



OUR OHIO NATURE

SPRING/SUMMER 2023

Sustainable Forestry

SEEING THE FOREST FOR THE TREES

Forests are many things to many people. For some, forests represent survival, providing food, shelter, water and livelihood. For others, they represent biodiversity, furnishing homes to over half the world's terrestrial plants and animals. But to Sustainable Forestry Director Tom Rooney, our forests hold the secret to creating a climate-resilient future. And finding ways to sustainably manage them is imperative to safeguarding the many benefits they provide to both people and wildlife.

From the lush hardwoods in the Appalachian region to the forested wetlands of the north, woodlands have long supported the ecological and economic well-being of Ohioans.

Forests provide a diverse array of habitats that support a wealth of wildlife, provide clean water by acting as natural sponges that absorb and filter rainfall and mitigate climate change by sequestering and storing carbon dioxide. They also play an important role in supporting the state's economy and communities, helping to uphold an outdoor recreation industry that produces over \$24 billion in consumer spending annually and supports more than 215,000 jobs.

Unfortunately, forests in Ohio have drastically declined since European colonization.

Ohio was once 95% forested. Over time, our woodlands gave way to fields and housing divisions as agriculture and development

IN THIS ISSUE:

- 2 Director's Message
- 4 Conservation Highlights
- 6 Energy and Accessibility Upgrades
- 7 Staff Spotlight

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

STATE DIRECTOR

Bill Stanley

OFFICERS OF THE BOARD

Marta Stone, Chair, *Chagrin Falls*
Drew Gores, Vice Chair, *Cincinnati*
Don Laubacher, Vice Chair, *Richfield*
John O'Meara, Vice Chair, *Columbus*

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Kate Bartter, *Columbus*
Mike Deggendorf, *Columbus*
Bob Eckardt, *Cleveland*
Mayor Doug Franklin, *Warren*
Doug Parris, *Dublin*
Barb Petee, *Toledo*
Jim Samuel, *Lynx*
Carol Scallan, *Cincinnati*
Clarence Simmons, *Columbus*
Emily Smith, *Columbus*
Alex Wesaw, *Columbus*
Jay Woodhull, *Dayton*

STUDENT TRUSTEES

Michael Moriarty, *Columbus*
Hannah Simonds, *Columbus*
Aditi Thapar, *Columbus*

HONORARY LIFE TRUSTEES

Jo Ann S. Barefoot, James K. Bissell, David T. Bohl, John Boorn, Frances S. Buchholzer, Catharine W. Chapman, Joan Cochran, Rick Conner, James F. Daubel, E. Marianne Gabel, James P. Garland, Christopher Jones, Harry Kangis, Charles C. King, C. W. Eliot Paine, Victoria W. Parlin, Jan Van der Voort Portman, Jeff Reutter, Nancy Reymann-Gotfredson, Karl J. Warnke, Georgia E. Welles



The Nature Conservancy is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) international membership organization. Its mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.

The Nature Conservancy meets all of the Standards for Charity Accountability established by the BBB Wise Giving Alliance. The BBB Wise Giving Alliance is a national charity watchdog affiliated with the Better Business Bureau.

Director's Message

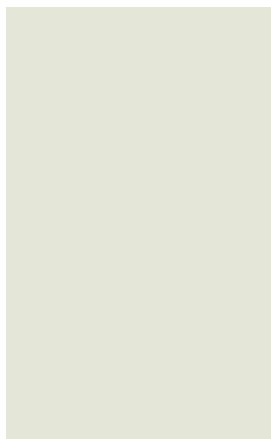


As we mark the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), I am reminded of Aldo Leopold, the author of *The Sand County Almanac* and a champion of the United States' wilderness system. He famously said, "To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering." This quote is often cited by supporters of the ESA, for every ecosystem needs its full array of species and functions to thrive.

This theme of ensuring that we keep all the pieces of our ecosystems meanders in and out of the stories in this issue. At The Nature Conservancy in Ohio, we continue to work with persistence and urgency to protect ecosystems and the species within them, and to restore waters and lands that have not been cared for properly. In this way, we not only keep every cog and wheel but bring back pieces of these ecosystems that have been lost.

