

FALL/WINTER 2020

# OUR OHIO NATURE

## CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP

### TNC's new Chief Executive Officer visits Ohio nature preserves

How do you take the helm of an international conservation organization amid a global pandemic? You pack up your family and hit the road.

"While it's been wonderful getting to know colleagues, trustees and partners over Zoom, it was essential for me to meet in person and learn more about what The Nature Conservancy is doing on the ground," says Jennifer Morris, who began in her role as TNC's new chief executive officer on May 18.

With health and safety top of mind, Jennifer personally rented an R.V. with her husband, daughter and dog, and left their home in Washington, D.C. to tour the Midwest. There, she met with small groups in outdoor settings, following guidelines set by local and state health agencies. The trip included stops in

Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, New York and Pennsylvania.

Her first stop was the Edge of Appalachia, TNC's oldest and largest Ohio nature preserve.

"Our tour of this 20,000-acre preserve, including along the brand new Cedar Falls Trail, treated Jennifer to one of the most biologically diverse places in the Midwest and provided a glimpse into a history rooted in farms, iron furnaces and grist mills that dominated the area long ago," says Martin McAllister, TNC's Appalachian Forests project manager in Ohio. "Today the landscape boasts healthy and resilient forestlands that TNC actively manages and is working to connect with other conservation areas via projects like the Sunshine Corridor."

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Bill Stanley

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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.



Bill Stanley © David Ike

# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

If you are anything like me, you might be scratching your head and muttering, “Is this still happening?” One minute we were going about our daily lives, spending time with family, friends, neighbors and colleagues. Suddenly, we found ourselves confined at home, absorbing ever-changing information about a new pandemic sweeping the globe.

Though the uncertainty of our future makes us uneasy, it also brings into focus what is most important. One of those things is a reminder of how all living things on our planet are connected. We share air, water and soils that are necessary for our survival. We share cities, towns and neighborhoods. And, especially during tough times, we share nature for peace and solitude.

Also, despite sometimes grim headlines, I am excited to report good news. Even with the challenges of the day, we continue to make strides in advancing TNC’s mission in Ohio. Things have been far from “business as usual,” but our staff and partners have stepped up in a big way, learning new methods of moving the needle to conserve nature for all Ohioans.

As you will see in these pages, we learned to advance our work, like many, via Zoom and other digital platforms. We fielded questions from curious youth on Facebook Live and shared videos of our favorite trails. We held virtual lunch-and-learns, board meetings and property closing, and we even organized a virtual advocacy day between our trustees and elected officials.

Despite lockdowns and distancing, we also experienced some big conservation wins. A highlight includes a visit to Ohio from TNC’s new chief executive officer, Jennifer Morris, as she embarked on a summer road trip dedicated to learning more about our work and people. And we witnessed the signing of the Great American Outdoors Act, a groundbreaking law—decades in the making—that represents a legacy built on the hard work of our current staff and many colleagues who came before us. (Read more about this big news on page 6.)

Our work at TNC has never been more important. Looking forward, nature’s role in our lives will become even more significant as we rebuild our communities, our culture, our policies and our economies in a post-COVID world.

I am excited and proud of the proactive approach we are taking in Ohio to secure clean and abundant water, healthy and resilient lands, and a stable climate that benefits everyone. Thanks to your support, nature has been there for us during this challenging year. I look forward to working with you to protect it so that it can support all living things, forever.

Be safe, and be well,

Bill Stanley  
Ohio State Director  
The Nature Conservancy

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**42.0**  
trees preserved  
for the future



**3,143.0 gallons**  
water not produced



**6,100.2 lbs.**  
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COVER: Jennifer Morris at Great Egret Marsh Preserve © Matt Kovach/The Nature Conservancy

# CONSERVATION HIGHLIGHTS



© Sophie Revis/Groundwork Ohio River Valley

## Groundwork Ohio River Valley Green Corps

The Nature Conservancy contracted with the Groundwork Ohio River Valley Green Corps to remove bush honeysuckle, winter creeper, privet and other invasive plants from 20 forested acres at TNC's Jacoby Branch Mitigation Project to prepare the landscape for wetland restoration. Based in Cincinnati, Groundwork employs young adults who are interested in learning more about working on projects and exploring careers that promote the environment, social justice and civic engagement. Learn more about TNC's work connecting with youth and young adults at [nature.org/engagingohioyouth](https://nature.org/engagingohioyouth).



© Terry Seidel/TNC

## City of Warren

A crew of AmeriCorps volunteers and Nature Conservancy land stewards performed invasive plant control at local parks located along the Mahoning River in the City of Warren. Their efforts advance a management plan, developed by TNC, that is aimed at improving the ecological health and diversity within the parks to benefit the river and surrounding landscape. The project—which concludes in 2021—also expands trails and other natural features to enhance the visitor experience.



