



Rooted to the Land
2023





LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Alaskan experience is defined by a powerful connection to place. Although development pressures and the rapid pace of change have impacted that connection, people across the state are working to rebuild and redefine it in inspiring and creative new ways.

TNC Alaska is honored to count many of these leaders among our most valued partners. We're working with Indigenous peoples and local communities to provide science, resources, capacity building and elbow grease to support their priorities. Our work is rooted in relationships and a deep commitment to ensuring Alaska is a place where both people and nature thrive.

Now, 35 years after we began our work here, we're witnessing a revolution in the way Alaska's lands and resources are managed:

- In Southeast Alaska, land managers have shifted from managing the forests for timber to managing for sustainability;
- In Bristol Bay, local communities have seen their hard work pay off with a first round of protections for the Pebble Mine site;
- Alaska — once a stronghold for climate denialism — is now a proving ground for climate change technology and a growing renewable energy economy.

We've helped forge dynamic coalitions and are working alongside our partners to create a new kind of conservation that is anchored in local values and priorities. With a connection as deep as Alaskans have with the lands, waters and resources on which we depend, we know this is the key to truly lasting, tangible outcomes for both people and nature. Thank you for being a part of this transformational work.

Ivy Spohnholz,
State Director, TNC Alaska

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ROOTED TO THE LAND

In Alaska, ties to the land extend back thousands of years. Throughout this time, Alaska Natives practiced hands-on stewardship of Alaska's lands and waters, which resulted in the remarkable abundance for which Alaska is known around the world. Indigenous stewardship has been shown to produce better outcomes for biodiversity than Western-style management on public lands.

To ensure these stewardship practices can continue, we must support Indigenous rights and authority over their lands, waters and resources — starting with enabling conditions like economic and educational opportunities and leadership development. Guided by TNC's Voice, Choice and Action framework, we are collaborating with people and communities throughout Alaska to produce powerful, lasting results for the lands and waters on which we all depend.

ALASKA'S NEW POLICY SHOP

This year, TNC Alaska's new government relations program provided Alaska legislators with information about carbon credits and supported six different bills. Two bills that encourage local economic opportunities passed. The other four bills are up for consideration in 2024. We also expanded our federal policy work with TNC's North America Policy and Government Relations team. We've seen our priorities for Alaska written into revised federal policy, given feedback on draft legislation that protects Alaska's coastal resources and economies, and improved national understanding of high-profile resource issues that impact Alaska.

"We are at a critical moment in Alaska — policymakers are embracing renewables to grow our energy independence, exploring carbon markets on state lands, and encouraging a new approach to energy policy. We have a tremendous opportunity to shape this work, and I am proud that our policy program represents the unique needs of Alaska's communities."

-Kelsey Schober, Director of Government Relations, TNC Alaska



CLIMATE

Alaska is poised to lead the world with solutions



HOPE IN A CHANGING WORLD

TNC Alaska has made climate action central to our strategic framework for our work through 2030 in recognition of both the urgency of the problem and Alaska’s potential to contribute to solutions. We are exploring creative ways to sequester carbon using nature and will promote the smart use of renewables in rural and urban communities throughout the state. TNC Alaska expects this work will make communities more energy independent, resilient, and economically and environmentally sustainable. We look forward to continuing this work through The Nature Conservancy’s policy, science and community-centered conservation approach.

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Alaska is poised to lead the world with solutions to the greatest challenge of our time — climate change. Throughout the state, individuals, businesses and organizations are doing inspiring work on the front lines of a rapidly changing landscape.

We’re working to catalyze climate action — in Alaska and beyond — by bringing Alaskans together under our Climate Opportunities Assessment project. This year we hosted roundtables on innovation and economics, and commissioned reports on both biologic and geologic carbon storage projects and leveraging carbon-credit sales. Our work provides a solutions-oriented framework for addressing climate challenges.

WOMEN WHO FISH TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

Last fall, TNC’s Women in Climate program brought together women from across the nation to tackle the impacts of climate change on the nation’s fishing industry. Together, these leaders worked to generate innovative ideas on how the industry can become more resilient in the face of climate change and to build a network of women working together on three key issues: ensuring all voices are included; obtaining and using data and science; and advancing inclusive policy for a stronger fishing industry.

