

Maureen Garrity

# THE CONSERVATION ALLIANCE 2023/2024 CONSERVATION STRATEGY

The Conservation Alliance protects outdoor spaces and wild places. We do this through the collective power of our membership—companies from a range of industries that believe the future of business depends on a healthy planet. From the outdoor industry to brewers, bankers, sportsmen, and renewable energy companies, our member companies succeed when we take bold steps to conserve wild public lands and waters.

The Conservation Alliance provides a business-led answer to a global problem, proving that investing in land and water protection today creates jobs, helps local communities, and protects future generations from the impacts of climate change. Our model works. Since 1989, we've helped protect 82 million acres and 4,570 river miles, remove or halt 38 dams, purchase 22 climbing areas and designate five marine reserves.

#### WHY A CONSERVATION STRATEGY?

TCA unites businesses from a wide range of industries and harnesses our collective voice to lead the charge for reliable, bipartisan efforts that advance conservation policies and public land protection. TCA's Conservation Strategy brings focus to this work in order to maximize and measure our impact over time. This benefits our members and grantees by:

Aligning the impact of our corporate advocacy: This two-year strategy is based on staff expertise, conversations with high level decision makers in the federal government, input from our partners in the field, and the conservation committee of our board of directors. The strategy provides members with a clear understanding of where high value conservation opportunities overlap with political realities and opportunities on the ground.

**Providing clarity for current and potential grantees and aligning our grants and advocacy programs:** The Conservation Strategy drives the direction of our programs and outcomes and will increasingly inform TCA's giving after it is disseminated in 2024, alongside other grant criteria. The Conservation Strategy helps organizations in the field better understand our priorities over a given two-year window and provides clarity on how we rank funding proposals in the context of the current moment.

The Conservation Strategy will be updated on a two year cycle starting in December of 2024.

#### USING A CLIMATE LENS TO FOCUS OUR WORK

The consequences of climate change - extreme weather events including floods, drought, and wildfires - demand our attention and investment. TCA member companies recognize that North America's wild places and outdoor spaces are both impacted by climate change and are also a critical part of the solution. Nature-based climate solutions such as protecting forests and restoring coastal marshes are a key part of tackling climate change, similar to technology-based solutions like renewable energy and energy efficiency. Healthy lands absorb and store carbon from the atmosphere, where it would otherwise contribute to climate change. In order for TCA to ensure that our investments in conservation yield the highest climate benefits, deciding where we invest our resources is paramount. Using the <u>Climate Atlas</u> as a filter for our work, TCA maximizes its impact by not only supporting critical conservation campaigns, but by honing in on geographies that rate the highest for climate resiliency.

### **BROADENING OUR IMPACT:**

In order to achieve the most durable land and water protections, we are reaching beyond our traditional approaches to campaigns and partnerships. We are focussed on elevating community voices and prioritizing our commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion through all aspects of our work. We have identified four strategic areas that we believe will achieve the most durable conservation outcomes for our organization:

- 1. Land and Water Protections
- 2. Equitable Access to Nature
- 3. Recreation Opportunities
- 4. Rural Economic Development

Within our four strategic areas, we identify specific Priority Campaigns. These are nationally focused urgent efforts that address natural resource management, climate adaptation, the rights of indigenous and marginalized communities, and habitat protection in locations that also provide opportunities for outdoor recreation. Priority campaigns receive additional funding and advocacy resources. For information on TCA's current Priority Campaigns, please visit our <u>website</u>.

# 1. Land & Water Protections:

Opportunities for increased land and water protections are plentiful, but they require creativity, flexibility, negotiated compromises, and balanced land-use planning. Conservation of America's public lands comes in many forms and achieving the critical mass of support for land and water protections relies on building a strong foundation of support from local communities, tribal, state, and local governments, Congressional delegations, executive branch agencies, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector. TCA's business voice can be effectively deployed to build trust across the aisle and among local communities, removing the barriers that too often stop common sense conservation proposals from moving forward. Through its investments in grassroots organizations, TCA leverages the support and financial power of the business community to drive effective local and regional efforts. In 2023 and 2024 TCA is focusing on the following land and water conservation policies through its grants and advocacy programs:

