

# U.S. POLICY IN ALASKA

## *Priorities for Federal Policy in the 49th State*

Sustaining healthy natural systems that support Alaska's unique communities is the foundation of The Nature Conservancy's work to support our state's economy, security, and ways of life.



Aerial view of Southeast Alaska's Tongass National Forest. © Erika Nortemann

**T**he Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Founded in the United States in 1951, TNC works in every state and in 76 countries and territories around the world to make a lasting difference. **TNC has worked in Alaska for 30 years and currently hosts a statewide program with two offices – one in Anchorage and one in Juneau.**

Guided by science, TNC collaborates with Tribes, Native Corporations, local landowners, communities, and businesses to implement practical conservation solutions that benefit people and nature. TNC is supported by more than 1 million members worldwide and by boards of trustees made up of local leaders. The organization is nonpartisan—trustees, members and staff come from across the political spectrum.

TNC seeks opportunities to advance solutions that work for people and nature. This work is guided by TNC's core values, including respect for people, communities and culture, and commitment to diversity.

In Alaska, TNC believes the health of natural systems and the welfare of human communities are closely linked, and that diverse public and private interests can work together to achieve lasting conservation success.

### APPROACH TO PUBLIC POLICY

TNC supports policies and initiatives that:

- Are ambitious but practical, with long-term benefits
- Highlight the power and value of lands, waters, and wildlife
- Respect communities and human rights
- Use market mechanisms to achieve resource management goals
- Emphasize cooperation across political boundaries
- Recognize public sector fiscal constraints



Annette Caruso pulls fish out of Bristol Bay off the coast of Naknek, AK. © Brian Adams

## U.S. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Enhance U.S. Biodiversity

To support the biodiversity critical to communities, their economies, and their ways of life, we need policies that support science-based management.

#### Federal Policies We Work on in Alaska:

- *America the Beautiful* - Ramp up efforts to conserve, restore and connect 30% of U.S. lands and waters by 2030.
- *Water Policy* - Support the conservation and restoration of freshwater, ocean, and coastal habitats.
- *Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA)* - Reverse U.S. wildlife population declines, including by investing in state, local and tribal restoration efforts.

#### Other Federal Policies across TNC:

- *Wildfire Policy* - Increase the pace and scale of forest restoration through prescribed burns and other strategies.
- *Agricultural Policy* - Advance smart agricultural practices through conservation and soil health policies.
- *Charitable Conservation Easements* - Though tax policy, encourage sales of easements to foster voluntary conservation and promote private financing for conservation.

### Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change

The effects of climate change are increasingly evident across the country and require comprehensive and equitable policy action and investments.

#### Federal Policies We Work on in Alaska:

- *Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)* - Implement the BIL and IRA's clean energy, conservation, and climate resilience provisions.
- *Water Resources Development Act (WRDA)* - Invest in resilience projects that include nature-based strategies.
- *Forest Management Policy* - Encourage science-based, collaborative, climate-informed forest management.
- *Appropriations and Earmarks* - Advance a federal budget that sustains conservation and science investments.
- *Justice40 and Environmental Justice* - Ensure investments account for future climate impacts and are equitably distributed.

#### Other Federal Policies Across TNC:

- *Transportation Policy* - Reduce transportation emissions through policies that support electric vehicles and other low-carbon alternatives.
- *Emissions Policy* - Lower industrial climate emissions through energy efficiency and supporting technologies for carbon capture and storage.
- *International Conservation Policy* - Ensure funding for international conservation efforts, including USAID biodiversity conservation programs, the Global Environment Facility, and the Green Climate Fund.

## ALASKA SPOTLIGHT

TNC-AK also works on federal issues that have special impacts in Alaska. Two areas of interest are:

- Ensuring the EPA finalizes Clean Water Act Section 404(c) action to protect Bristol Bay
- Working with the USDA and related agencies to implement the Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy (SASS)

### What about Existing Federal Environmental Policies?

We recognize that some of the best tools are the ones we already have. That's why our team also engages to safeguard foundational environmental laws. Often, these laws do more than just preserve the environment; they protect public health, provide jobs, ensure accountability, and offer greater community input in federal decision-making. Here in Alaska, healthy lands, waters, air, and wildlife directly translate to sustainable and thriving communities. Ensuring safeguards for these resources is just common sense.



Brown bear at Lake Clark. © Mark Paul