Another theme in these stories is the deep connection between people and nature. In 1979, Paula Gunn Allen of the Laguna Pueblo tribe wrote this about the land: "It is not a means of survival, a setting for our affairs ... It is rather a part of our being, dynamic, significant, real. It is our self ..." Most who work at The Nature Conservancy, and most of you reading this, have deep, even spiritual, connections to nature. And for many of us it is that, perhaps even more than science or desire for self-preservation, that drives our passion to conserve it. As members, supporters and staff of The Nature Conservancy, we feel a shared responsibility to ensure that ecosystems are healthy, and that all living things that share this planet with us thrive.

We greatly appreciate your trust in us to do this incredibly important work. Thank you all for playing your part in nature, and for sharing this responsibility of caring for our planet. Nature would not be complete without you.



SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY

CONTINUED FROM COVER

swept across the state. Today, forests cover just 30% of Ohio, and our remaining woodlands face many challenges. Overharvesting has led to soil degradation and decreased productivity. Development and urbanization have fragmented habitats and reduced the amount of land available for wildlife. Pests, diseases and invasive species have caused widespread tree death and altered forest structure. And climate change has caused shifts in species ranges, resulting in the loss of important forest types and a reduction of economically valuable species.

As recently as the 1990s, conservationists combatted these challenges through a shared mindset focused on forest preservation. This passive approach to conservation helped protect some of the nation's old-growth forests so that they could continue maturing for the benefit of people and wildlife alike. But the world's climate has changed significantly since then, forcing a shift in perspective.

"Climate change has changed the rules for how we manage forests for biodiversity and long-term health," Rooney says. "While we haven't stopped protecting forests, we now better understand how to actively manage them against increasing threats that are intensifying from a warming climate." This is where sustainable forestry, which aims to manage the structure of the forest and its species composition, can help.

If a forest were a house, the foundation and frame would represent the woodland's structure, while the interior décor would represent the species composition. Forest managers help maintain a woodland's structure by protecting the oldest and largest legacy trees and ensuring the integrity of the seedling bed so that young trees can thrive. They also manage



woodlands for issues like invasive species, which threaten the forest's structure by overtaking native plant communities and outcompeting tree seedlings.

Intentional thinning is another important tool for maintaining a forest's structure. The new seedlings can sequester more carbon over their lifetimes than the mature trees that were removed, which sequester only a small additional amount of carbon each year. This process of guiding forest succession toward a more diverse, resilient state with higher carbon storage capacity is one of the active forest management practices in place at select sites within the Richard and Lucile Durrell Edge of Appalachia Preserve.

But managing for the forest's structure is just the start. Building on a solid foundation is critical to ensuring that a house will not collapse, but getting the interior décor just right ensures the comfort and happiness of those who will call it home. "Trees can grow pretty much anywhere in a forest, but when they're on optimal sites, they are healthier and more resilient to pests and diseases," says Rooney. "We manage the forest to ensure that the right species are growing in the right places,

which reduces plant stress and builds overall resilience of the ecosystem."

Managing protected forests like those at Edge of Appalachia Preserve won't be enough to safeguard the integrity of these systems to support people and nature. Long ago, famous forester and conservationist Aldo Leopold wrote, "Conservation will ultimately boil down to rewarding the private landowner who conserves the public interest." With 87% of Ohio's remaining forests in private ownership, Leopold's words are perhaps more relevant today than when they were written 89 years ago. The ability to sustainably manage Ohio's forests will depend upon our success in engaging the state's 397,000 private forest owners in the endeavor. And that's just what TNC is working to accomplish.

In collaboration with the American Forest Foundation, TNC is working to enroll landowners in the Family Forest Carbon Program, where they will develop sustainable forestry management plans. This type of community-driven conservation will help preserve and enhance the ecological, economic and social benefits of Ohio's privately owned woodlands and secure the resiliency of our forests, not just for today, but for generations to come.