MAPPING CARBON

TNC’s Emerald Edge team has mapped and calculated the amount of carbon stored in over 100 million acres of forest ranging from Oregon to Kodiak Island, Alaska. The Emerald Edge program spans the largest coastal temperate rainforest on Earth, a ribbon of dense forest along the coast from Washington to British Columbia to Alaska.

This ambitious effort, led by the Alaska team, found the equivalent of 5 billion metric tonnes of carbon dioxide locked up in the Emerald Edge, an asset of global importance that should be managed for and considered when making land-use decisions. This carbon can be protected using a suite of nature-based approaches to tackling climate change that we call Natural Climate Solutions. In Alaska, the study identified and mapped 3 million forested acres of federal, state, Indigenous, municipal and privately owned forest suitable for Natural Climate Solutions.

The mapping team is collaborating with TNC’s Global Science team to create a web-based mapping tool that will help communities and landowners identify and launch forest carbon projects. It is also working to publish a peer-reviewed paper that can help inform similar mapping efforts around the globe.

“We knew these forests stored lots of carbon. However, until now, we didn’t have the tools to rapidly assess opportunities to improve forest carbon storage for climate mitigation.”
-Colin Shanley, TNC Alaska’s GIS Analyst and the study’s lead scientist





BRISTOL BAY

Our efforts have been **collaborative**, creative and solidly diversified

EARTH'S LAST, BEST SALMON STRONGHOLD

It was a momentous year for Bristol Bay. After a decades-long fight, the Pebble Mine has been stopped — for now. The region, galvanized and united in its steadfast opposition to the mine, has answered the question of “What’s next?” with similar solidarity: we are now pursuing permanent protections for the Bristol Bay watershed.

Securing permanent protections for Bristol Bay aligns perfectly with The Nature Conservancy’s top priorities. Part of what makes Bristol Bay globally significant is that it is relatively undisturbed by the pressures of urbanization, which makes it an excellent hedge against climate change and biodiversity loss. Here, the Yup’ik, Alutiiq and Dena’ina people still travel to fish camp each summer to put up a catch that will supply families, elders and communities throughout the year.

TNC has been active in Bristol Bay for more than 25 years and contributed research that heavily informed the federal government’s understanding of the watershed. As the fight to oppose the Pebble Mine has evolved, so has our engagement. With more than a dozen active mine permits in the region today — and challenges to the Pebble veto already on the horizon — we can’t afford to spend generations fighting each new mining permit. Instead, TNC Alaska is lending its weight to the effort to secure permanent protections for this world-class fishery and watershed through public policy work at the state and federal level.

We know the work ahead will not be easy, but we are committed to it.

EPA VETOES PEBBLE MINE

In late January of 2023, the Environmental Protection Agency released its long-awaited final determination on the Pebble Mine, rejecting the proposal to build one of the world’s largest open-pit mines at the headwaters of the Bristol Bay watershed. For years, we joined our many Bristol Bay partners and supporters in asking the EPA to stop Pebble, and together we celebrated the EPA’s decision earlier this year. The EPA’s veto of Pebble under Section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act is largely expected to withstand legal challenges, although this notion is already being tested.

However, the EPA’s final determination applies only to the specific mine plan proposed by Pebble Limited Partnership. More than a dozen active permits for mines of various sizes lie outside the area covered by the Pebble veto and are part of the reason regional partners are united in seeking permanent protections for the entire watershed.

PEDRO BAY CONSERVATION EASEMENT

Our efforts to “Stop Pebble” have been collaborative, creative and solidly diversified. Last year we joined an effort led by The Conservation Foundation to secure conservation easements on 44,000 acres of land owned by Pedro Bay Corporation, the Alaska Native village corporation for Pedro Bay. In December of 2022, the easements were purchased, blocking a crucial transportation corridor that was part of the Pebble Mine plan for trucking ore to a deep-water port and off to market.



BELOW | In May, several Indigenous and conservation leaders from Bristol Bay and beyond were invited to the White House to celebrate some of the Biden Administration’s major conservation achievements, including the EPA’s veto of the Pebble Mine. Pictured left to right are TNC Alaska trustee Ben Mallott, chapter director Ivy Spohnholz, and government relations director Kelsey Schober.



