

2023

# IMPACT

REPORT



# OUR

Protecting the lands and water on which all life depends.

# MISSION

The Nature Conservancy is the leading conservation organization working worldwide to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. TNC in Louisiana protects local resources, ecosystems and habitats through dedicated efforts based on scientific research, valuable partnerships and passion.



# DEAR TNC SUPPORTERS,

## *Impact Rooted in Connectivity*

Five years ago, we planted the seeds of new goals. The seeds of a mission that would amplify our impact in conserving the place we call home and protecting the resources we depend on. Your support and the support of many fellow stakeholders and partners provided our mission with the fertile soil it needed to flourish. Now, we witness the budding growth of our combined efforts.

As our team's conservation work branches out through our lands, we as people are branching out, making meaningful connections throughout our state and beyond. We are all working toward a common goal: to conserve and protect Louisiana's unique landscapes.

By connecting resources with passion, we've made a rippling impact that echoes from the bayous of the Atchafalaya Basin to future generations of conservation leaders. This progress was made possible because of you. Every acre protected, every milestone reached and every step taken along the way could not have been accomplished without you.

We are all a piece of the puzzle, and this report is the picture we create when we connect – one of thriving ecosystems and resilient communities. But this picture is not a still image. As we look forward, we hope for more pieces to come together, creating a brighter future fueled by the lasting connections we strive to create.



**Karen Gautreaux**  
*State Director*

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# IMPACT **IN ACTION**

## Uncovering Nature-Based Solutions

By connecting with communities, fostering collaboration and forming meaningful partnerships, we are making a change. Through the donations and dedication of our supporters, we've been able to put ideas into action and make a real impact in defending Louisiana's natural resources. ***Together, we stand up for nature.***





## COASTAL RESTORATION

Through oyster reef restoration, we work to protect coastal habitats, fuel the local economy and improve coastal resilience from erosion and storm surges.



## WATER QUALITY

We are working to restore the Atchafalaya's natural processes by reconnecting historical bayous by establishing drains through canal banks to improve water quality and habitats for the watershed.



## LONGLEAF PINE

Three of our preserves highlight how the restoration and management of longleaf pine flatwood savannahs can be modeled so private landowners can learn to restore the historic structure and composition of this endangered system.

**More than 42%** of Louisiana properties are at risk of flooding over the next 30 years.

### Louisiana Watershed Initiative

To support communities faced with annual flooding along the Mississippi River, TNC completed the largest floodplain restoration project in its history at Mollicy Farms, reconnecting 25 square miles of former floodplain forest back to Louisiana's Ouachita River.

#### 2030 Goal:

Helping People on the Front Lines



**Just over 10%** of Louisiana's total area is under some form of protection statewide; that's **3,648,777 acres**.

### Park Reforestation

To offset the destruction and deforestation caused by Hurricane Laura, TNC planted 10,000 longleaf pine and other native trees and shrubs at Sam Houston Jones State Park, restoring the park while also providing natural ways to reduce carbon emissions.