University of Toledo professor Kennedy Doro and student Anna Becker use ground-penetrating radar to detect hydrology infrastructure. © Alexis Sakas/TNC

## Sandhill Crane Wetlands

Thanks to support from the Maumee Area of Concern Program and the Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program, The Nature Conservancy acquired a 280-acre parcel adjacent to the Kitty Todd Nature Preserve in northwest Ohio, part of the globally important Oak Openings region. Past glacial activity created ancient beach ridges that support incredible ecological diversity for which the region has become known. This project is part of an ambitious effort to restore 23,000 acres of marginal agricultural land back to native habitat. Restoring this land after decades of conventional agriculture provides an opportunity to welcome back native plants and animals, while also providing flood retention, nutrient storage and improved water quality in Lake Erie. This property also represents a key piece connecting a valuable wildlife habitat corridor.



Nathan Brause © David Ike

## Farmer Advocate For Conservation

The Conservancy launched a new program aimed at training 60 farmers, over three years, to communicate with peers



Screen grab of Facebook Live See Kids Dream session © TNC

## Conservation Connection

The Nature Conservancy's Ohio volunteer coordinator Angie Burke, switched gears amidst COVID guidelines to virtually connect with youth around the state through events organized by the Columbus-based service learning organization, See Kids Dream. In April, Burke participated in a Facebook Live interview with student leaders seeking solutions to challenges that threaten nature in Ohio. Then in June, she demonstrated how to make an "insect hotel"—an easy, DIY project that uses recycled materials to provide habitat for nesting bees and other pollinators inhabiting stems and branches of plants rather than traditional hives.

throughout the Maumee Watershed about best management practices. These practices focus on building healthy soils and managing water to improve farm profits, increase carbon storage and benefit water quality. The program—supported by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in partnership with American Farmland Trust, National Wildlife Federation, Ohio Farm Bureau and The Ohio State University—is accepting applications at <https://sites.google.com/view/farmeradvocate> and has a presence on Facebook at [facebook.com/groups/OhioTNCagriculture](https://facebook.com/groups/OhioTNCagriculture).



Jennifer Morris stands next to a sign at the Edge of Appalachia Nature Preserve. © The Nature Conservancy

According to McAllister, Morris listened intently and asked many questions, including about how she can support the Ohio team's goal of protecting even more forestland—tens of thousands of more acres—over the next five years. She departed the Edge with a potted begonia, a direct descendent of one grown by the late, world-renowned botanist Dr. E. Lucy Braun, who was the first to study this landscape's unique plant communities in great detail.

Morris adds, "Despite setbacks caused by the global pandemic, our team in Ohio is doing everything they can to advance TNC's mission in ways that benefit both local communities and our planet's lands, oceans and fresh water. It was rewarding to see their hard work in action."

Before leaving for her next destination, Morris toured the Kitty Todd Nature Preserve in northwest Ohio's Oak Openings region to learn about TNC's efforts to restore wetlands that are key to filtering waters flowing off nearby farmland. Morris also visited Lake Erie for the first time, where she kayaked along Ohio's coast at the Great Egret Marsh Nature Preserve to witness how TNC is working with partners—at unprecedented scales—to conserve a landscape stressed by growing development and agricultural runoff that fuels harmful algal blooms.

"As we chart a new course forward, we can strengthen nature's role in filtering our air and water, protecting coastal communities from storms and flooding, and even tackling climate change. Now, more than ever, we need to protect nature for our health, our livelihoods and our well-being," says Morris. "I was glad to see that taking place in Ohio, while meeting new colleagues, and look forward to following this important work in the years ahead."



Visit [nature.org/naturesfuture](https://www.nature.org/naturesfuture) to read "Nature's Future Is Our Future" by Jennifer Morris.

# FACES OF CONSERVATION

## The Nature Conservancy Welcomes New Ohio Trustees



**William "Doug" Franklin** has spent more than three decades as a community activist, both as an elected official and private citizen. In 2011, Doug became the City of Warren's 35th mayor after serving in other roles, including as president of city council and director of public service and safety. As mayor, Doug has focused on several initiatives, including the revitalization of Warren's downtown and green spaces. Prior to entering public service, Doug worked at General Motors for 25 years as a production and alternate UAW benefits representative. Born and raised in Warren, Doug has deep roots in the community and makes promoting volunteerism throughout the area one of his priorities. He is an alumnus of Warren Western Reserve High School and earned his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and American Government from Kent State University. Doug is married to Kenya Franklin and is the proud father of four sons.



**John O'Meara** served as executive director of Metro Parks from 1998 through 2014 and oversaw the operation of 18 parks encompassing more than 27,000 acres. During his tenure, the system added seven parks and two nature centers, expanded its network of trails, became a statewide leader in habitat restoration, and expanded programming to include all Columbus city elementary schools and most suburban school districts. Prior to his appointment, John was director of the Geauga Park District, a scenic river coordinator for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, a naturalist with Cleveland Metroparks and a natural resources conservation teacher at a vocational high school. He is a Distinguished Alumnus of The Ohio State University's College of Food, Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, where he also earned bachelor's and master's degrees in natural resources. John and his wife, Helen, live in Columbus, where he enjoys hiking, canoeing, mountain climbing and other outdoor activities.

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## BEYOND BORDERS

### Donor Spotlight: Tadd and Nancy Seitz

Last spring, Ohio residents Tadd and Nancy Seitz established a \$500,000 endowment to support The Nature Conservancy's work in neighboring Michigan.