CIULISTET — THE FUTURE OF BRISTOL BAY

TNC Alaska continues to support valuable work like Bristol Bay Native Association's emerging-leader development program, Ciulistet, which graduated its second class of future Bristol Bay leaders in the spring of 2023. This innovative new program emerged from a TNC-coordinated learning exchange between Indigenous leaders in Bristol Bay and Southeast Alaska. Participants learn to lead in their community, Tribe or in business, and to develop the skills to continue stewarding lands and waters alongside sustainable economic development.

"There is no greater power for conservation than the expertise that comes from living on the landscape as long as the cultures in Bristol Bay have. This connection to place can't be replicated, duplicated or taught anywhere but on the land itself through thousands of years of interactions," says Branden Bornemann, Bristol Bay program director for TNC Alaska.

By arming the region's youth with the knowledge and skills to exercise greater authority over their lands and resources, Ciulistet is preparing Bristol Bay's next generation to steward this globally significant watershed into the future. "The students bring their passion and connection to the land, resources and culture to bear in a way that no one else can," says Bornemann.



ABOVE | At a retreat in April, Ciulistet participants mapped out places in Bristol Bay that hold meaning to them.

RIGHT | Mary Hostetter, working on the Kvichak River.



LAUNCHING BRISTOL BAY'S INDIGENOUS GUARDIANS

For Mary Hostetter and Bill Kane, tribal stewards for the Alaska Native Village of Igiugig, launching an Indigenous Guardians program in Bristol Bay has been a labor of love.

In 2021, Hostetter — who is Aleut and Yup'ik and was raised in Igiugig — participated in an Indigenous ecosystem stewardship exchange program with Indigenous stewards from around the globe. She and her partner, Kane, a biologist from Minnesota, started thinking about how they could bring resources to the effort to protect Bristol Bay.

"Bristol Bay is the last stronghold for wild sockeye salmon," Hostetter said. "It provides nearly 50% of the wild sockeye salmon to the world and supports some of the last salmon peoples on the Earth."

Last summer, the village was awarded a grant to start an Indigenous Guardians program in Bristol Bay. Guardians use Indigenous and Western science to manage, protect and restore their lands. Kane and Hostetter hope the program will also "address general community well-being and provide meaningful jobs and employment skills," Kane said.

TNC Alaska worked with Kane and Hostetter to help launch the program's pilot project, the re-installation of an old U.S. Geological Survey stream gauge near the headwaters of the Kvichak River. The gauge will provide baseline data for other research and monitoring efforts, and an opportunity to train the region's first Indigenous Guardians.

"I want Bristol Bay and Nanvarpak — or Lake Iliamna — to remain this way for the seven generations to come. This land is not my land. It is not our land. It is the land of our future. And in order to do that, we need to protect it today."

-Mary Hostetter, Tribal Steward, Igiugig Village Council

TONGASS

We have seen a seismic **shift** in the approach to conservation



THE PUSH FOR PROGRESS IN THE FOREST

For more than 20 years, TNC Alaska has worked to protect and restore the lush natural abundance of the Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska. In recent years, we have seen a seismic shift in the way landowners, nonprofits, government entities and communities approach conservation.

In 2021, the Forest Service announced an end to the large-scale old-growth logging that began half a century ago. Earlier in 2021, Sealaska, the regional Alaska Native corporation for Southeast Alaska, also announced it would end its logging program. Sealaska followed up with \$10 million to launch the Seacoast Trust, a permanent funding mechanism to fully support and expand the Sustainable Southeast Partnership. TNC quickly signed on to match Sealaska's contribution with \$8 million, and many other donors have since joined the effort.

The Sustainable Southeast Partnership, established more than a decade ago by TNC Alaska and partners to work toward community and environmental sustainability, is now active in 13 communities. New approaches to land management have grown out of these efforts, like community forest partnerships.

This is truly an exciting time not only for conservation in Alaska, but for communities grappling with related social justice issues that need to be redressed in order to see lasting change. We will continue to do our part to push for progress in the forest.