Conservation Highlights

Celebrating 50 years of the Endangered Species Act

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act, which has been a game-changer in the protection of plants and wildlife since its passage in 1973. The legislation, which is credited with saving 99% of listed species, is widely considered one of the most important and effective pieces of legislation for preserving biodiversity. In Ohio, it has helped prevent the extinction of species like the bald eagle, the Lake Erie water snake and Kirtland's warbler. It has also played a vital role in the protection and recovery of habitats like wetlands, forests and prairies.

➔ **DISCOVER MORE** species TNC is helping to bring back from the brink of extinction at [nature.org/ohio](https://www.nature.org/ohio).



The Ohio Mitigation Program Helps Restore Jacoby Branch

Jacoby Branch was once a detriment to the Little Miami River, pouring sediment, pollution and excess nutrients into the river. But that's changing, thanks to the restoration work on 60 acres in Yellow Springs, Ohio. In early January, the Ohio Mitigation Program (OMP) completed the initial phase of the restoration at Jacoby Branch in partnership with the Agraria Center for Regenerative Agriculture, an organization whose mission is to cultivate community resilience by modeling regenerative practices that restore ecosystem health and promote equitable food systems. The project re-meandered and reconnected over a mile of degraded stream and created almost four acres of wetland to restore surface water hydrology to the floodplain. Allowing water to access the floodplain more frequently will help to create a cleaner, more diverse ecosystem that will serve as habitat for an abundance of freshwater species, including fish, amphibians, and macroinvertebrates.

Though the design and construction work are finished, the restoration is far from complete. Throughout the winter months, the OMP worked to seed the former fields with native seed mixes and will plant nearly 30,000 tree and shrub seedlings. In time, the young forest will provide important habitat for wildlife, while increasing the ability of the land to hold water by shading the streams and wetlands. The OMP will also work with partners to help control aggressive non-native species, such as bush honeysuckle and Canada thistle. A successful restoration project is a long-term effort, and the OMP will monitor this project for 10 years to support the continued stewardship of the restored stream and newly created wetlands.

The OMP continues to implement a bevy of new stream and wetland restoration projects across the state, with approximately 15 slated for completion by year's end.

Ohio's Natural Areas Grow

Morgan Swamp Preserve in Ashtabula County grew by 100 acres in December 2022 when TNC acquired the Rich tract. The acquisition is hailed as a “crown jewel” addition to the preserve by Director of Protection Terry Seidel, who notes that protection of this massive wetland area helps ensure that the Grand River remains one of the most biodiverse tributaries in the Lake Erie watershed. The preserve now protects 2,154 acres.

Acquisition of the Frame tract in January added 98 acres to Edge of Appalachia Preserve, bringing the Adams County preserve to over 21,000 acres. Part of the larger Lynx Prairie landscape, the property is marked by rolling hills, forested streams and geological features like dolomite cliffs. The preserve protects one of the most expansive landscapes of dry limestone prairie in Ohio and is home to rare and endangered species like Uhler’s sundragon (*Helocordulia uhleri*), jelly lichen (*Enchylium coccophorum*) and a state-threatened soil lichen (*Placidium squamulosum*). As Edge of Appalachia Preserve grows, so too does the ability of the preserve to support larger mammals like state-endangered black bear.

 **EXPLORE MORE** of the natural areas we’ve recently protected in Ohio at nature.org/ohiolandprotection.



Beyond Borders

The Oak Openings Region, which spans northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan, supports an array of plants and wildlife, including dozens of species of conservation concern. But opportunities for southeast Michiganders to connect with this globally rare natural area have been limited. Thanks to a Southeast Michigan Resilience Fund-sponsored project, financed through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation under the provisions of the U.S. Forest Service and the USFWS Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, residents will now have more opportunities to connect with nature.

Working in Monroe and Wayne Counties, TNC and partners from the Green Ribbon Initiative implemented restoration treatments across more than 651 acres of ecologically diverse, high-priority habitats within the Oak Openings Region of southeast Michigan. The project helped strengthen native plant communities and enhance wildlife habitat while also increasing trail access, improving wildlife viewing areas and enhancing sites used for educational programming. “Strengthening regional pride and enhancing local recreational opportunities in this globally rare habitat are imperative to the future preservation of the area,” says Amanda Ludwig, Northwest Ohio conservation coordinator. “We know this project will help bolster opportunities for people to connect with and enjoy this globally rare ecosystem that exists in their own backyard.”