- Support Active Legislation: TCA is continuing to support legislation that we have historically funded, as well as new relevant bills, when there is an opportunity to foster bipartisan support and an effective strategy to reach intended milestones. TCA is working to broker a public lands package late in 2024. The full list of bills can be found here.
- **Champion Monument Designations:** TCA is leading a <u>coalition</u> of brands and organizations in a coordinated national campaign to advocate for the designation of specific landscapes as National Monuments by the Biden Administration. TCA will evaluate opportunities to engage with other monument efforts as they occur.
- Secure the Removal of the Snake River Dams: TCA is advocating for the removal of the Snake River Dams and evaluating opportunities to engage with other dam removal campaigns.
- Advocate for Mineral Withdrawals on BLM lands: The majority of BLM lands are open to oil and gas operations and mineral leasing and development, hindering carbon reduction and clean energy goals while also locking these lands away from other public use. Administrative and legislative withdrawals are useful, targeted tools to protect ecologically and culturally sensitive areas. TCA is supporting the use of this tool by the Biden administration to strategically protect wild places, outdoor spaces, and sensitive cultural areas significant to members and grantees.
- Block withdrawals on D1 lands: TCA is working with the BLM and stakeholder groups to push back on attempts to <u>open</u> <u>the D1 Withdrawal lands</u> in Alaska to development.
- Ensure the BLM Public Lands Rulemaking is completed and stays in place for the long term. The Bureau of Land Management is working on the <u>Sustained Yield and Land Health BLM Rulemaking</u>, which will significantly impact the way BLM lands are managed under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). The updated rule will place an emphasis on climate resiliency and restoration and providing long-term protections for lands with the highest wildlife, climate, recreation, and cultural and historic resource values.

- Support the Outdoor Recreation Coalition's 2023 Farm Bill Efforts: TCA is working alongside our partners Outdoor Alliance and the Outdoor Industry Association - and a coalition of outdoor recreation and conservation groups to bring a unified voice focussed on the outdoors to farm bill negotiations.
- Invest in High Value Private Lands Acquisitions: TCA is continuing our work to support land trusts and protect private lands in the US, with a focus on landscapes and locations that rate the highest for climate resiliency and biodiversity value on the <u>Climate Atlas.</u>

### 2. Equitable Access to Nature:

TCA supports historically excluded communities in their work to protect cultural and natural resources of significance. TCA also recognizes that low-income communities, communities of color, and Tribes have been left out of the conservation movement too often, are frequently subjected to polluting industries and development, and have limited access to close-tohome recreation or healthy outdoor spaces. While TCA prioritizes weaving our commitment to equity into all aspects of our work, we are also prioritizing specific policies and projects that are led by these communities and are focused on increasing opportunities for historically excluded communities to authentically engage and participate in public land and conservation management decision making processes. Through TCA's Confluence Grant Program, we are already nurturing relationships with historically excluded communities. Our advocacy and grants work will build upon these efforts to:

- Build Relationships and Center BIPOC Voices: TCA intentionally conducts outreach to funders, affinity groups, grantees, and others to develop meaningful relationships with BIPOC-led organizations and understand where TCA can best support their efforts. Through these partnerships, we will engage with Federal Agencies, including DOI, BLM, USFW, and EPA to support the implementation of the <u>White House's Justice 40 initiative</u>.
- Expand Equitable Access to the Outdoors: TCA engages with the <u>Outdoor F.U.T.U.R.E. coalition</u> and <u>Senator Heinrich</u> to establish a federal grant program for outdoor recreation and stewardship experiences for underrepresented communities, which is currently under development. Additionally, TCA is advocating for the <u>Outdoors for All Act (S. 448)</u>.

# 3. Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Focusing on specific outdoor recreation policies that complement our mission is a natural progression from TCA's historic focus on land and water conservation. TCA's membership is heavily weighted toward outdoor recreation businesses but includes companies from a wide range of sectors that benefit from the outdoors. We support policies that enable greater outdoor access and increase the number of people getting outside.

 Advocate for Recreation Legislation: TCA is working with partners like the Outdoor Industry Association and Outdoor Alliance to advocate for bills in the 118th Congress that seek to modernize the outdoor recreation permitting processes and improve access to public lands and recreation. The <u>America's Outdoor Recreation Act (AORA)</u> is the package that includes recreation legislation and includes sections on permitting, accessibility, and recreation infrastructure. In addition to AORA, TCA is lending its support to other recreation bills, including the <u>Outdoors for All Act</u> and others as opportunities arise. TCA will also be supporting the House version of the recreation package, the EXPLORE Act.

# 4. Rural Economic Development

Economic development is key to the success and durability of conservation projects in rural communities. Rural areas with high conservation potential frequently face land-use conflicts that pit protection against development. It is critical that we continue to decouple economies from extractive activity while demonstrating that alternatives such as recreation economies on or near protected areas present growing, if not greater opportunities.

 Advocate for Legislation that Supports Rural Communities: TCA is supporting the reintroduction and advancement of the <u>Rural Outdoor Investment Act</u> to boost rural communities through investments in outdoor recreation, workforce development and small business, and stewardship. TCA is also supporting the reintroduction and advancement of the <u>Schools and State Budgets Certainty Act</u> and the <u>National Energy Community Transition Act</u> to help rural communities as they transition from dependence on extractive industries.