#### 2030 Goal:

Tackling Carbon Emissions



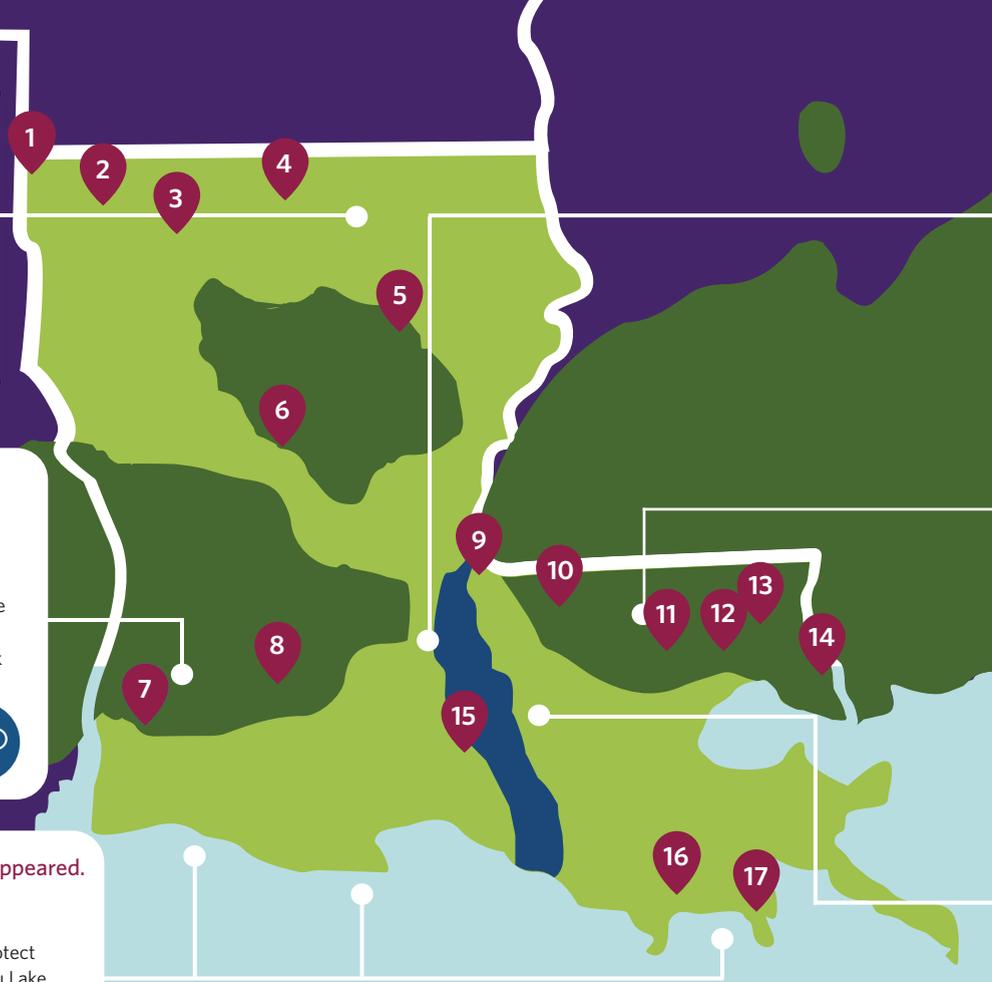
**50-80%** of oysters in the Gulf of Mexico have disappeared.

### Oyster Reef Restoration

Since 2017, TNC has restored 2.5 miles of oyster reefs to protect the shoreline of Sabine National Wildlife Refuge in Calcasieu Lake, provide habitat for fish and shellfish and improve water quality along the coast.

#### 2030 Goal:

Deepening Solutions for Our Ocean



Gulf of Mexico



**Learn more about our 2030 Goals**

Louisiana accounts for **80% of wetland loss in the U.S.**

### Atchafalaya Basin Restoration

We are working to remove harmful dead zones in the Atchafalaya River Basin by shaving down man-made spoil banks and establishing drains through canal banks in the south. This improves water quality by bringing good water in and pushing bad water out.

**2030 Goal:**  
Conserving the World's Freshwater



Longleaf pines now cover **less than 5%** of their original range.

### Longleaf Pine Conservation

Through the acquisition, restoration and management of longleaf pine flatwood savanna, we focus on ensuring the long-term viability of this vital landscape. In addition to our preserves, we also partner with landowners to protect over 10,000 acres of longleaf pine on private land.

**2030 Goal:**  
Saving Healthy Lands for a Healthier Planet



Louisiana loses an acre of land every 100 minutes.

### Louisiana Outdoors Forever

Passed during the 2022 legislative session, the Louisiana Outdoors Forever Program helps fund local conservation projects that protect drinking water supplies, conserve wildlife habitat and much more. As part of the Louisiana Outdoors Coalition, TNC and other partners helped establish the program.

**2030 Goal:**  
Lighting the Way



## Places We Protect

1. Caddo Black Bayou 
2. Upper West Gulf Coastal Plain 
3. Bayou Dorcheat Preserve 
4. Summerfield Springs Preserve 
5. Copenhagen Hills Preserve 
6. Lower West Gulf Coastal Plain 
7. Persimmon Gully Preserve 
8. CC Road Savanna Preserve 
9. Upper East Gulf Coastal Plain 
10. Mary Ann Brown Preserve 
11. Lake Ramsay Preserve 
12. Abita Creek Flatwoods Preserve 
13. Talisheek Pine Wetlands Preserve 
14. Lower Pearl River Partnership 
15. Cypress Island 
16. Louisiana Gulf Coast Praries and Marshes 
17. Grand Isle 

### MAP KEY

-  Limited Access
-  Open to Public
-  Closed to Public
-  Nature Preserve
-  Long Leaf Pine
-  Atchafalaya River Basin

A group of people are kayaking in a marshy area with tall grasses and water. The kayakers are wearing life jackets and paddling. The scene is captured from a low angle, showing the kayakers in the foreground and the marsh extending into the distance under a clear blue sky.