RESTORING DOG SALMON CREEK

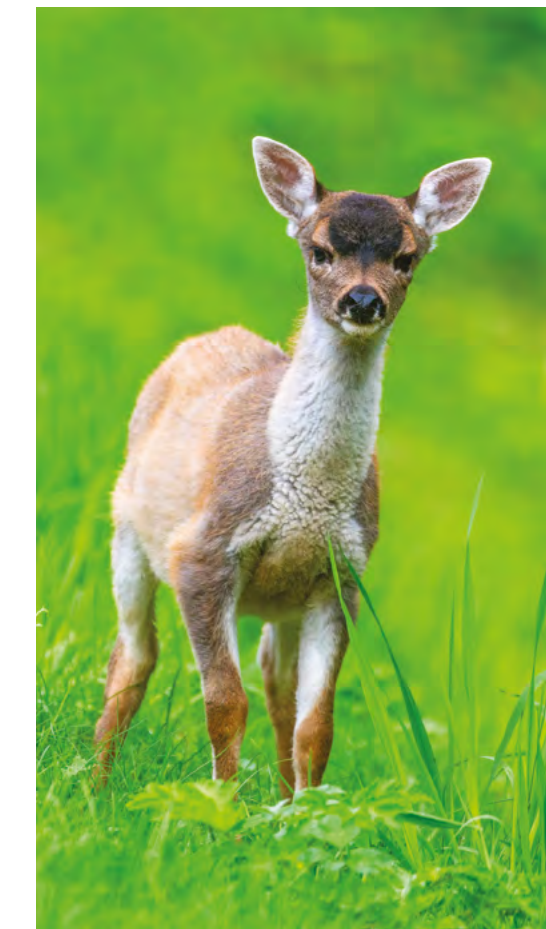
At Dog Salmon Creek on Prince of Wales Island, we completed the first-ever joint project between The Nature Conservancy and the Forest Service, aimed at improving wildlife habitat while also supporting a future young-growth timber industry. Five years in the making, this 950-acre restoration project proved that forest treatments could benefit both wildlife and timber, which were historically thought to be incompatible.

“Making the forest more livable for wildlife while supporting sustainable businesses benefits communities who depend on both healthy deer populations and forests for their livelihoods,” says Julia Nave, Southeast Alaska program director for TNC Alaska.

Building from the success of Dog Salmon Creek, TNC is now managing two new restoration projects for the Forest Service in the Hoonah Ranger District and on Prince of Wales Island, ultimately working to institutionalize these changes in management and supporting the Forest Service and other landowners across the state to undertake projects like this on their own.

ENSURING HEALTHY DEER THROUGH EDUCATION

TNC Alaska has spent decades working to bridge the divides between groups historically at odds in the Tongass. In the fall of 2022, we brought together community members, scientists, land and wildlife managers, and hunters — groups that have often disagreed about how to best manage the deer population on Prince of Wales, an important source of food for many on the remote island. The Deer Summit focused on enhancing understanding of what drives numbers down — and up — so we can all work to ensure healthy deer populations. TNC's role as a convener in these discussions is closely aligned with our organizational belief that we must work together to solve our planet's toughest problems.



COMMUNITY FOREST PARTNERSHIPS

Healing the divides in Southeast Alaska has fostered an innovative approach to land management: community forest partnerships. These partnerships bring Tribes, Alaska Native corporations, nonprofits, local, state and federal governments, and other partners together to manage connected parcels of land with a patchwork of owners. Projects reflect shared goals, have equal buy-in and prioritize subsistence hunting and fishing to improve local food security and community well-being.

TNC helped establish the Hoonah Native Forest Partnership, Southeast Alaska's first community forest, in 2014. Word spread, and the Sustainable Southeast Partnership assisted other communities eager to launch their own. Today there are three community forest partnerships — and likely more on the way.

These partnerships are valuable laboratories for both Western and Indigenous science and the transfer of knowledge between generations. The Alaskan Youth Stewards program and the emerging Indigenous Guardians program work in the forests, gathering data and making valuable observations. This focus on reconnecting to the land and the traditional role as guardians of the forest harkens back millennia and heralds a continuing abundance for the next 10,000 years.

SEACOAST TRUST

In mid-2022, TNC Alaska joined with partners in Southeast Alaska to celebrate a major milestone — we collectively met the Seacoast Trust's first major fundraising goal of \$20 million. The Trust, which has now raised more than \$21 million, is designed to fund the work of the Sustainable Southeast Partnership in perpetuity. The Nature Conservancy was a founding donor to the Seacoast Trust and has contributed \$8 million to the trust to date.