"Nancy and I were born and raised in Grand Rapids and spent many wonderful times at Lake Michigan," says Tadd Seitz. "This means a lot to us that we are able to help make a difference to make sure other people will enjoy this beautiful place, too."

Like in Ohio, TNC has a long history of leading conservation in west Michigan, particularly in restoring and managing a dune complex that extends along the Lake Michigan shoreline.

Endowments are a valuable source of sustained revenue for TNC and represent an excellent method for creating a lasting legacy of support for conservation efforts. The endowment to Michigan is not the Seitzes' first. In 2017, the couple set up a \$500,000 endowment for TNC's work in Ohio.

"Endowments give us the confidence and support that we need to pursue really ambitious and long-term solutions that benefit people and our planet," says Bill Stanley, TNC's state director in Ohio. "We are so grateful for this legacy of the Seitzes, whose generosity, like nature, knows no borders."



Photo © Courtesy of Tadd and Nancy Seitz

# LANDMARK LEGISLATION

## Congress Passes the Great American Outdoors Act



Cuyahoga Valley National Park © Shutterstock

Ohio's wild and scenic spaces represent more than just lands and waters—they reflect a collective history, culture and way of life for all Ohioans. That is why The Nature Conservancy was thrilled when the U.S. Senate (73-25) and the U.S. House of Representatives (310-107) made conservation history with their bipartisan support and passage of the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA), which was signed into law last summer.

“The GAOA is a legacy that we leave for future generations,” says Bill Stanley, TNC’s state director in Ohio. “The new law secures resources needed to care for our public lands—places that are key to Ohio’s economy, our communities and our well-being.”

The GAOA provides full and permanent funding of \$900 million each year for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which is supported by royalties from offshore oil and gas revenues—not taxpayer dollars. Since 1964, the LWCF—which has never been fully funded at its Congressionally authorized level—has provided Ohio with \$325 million to conserve natural, historic and cultural resources at places like Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Wayne National Forest, Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, East Fork State Park, the James Garfield National Historic Site, and roughly 1,500 other federal, state and local public lands.

The LWCF has also been used to build hiking and biking trails in state and local parks, and to construct playgrounds and ballfields in local communities. The LWCF is responsible for funding our nation’s Forest Legacy Program, which protects working forests from conversion to non-forest land uses. Matching grants from state and local governments further leverage this financial support to benefit projects in Ohio and around the country.

The GAOA also includes the Restore Our Parks Act, which invests \$1.9 billion annually—for five years—to address a maintenance backlog in national parks and other public lands, an issue that Ohio Senator Rob Portman has long championed and fought to include in this new law.

“This year, we have seen an increase in the recreational use of parks and other natural areas that are deteriorating due to inadequate funding over the past decade or more,” says Bob Eckardt, a TNC trustee in Ohio. “It is great to see so many people turning to nature in order to stay safe and healthy. I speak on behalf of TNC’s staff, trustees and members in thanking our Ohio Representatives—Anthony Gonzalez, Joyce Beatty, Marcy Kaptur and Steve Stivers—for cosponsoring the legislation in the House, and our Senators Rob Portman and Sherrod Brown for supporting this new law that benefits every American.”



Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge © Ariana Lindquist



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### Nature Brings the Green

Investments in conservation serve as powerful drivers of economic growth that multiply local, state and national economies. According to a study conducted by The Ohio State University, an average of 171 million outdoor recreation trips infuse \$5.9 billion into the state’s economy each year. The outdoor recreation industry also employs approximately 132,000 Ohioans and contributes \$8.1 billion to the state’s economy annually.

# BY THE NUMBERS

While a lot has changed since the arrival of COVID-19, The Nature Conservancy's efforts to **conserve the plants and animals on which all life depends** carry on.

We are proud to report several additional achievements since we checked in last spring. This creativity and resilience will continue to inspire the way we work moving forward.



# 3,570

## volunteer hours

logged in fiscal year 2020 helping to remove invasive plants, complete surveys of fragile habitats, collect native seeds and monitor pollinators



# 5

times **Leo Almeida, senior climate policy associate, testified in the Ohio General Assembly** in opposition to House Bill 6 (now part of a repeal effort)



# 2.85

## new miles of trail constructed

for the public's enjoyment (the Barbara A. Lipscomb Trail at Snow Lake and the Helen C. Black Trail at the Edge of Appalachia Preserve)



# 114

## members and supporters

who registered for the first-ever virtual State of The Nature Conservancy in Ohio webinar



# 16,942

## new users

visiting the Choosing Clean Energy in Ohio webpage, due to our digital ad campaign



# 4

## members of Congress

who said TNC's advocacy efforts played a role in their eventual sponsorship of the Great American Outdoors Act



# 7

## meetings (in one day)

with Ohio's Congressional delegation to advocate for full and permanent funding for the Land & Water Conservation Fund

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Snow Lake Preserve © Terry Seidel/The Nature Conservancy

The water that we drink.  
The air that we breathe.  
The land that sustains us.  
Connects us all.



Cinnamon ferns © Angie Cole

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