 **TO LEARN MORE** about the Oak Openings Region, visit oakopenings.org.




Energy and Accessibility Upgrades



The Nature Conservancy is shrinking its carbon footprint, thanks to a nationwide partnership between TNC and Rivian, a U.S.-based electric vehicle company. Last year, two EV charging stations were installed at our Grand River Conservation Campus, making Morgan Swamp Preserve one of many that now offer EV charging. And through a donation from Third Sun Kokosing Solar, new solar panels were installed on the pavilion next to the Dr. James K. Bissell Nature Center. The 7.4-kW solar panels will help to power the campus' pavilion lights, the nature center and the new EV charging stations, offsetting the equivalent of 111 tons of CO₂ each year. This carbon offset is equivalent to the carbon that would be absorbed by planting 240 acres of forest.

In addition to renewable energy upgrades, the Grand River Conservation Campus also received several important accessibility updates. These updates help create a more welcoming environment for visitors to the campus by increasing safety and accessibility of the nature center, pavilion, parking area and trails. Updates included the installation of the following:

- ADA surface in pavilion
- ADA pathway from nature center to pavilion
- ADA pathway for student drop-off area
- ADA surface around River Trailhead sign
- ADA pathway to Grand River Overlook
- Motion-sensor lights to the gym and the nature center

 **PLAN YOUR VISIT** to the Grand River Conservation Campus by visiting nature.org/bissellnaturecenter.

BOLSTERING CLEAN ENERGY IN OHIO

Climate and clean energy work is expected to get a boost in Ohio after passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) in 2021 and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) in 2022. With IIJA authorizing over \$2.1 billion nationally for ecosystem restoration and the IRA providing an expected \$19.5 billion to help farmers adopt climate-friendly agricultural practices, the acts represent the largest investments in climate in the country's history.

HOW IIJA AND IRA WILL IMPACT OHIO



\$241 million

toward clean water infrastructure



\$38.2 million

toward clean public transit



\$50.5 million

toward network of EV charging stations



\$122 million

toward infrastructure to bolster climate resilience



\$12.8 billion

toward large-scale clean energy generation

TNC continues to advocate for legislation that supports climate and biodiversity in Ohio and nationally. Learn more about our work to secure a climate-resilient and clean energy future in Ohio at nature.org/ohioclimate.

“Passage of the IRA can help reduce the nation’s carbon emissions by roughly 40% by 2030, putting the U.S. within reach of its international commitments.”

—JENNIFER MORRIS, CEO of The Nature Conservancy

Staff Spotlight

Written by Chad Duplain, Global DEIJ Philanthropy Fellow, and Associate Director of Development for The Nature Conservancy in Ohio

When reflecting on my childhood, my parents like to share the story of when we found baby birds that had fallen from their nest in our suburban backyard. I insisted on saving them. I wanted to be a voice for nature, empathetic to creatures great and small. Not long after, I would watch those same birds perch on power lines and fly across the street to a small, wooded oasis—a place where I would also fill quart-sized buckets full of blackberries and catch fireflies at dusk with my neighbors. We would later watch those woods slowly succumb to development, making room for more homes. It wasn't until I listened to the wedding speeches of two close friends that I realized just how cherished that small, but mighty woody retreat was. It's what led me to start volunteering at a wildlife rehabilitation center with my dad at the age of fifteen and later pursue a degree in Forestry, Fisheries, and Wildlife at The Ohio State University.