SUCCESS FROM SUPPORT

# LOUISIANA OUTDOORS FOREVER

Passed during the 2022 legislative session, House Bill 762 created the “Louisiana Outdoors Forever Program.” Introduced by Representative Jerome “Zee” Zeringue, the program funds outdoor conservation projects that protect drinking water supplies, conserve wildlife habitat, provide recreational opportunities in urban and rural areas, sustain working farms and forests and much more. This program not only helps increase the conservation of the state’s natural resources, but it also bolsters the state’s economy and leverages matching funds. As part of the Louisiana Outdoors Coalition, TNC and many other conservation groups and organizations work to promote the program’s benefits.

***Together, we are committed to strengthening our investment in protecting water, wildlife and land.***



“Louisiana’s state motto is ‘The Sportsman’s Paradise,’ and we want to ensure that we have the ability to sustain and enhance that moniker. This program is another arrow in the quiver that we use to achieve that.”

- Rep. Jerome Zeringue, LA House of Representatives



Learn more about  
Louisiana Outdoors Forever

## Project Timeline

- July 2017** Initial meeting of natural resource agencies and conservation organizations
- June 2018** Conservation Finance Feasibility Study completed
- August 2018** Louisiana Statewide Conservation Issues Survey Completed
- December 2020** Created website and Facebook sites
- April 2021** HCR #55 passed legislature establishing the Outdoor Conservation Study Group
- February 2022** Louisiana Conservation Study Group final recommendations submitted to Legislature
- June 2022** House Bill 762 establishing the Louisiana Outdoors Forever program overwhelmingly passed the Senate and House Chambers
- August 2022** Project Selection Board and Technical Advisory Board created
- August 2022** Rule Making process begins to establish framework of the program, including eligibility, criteria, application, etc.
- Next Steps** First Request for Proposals issued to solicit applications for conservation project funding in Louisiana

A woman wearing a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses is smiling while driving a boat through a wooded area. The boat is filled with fishing gear, including large fishing nets draped over the side. The background shows a dense forest with tall trees.

SUCCESS FROM SUPPORT

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# CONSERVATION FELLOWS

Our Conservation Fellows Program partners with participating universities to **provide graduate students with on-the-ground experience for solving complex issues.** As active participants on TNC's team, fellows engage in all facets of conservation, receive science communication mentoring from TNC staff, and participate in communications workshops to learn how to share their research with different audiences. Once finished with their projects, fellows' research results are used to impact conservation in Louisiana and beyond. Trained in the multiple facets of issues and adept at leading effective partnerships, fellows leave the program prepared to solve conservation problems on different scales. We envision the program extending beyond Louisiana and incorporating talents not often associated with conservation, like technology development, policy building and marketing.



“I am happy to support the Conservation Fellows program and learn about the vital research being done in the Atchafalaya Basin.”

- **Charlie Lamar**, Chairman and CEO of Woodlawn Investments Inc.

## Student Profiles



**Lauren Kong**

**Project: Crawfish Research**

**During her time as a fellow, Lauren felt like a valued team member, and her research continues to contribute to our restoration efforts in the Basin.**

*“I am very grateful for The Nature Conservancy and them giving me a chance to do this work. I know the conservation team valued my input, but I also really valued them as well. I think this experience really did set me on the path for the career that I wanted, and I sincerely hope other people have opportunities like the one I had as a Conservation Fellow.”*



**Justin Kozak**

**Project: Water Management**

**As a fellow, Justin published two scientific papers with his mentor focused on streamlining management decisions in the Atchafalaya and water management.**

*“My time as a TNC Fellow paved the way for my current position as the Nature Based Solutions Manager for TNC in Texas. I really appreciate the one-of-a-kind experience this program gave me, and I hope others take advantage of this amazing opportunity.”*

SUCCESS FROM SUPPORT

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# FOREST PROGRAM

TNC protects longleaf pine forests through **acquisition, restoration and management on its own lands, including Talisheek Pine Wetlands Preserve, Lake Ramsay Preserve and Abita Creek Flatwoods Preserve**. We also partner with landowners to ensure the long-term viability of the savanna habitat with a project that encompasses over 10,000 acres of private land in the surrounding area. To make an impact over such an enormous range, TNC also fosters meaningful relationships with the U.S. Forest Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department of Defense. These relationships solidified within a framework known as America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative, which TNC chairs, help drive the protection, restoration and management of these unique and irreplaceable forest ecosystems.



Each year, **448k acres** of Louisiana forest are harvested.



TNC has protected **308,518 acres** in Louisiana.



TNC protects **89 state-tracked Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) plant species** on its preserves, all associated with forests.



This year, TNC expects to burn **2,280 acres**.