ACCELERATING CONSERVATION

There is immense power in gathering and focused collaboration, as demonstrated by the project “accelerators” hosted by TNC's Emerald Edge program in Southeast Alaska. Accelerators are multi-day events intended to take projects from a seed of an idea and accelerate project development after the event. Accelerators bring local communities and organizations together to focus on community priorities, emphasizing relationships as the foundation for impactful work. The conservation gains are already considerable. The Seacoast Trust, born from a 2019 accelerator, is one success story and exciting new projects are emerging — including the creation of an Indigenous Guardians program by the Yakutat Tribe, which participated in a recent accelerator.

HEALING TO GET BIG STUFF DONE

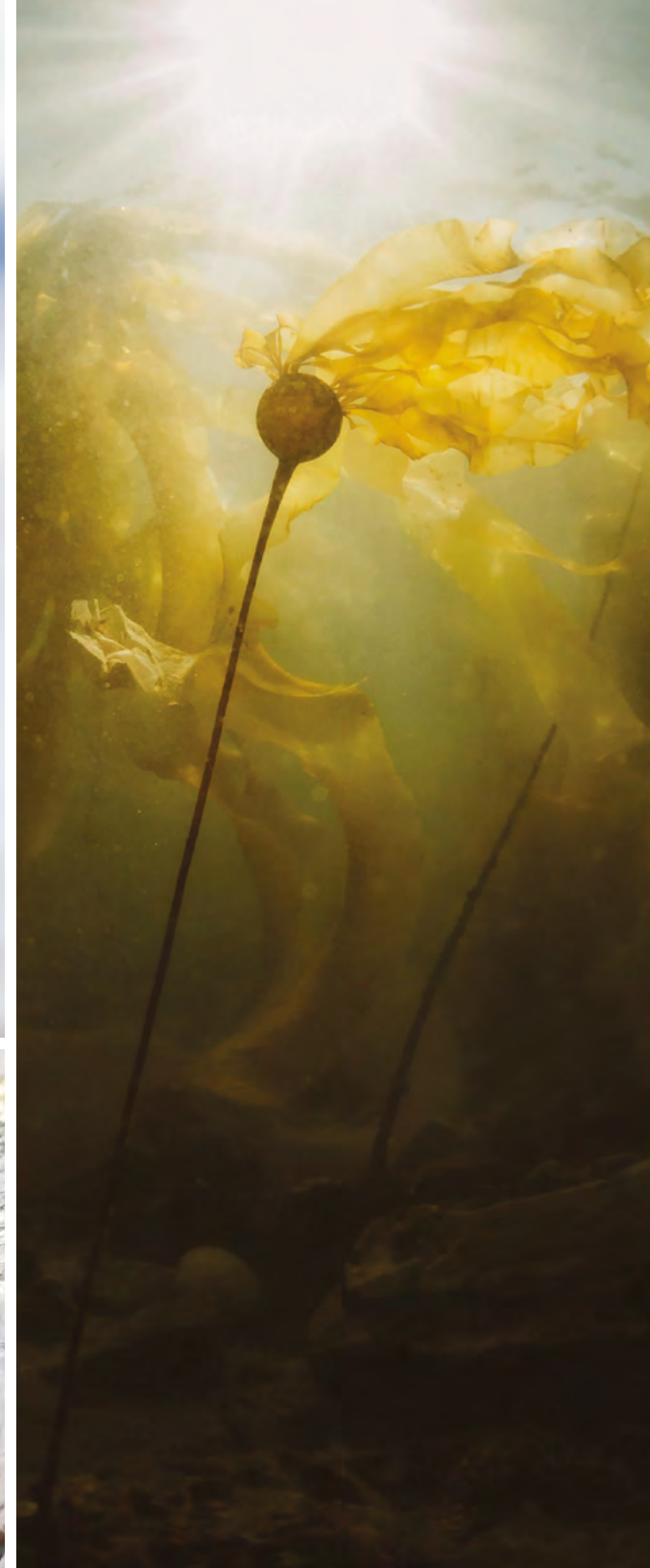
Tucked among the endless array of fog-coated islands that make up the Tongass National Forest on the northwest edge of Kupreanof Island is the small rural village of Kéex Kwáan (Kake). Leaders from Kake recently participated in a cultural exchange with members of Ho'omau Ke Ola, a cultural healing center on the Hawaiian island of Oahu. TNC facilitated the exchange in part to support the Kake community's journey to heal from decades of cultural loss and separation that came with Western colonial systems of education, commerce and religion. With support from the Forest Service, Kake leaders are transforming an old Forest Service logging bunker near the village into a cultural healing center like the one on Oahu.