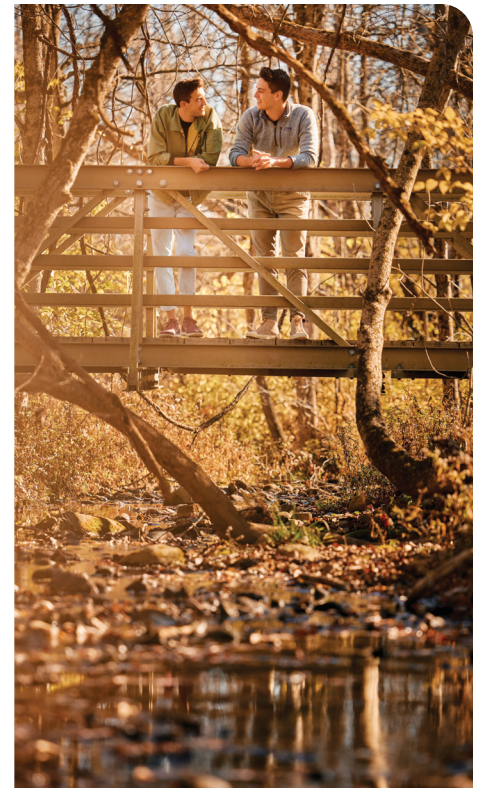
As the years went on, I knew I was in the right field, but sometimes felt that the “magic” or “mystery” of nature that spurred my childlike curiosity was absent from my studies. The emotion and human connection of conservation felt neatly boxed and separated from our focus, in a way that nature wouldn't organically encourage. I was also struggling at the time with my own identity.

It would take me years to find myself, and when I finally came out to close family and friends at the age of 19, I quickly learned what it was like to jump into the deep end of the pool—my privileged life had an awakening. When

my partner Matthew and I first visited a remote nature preserve, we found ourselves looking over our shoulders, releasing our embraced hands when others approached and questioning our safety. It was in that moment that I realized that not everyone experiences the same right and access to nature as we should.

As I began my journey with The Nature Conservancy, I quickly discovered a growing passion for engaging people in our mission. I joined Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice initiatives to help forge this sometimes-missing piece that is so foundational to our success in conservation—people. This work recognizes that there were many before us, and who are still here, who have a deep connection, appreciation and respect for the natural world, a relationship that existed long before colonialism saw nature as something to be sold. Nature is not a resource to be extracted, but a beautiful, synergetic relationship of which we are all a part.

On a recent trip to the Peruvian Amazon, my partner and I re-discovered what it meant to be in absolute awe at the beauty, connection and curiosity of nature—a right, I believe, that should be experienced and cherished by all, equitably and inclusively. I think as children we share this inherent connection to nature, but that connection is sometimes lost as we grow older. Now, in my work with TNC, I find a deep sense of purpose in helping to reignite that connection between people and nature toward the common goal of protecting planet Earth for all.






A VISION OF PEOPLE AS PART OF NATURE

As part of our 2030 goals, TNC is supporting 45 million people whose well-being and livelihoods depend on healthy oceans, freshwater and lands. We are partnering with Indigenous People and other local communities to learn from and support their leadership in stewarding their environment, securing rights to resources, improving economic opportunities, and shaping their future. Learn more about our 2030 goals at [nature.org/solutions](https://www.nature.org/solutions).

SPRING/SUMMER 2023

OUR OHIO NATURE

-  facebook.com/OhioNatureConservancy
-  twitter.com/nature_ohio
-  instagram.com/nature_oh



DISCOVER WAYS TO GIVE

Brown's Lake Bog © Danae Wolfe/TNC

Help create a sustainable world for generations to come.

Contact our gift planners to learn how creating a donor-advised fund, establishing a life-income gift such as a charitable remainder trust, or making a gift of real estate can benefit both you and the lands and waters you love. Contact Meg Sekas in Ohio at:

 (380) 206-2172

 meg.sekas@tnc.org

 nature.org/legacy



THE NATURE CONSERVANCY CANNOT RENDER TAX OR LEGAL ADVICE. PLEASE CONSULT YOUR FINANCIAL ADVISOR BEFORE MAKING A GIFT. PHOVQ23FY01APGH0XX

Celebrating 50 Years OF THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT



Credited with saving 99% of listed species, the Endangered Species Act is the most important and effective piece of legislation for preserving biodiversity. Discover some of the endangered species we're working to protect in Ohio.

Visit nature.org/ohioendangered to learn more.