SUCCESS FROM SUPPORT

# OYSTER REEFS

To improve the health of the Gulf of Mexico, the Louisiana coast and its coastal habitats, TNC has constructed 7.5 miles of oyster reefs along shorelines in Vermilion Bay, Grand Isle, St. Bernard Parish, and Calcasieu Lake. What starts as boxes of rocks evolve into a living reef, giving larvae a home to grow and reproduce. Our oyster reef restoration work aims to **protect coastal habitats, fuel the local economy and increase coastal resilience.**



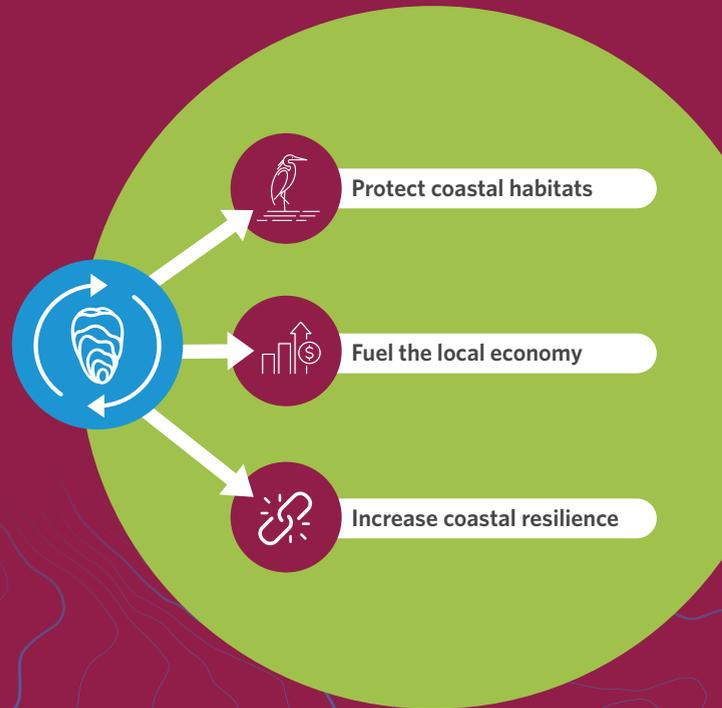
"TNC's oyster reef restoration and coastal shoreline protection projects are critical because they create and restore natural systems that increase protection for communities from coastal hazards, enhance water quality, and improve habitats for numerous fish and wildlife species."

- **Amy Smith Kyle**, Coastal Projects Manager



"As a lifelong Louisianian and lover of all things marsh and coast in our unique state, I am proud of TNC's amazing work to build oyster reefs along the vulnerable coast. This project is critically important as part of TNC's strategy to create habitats that support fisheries and reduce coastal erosion. TNC is the conservation organization that I passionately support because of its 'can do' approach that is backed by science and collaboration with like-minded stakeholders."

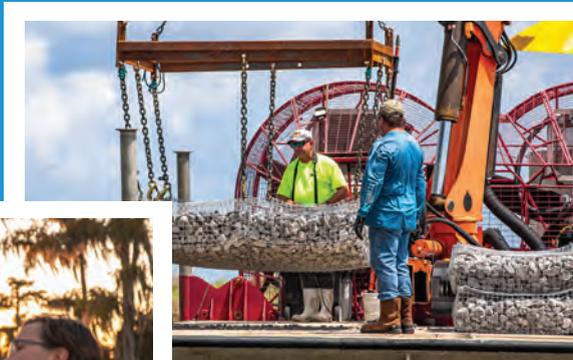
- **Mary Lavigne**, TNC Louisiana Trustee



# OUR SUPPORTERS

Thank you to our supporters. Your generosity and passion drive our ability to stand up for nature. ***Every acre*** preserved, ***every mile*** restored and ***every habitat*** saved begins with you. Protecting Louisiana's natural resources would not be possible without your donations and dedication.

Today, we are facing the biggest, most complex environmental challenges in our lifetime as the dual crises of rapid climate change and biodiversity loss threaten our planet. ***Thanks to your support***, we are doing our part in Louisiana to preserve biodiversity and fortify resilient landscapes that can safeguard the people and places most vulnerable to these issues we all face.



# TREESILIENCE PROJECT

***Resilience starts with restoration.*** After enduring catastrophic damages caused by hurricanes Ida and Laura, The Nature Conservancy plans to bring Treesilience to Louisiana.

Treesilience is a growing national initiative focusing on removing the barriers to a healthy canopy in community forests which currently includes removal and replacement of dead or dying trees, mature tree maintenance and site preparation to improve planting conditions for new plantings.



# GET INVOLVED

**BECOME A  
CHANGEMAKER**

## DONATE

Protect the nature you love in Louisiana and around the world today. Scan here to support conservation in Louisiana.



## CONNECT

Stay up to date on all of our projects and the exciting discoveries we make along the way!

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