The exchange originated from a group within the Sustainable Southeast Partnership explicitly dedicated to similar cultural healing initiatives throughout the region and supported by TNC Alaska.

“Healing our relationships with each other and the land enables us to get big things done — shifting systems and creating strong communities and economies that benefit people and place.”

—Crystal Nelson, Community Development Specialist, TNC Alaska

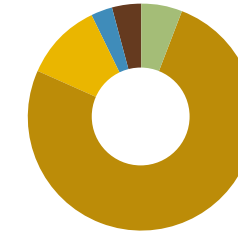
This story produced with Alaska Fellows Program and 2022-23 TNC Alaska Fellow Lauren Tanel



FINANCES

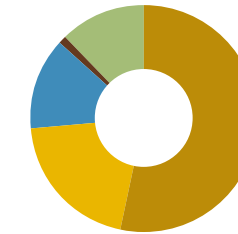
FY 2023 EXPENSES

- Conservation Program | 76%
- Development | 11%
- Government Relations | 3%
- Marketing and Communication | 4%
- Operations | 6%



FY 2023 REVENUES

- Contributions | 53%
- Philanthropic Reserves | 21%
- Grants and Contracts | 13%
- Investment | 1%
- Other | 12%



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Cash and Investments | \$4,121,772 |
| Endowment Funds | \$327,494 |
| Conservation Lands | \$2,148,452 |
| Other Assets | \$249,714 |
| | \$6,847,432 |

LIABILITIES

| | |
|------------|--------------------|
| | \$26,351 |
| NET ASSETS | \$6,821,081 |
| | \$6,847,432 |

ALASKA STAFF

Ivy Spohnholz, State Director
 Nicki Holmen, Director of Finance and Operations
 Caitlin Hedberg, Director of Philanthropy
 Amy Miller, Director of Marketing and Communications
 Kelsey Schober, Director of Government Relations
 Stephanie Holthaus, Climate Action Advisor
 Branden Bornemann, Bristol Bay Program Director
 Julia Nave, Southeast Alaska Program Director
 Crystal Nelson, Community Development Specialist
 Colin Shanley, Southeast Conservation Planner
 Jean Carter, Philanthropy Communications Specialist
 Gerald Courmoyer, Associate Director of Philanthropy
 Ginny Lindberg, Operations Specialist
 Megan Morris, Trustee and Donor Relations Manager

TNC Alaska's work is also supported by quarter- and half-time employees, many of whom are part of collaborative partnerships with other business units within The Nature Conservancy, including:
 Hank Lentfer, Preserve Assistant
 Michael Kampnich, Prince of Wales Field Representative
 Dustin Solberg, Writer/Editor
 Brittany Reynoso, Associate Director of Philanthropy
 Collin Thompson, Major Gifts Manager
 Amy Baum, Donor Relations Manager
 Chris Mildner, Prospect Researcher

BOARD OF THE FUTURE

In 2023, The Nature Conservancy in Alaska's board of trustees developed a framework called the Board of the Future. Ben Mallott, vice president of the Alaska Federation of Natives, who serves as the board's development and governance committee chair, led this effort. He brought together a supercommittee of trustees to evaluate who is needed on the board to best support TNC Alaska's work into the future. They developed goals ranging from demographic diversity to areas of expertise, influence, donor capacity and connection to Alaska.

In June 2023, the board enthusiastically adopted the framework and now begins engagement and recruitment processes to build the board of the future they've envisioned. We are grateful to Mallott for thoughtfully paving the way for the future of our board, and we would also like to congratulate him on being selected as one of Alaska's Top 40 Under 40 in 2023.

ALASKA BOARD OF TRUSTEES


Melanie Baca Osborne, Chair
 Adam Gibbons, Financial Advisor
 Mike Johnson, Philanthropy Advisor
 Benjamin Mallott, Board Development and Governance Committee Chair
 Linda Behnken
 Nikoosh Carlo
 Andy Mack
 Norm Van Vactor
 Bob Waldrop
 T. Henry Wilson


Our vision is a world where the diversity of life thrives,
and people act to conserve **nature** for its own sake and
its ability to fulfill our needs and enrich our lives.

The Nature Conservancy

Alaska Program

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