conservation and energy



TNC is pleased to welcome Molly Levy as Idaho's Policy Fellow.

In this new role, Molly will advance conservation and climate policy initiatives and strategic partnerships. Her work will focus on accelerating a clean energy transition that benefits nature, people and the climate.

Molly has a rich background in natural resource management through her experience as a PhD candidate in Human-Environment Systems at Boise State University and as an environmental analyst on large-scale wind and solar projects. Her research has focused on understanding and resolving complex land use conflicts, with an emphasis on community engagement.

With her expertise, Molly will shape and support projects to understand and advance innovative solutions for conservation policy and responsible clean energy development in Idaho.

"I'm excited to contribute to TNC's policy efforts in Idaho, helping shape renewable energy and climate adaptation strategies that protect the places and communities we all care about," says Levy.



## Growing the Next Generation of Farmers

### New partnership supports agriculture education

In Minidoka County, Minico High School—home to Idaho's largest Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter—partnered with The Nature Conservancy to launch a student-led regenerative agriculture project.

With 1,200 students enrolled in agriculture classes and 600 students affiliated with the school's FFA program, Minico High School is leading the next generation of future farmers. Earlier this year, the school's agriculture advisory board approached TNC to help bring regenerative farming practices to life on a 5.7-acre educational farm. The result is a new partnership that's giving students the tools to lead on soil health, sustainability and community engagement.



With TNC's financial and technical support, students are growing Idaho crops using regenerative methods, starting with potatoes. After their first harvest, the student-grown potatoes have been contracted with global food supplier McCain Foods to support ag programming. On a half-acre of the farm, the FFA members have proposed to plant a large vegetable garden to host student-led farmer's markets during the summers.

**“TNC is helping provide true hands-on learning to hundreds of Minico ag students and the Mini-Cassia community.”**

—Jessica Stapelman, Teacher

Students are not only learning regenerative ways of farming—they're also leading the charge in educating their community about nature-based agriculture. As part of the partnership, students will host field days to demonstrate soil conservation practices, showcase student-led innovations, and invite the public to learn about regenerative farming.

## Researching Resilience

### A wildfire presents rare research opportunity in the Sagebrush Sea

TNC Idaho Science Lead Taylor Ganz has launched a research project that will study the effects of restoration and management on wildfire risk in the Sagebrush Sea. Taylor and partners will be looking specifically at the impacts of the 2024 Glendale Fire that burned 40 percent of the TNC-owned Rinker Rock Creek Ranch and associated public land allotments.

Thanks to prior restoration treatments and data collection, this research presents a rare opportunity to rigorously examine the factors affecting resilience of sagebrush ecosystems to wildfire. Our findings will help land managers identify and implement the most effective conservation strategies to boost landscape resilience within the Sagebrush Sea, and identify local-scale tools, management interventions, and restoration practices that support biodiversity, carbon sequestration, freshwater quality and sustainable grazing.



# Expanding Salmon Recovery Efforts

## Program builds on decades of work

Salmon begin life in the cold, clear gravel beds of Idaho's mountain streams. From there, they embark on an extraordinary 850-mile journey to the Pacific Ocean, grow to adulthood at sea, and return to their birthplace to spawn.

For decades, TNC has partnered with Idaho communities to restore vital salmon habitat while balancing human needs. Through collaboration and innovation, TNC has helped rewater long-dry streams and reopen miles of spawning grounds—ensuring that when wild salmon return, they have the space they need to thrive.

### Improving Habitat for Juvenile Salmon

Young Snake River salmon will have a better start in life thanks to a conservation easement secured by TNC on the 181-acre Peterson Ranch in the Lemhi Valley of Idaho. In addition to restricting development on their property, the owners have committed to engage in significant river restoration efforts on Hayden Creek and the reach of the Lemhi River located on the ranch.

One of the top salmon spawning tributaries in the state, the Lemhi River meanders 60 miles through Central Idaho before joining the Salmon River. A key limiting factor influencing fish productivity in the Lemhi system is the lack of overwintering and summer rearing habitat downstream of current spawning areas.

This project is increasing habitat for juvenile fish where they can linger and grow before migration, increasing their chances of a successful journey to



the Pacific Ocean. The Peterson Ranch easement is part of a larger project identified by TNC and partners to improve conditions for Snake River steelhead and spring/summer chinook salmon.

### Supporting a Tribal-led Pathway to Columbia Basin Salmon Recovery

While actions within Idaho are important and necessary, many of the solutions to recovering Idaho salmon lay well beyond Idaho's borders.

Spanning more than 250,000 square miles, the Columbia River Basin stretches from its headwaters in British Columbia and down into Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming, terminating at the Pacific Ocean. Recognizing that we must work collectively to address the scale of the issues, TNC staff in Idaho, Washington, Oregon and Montana are moving

a shared vision and plan forward that supports an Indigenous-led pathway to salmon and river recovery across the Columbia River Basin.

By coordinating efforts, TNC can help save salmon from extinction and return them to healthy and harvestable populations.

To lead this effort, TNC hired the first-ever Columbia Basin Program Director in March 2025. Sammy Matsaw Jr. is a Ph.D scientist in water resources and conservation genetics. He is steeped in Indigenous wisdom and brings longstanding relationships with Tribal leaders across the Columbia Basin. He describes his new role as, "blending scientific expertise, leadership and Indigenous lifeways in service of people and the environment."

# Thank you

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 2025 (July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025). Every gift, regardless of size, plays a crucial role in our work for people and nature. We thank you for your commitment to our mission.

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## One Future Together

A livable climate, healthy communities and thriving nature: **This is the one future The Nature Conservancy envisions.**

Turning this vision into reality starts with a clear recognition of the challenges we face. We have years, not decades, to address catastrophic climate change and biodiversity loss.

Though daunting, these problems are not insurmountable. The Nature Conservancy in Idaho believes in the intrinsic power of nature to help solve our greatest challenges.

By bringing people together to implement strategies that produce lasting outcomes, advancing science and elevating local knowledge, we are overcoming barriers to meet these challenges head-on.

**Together, we will find a way. Join us!**

