



## The Landscape Conservation Catalyst Fund Description of 2020 Grant Awards

*August 2020*

The Network for Landscape Conservation is pleased to announce 13 Landscape Conservation Catalyst Fund grant awards for Partnerships working to implement community-grounded conservation at the necessary landscape scale. Each of these Partnerships will work over the next one to two years to accelerate their collaborative efforts to build enduring, place-based conservation progress in protecting the ecological, cultural, and community health of the landscapes they call home. In the face of large-scale challenges like habitat fragmentation and climate change, conservation efforts at the landscape scale are imperative—and investing in robust Partnerships is essential for success at this scale. For more information on the Catalyst Fund, please see: <http://landscapeconservation.org/catalyst-fund>.

Generous support for the Catalyst Fund has been provided by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and a portion of the Fund is specifically dedicated to Indigenous-led Partnerships that serve Indigenous communities working on landscape conservation.

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### **The Alabama River Diversity Network, \$25,000 over one year**

*Open Landscape Conservation Partnerships recipient*

The Alabama River and its tributaries form a watershed that stretches over 7 million acres in southern Alabama from Montgomery and Selma to the Gulf Coast. This is one of the most biologically diverse aquatic basins in North America, and a national center for oak, hickory, and woody species diversity. Landscape and human experience are inextricably intertwined here: some of the largest pre-Columbian settlements in North America were located here and this landscape was a seedbed for the Civil Rights movement. Today, it remains a hotspot for rare and critically endangered species but is also one of the most impoverished regions of the nation.

The Alabama River Diversity Network works to conserve the unique biological, cultural, and historical resources of the Alabama River watershed in a manner that also honors the cultural and human diversity of the basin. Funding support will enable the Network to hire a Coordinator and facilitate planning at the landscape scale to integrate conservation, cultural, and historic preservation priorities. Funding will also support efforts to build deeper engagement with Indigenous partners, and to build

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The Network for Landscape Conservation advances cross-border, collaborative conservation as a vital approach to sustain nature, culture, and community. The Network is a fiscally sponsored project of the Center for Large Landscape Conservation in Bozeman, MT.

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collaboration with partners working on Civil Rights and Social Justice issues within the landscape. This support will accelerate the efforts of the Network—in a landscape that is a cradle of biological diversity and the American Civil Rights movement—to showcase a new model of conservation that views biological diversity through the eyes of human diversity.

**Camas to Condors Partnership, \$25,000 over one year**

*Indigenous-led Partnerships recipient*

The Nez Perce Tribe’s Indian Claims Commission territory stretches across 13 million acres over portions of what is now southeastern Washington, northeastern Oregon, Idaho, and western Montana. Much of these ancestral lands boast strong ecological resilience, but the Tribe’s Reservation in northcentral Idaho itself has low resiliency. The Joseph Creek watershed is an essential linkage between the Blue Mountains of Oregon and Washington and the wildlands of central Idaho, and is comprised of a network of canyons that support wolves, eagles, bighorns, rare grasslands, and Snake River steelhead. This watershed is a possible site for the Tribe’s proposed reintroduction of the California Condor.

The Camas to Condors Partnership works to advance culturally relevant conservation across the Tribe’s Indian Claims Commission territories to build a holistic vision for ecological, cultural, and climate resilience, with an early focus on the Joseph Creek watershed. Funding will enable the Partnership to hire an Indigenous Relations Liaison to engage with Indigenous knowledge keepers and youth to build regional conservation leadership. Additionally, funding will support a co-created Indigenous Relations in Restoration Design handbook and the development of a Seasonal Round Stewardship Curriculum for empowering youth in regional conservation design and implementation. By elevating the perspectives and experience of Indigenous knowledge keepers and by investing in conservation leadership opportunities for youth, this support will accelerate the Partnership’s work to advance a culture-smart, climate-smart “healing economy” as an alternative to the extractive land management paradigms that currently define the rural economies of its landscape.

**Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition, \$25,000 over two years**

*Open Landscape Conservation Partnerships recipient*

The Patapsco, Patuxent, and Gunpowder River watersheds of central Maryland have witnessed heavy urbanization over the last century, which has resulted in a dramatic conversion of greenspace to impervious landcover. These are critical watersheds within the broader and globally significant Chesapeake Bay watershed, and their condition plays a major role in the restoration efforts of the estuary: the Patapsco River basin now consistently receives the lowest ecosystem health grade in the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition works to establish a comprehensive green infrastructure network at the local and regional scale within this landscape as a means of building the region’s sustainability and resiliency in the face of climate change. Funding will enable the Coalition to expand partner engagement, solidify its governance structures, and undertake a rigorous strategic planning process to result in a five-year strategic plan and an associated two-year action plan. In addition, funding will allow the Coalition to convene two workshops centered around building partner expertise and capacity in collaboration and adaptive leadership. This support will accelerate the Coalition’s capacity to advance efforts to support biodiversity, resiliency, access, and equity goals across its Central Maryland landscape, as an important piece of the broader efforts to restore the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

**Emerald Alliance for People, Nature, and Community; \$25,000 over two years**

*Open Landscape Conservation Partnerships recipient*

The central Puget Sound region of Washington—comprised of the four counties of Snohomish, King, Pierce, and Kitsap—is a landscape marked by snow-covered volcanic peaks, fertile and productive valleys, and rich aquatic systems. The landscape too has a deep legacy of human connection. However, rapid population growth and development in the region are increasingly pressuring this iconic natural and cultural landscape.

The Emerald Alliance for People, Nature, and Community works to protect and sustain the region’s iconic landscapes, striving to connect conservation and open space priorities to the region’s growth management planning efforts. Funding will accelerate the development of the Alliance’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion program and support efforts to solidify the organizational and governance structures of the Alliance. This investment will accelerate the Alliance’s efforts to work to conserve the open space and natural environments that are so critical to protecting the health of people and maintaining the livability of communities across the Puget Sound.

**Eno-New Hope Landscape Conservation Group; \$25,000 over two years**

*Open Landscape Conservation Partnerships recipient*

The Eno River and New Hope Creek watersheds span portions of four counties within the rapidly developing Triangle region of North Carolina. These watersheds contain ecologically significant and biodiverse habitats, and provide drinking water for nearly one million people. Although important lands have been conserved within the landscape, little effort has been made to ensure connectivity across these lands. In the face of the rapid development within the region, ecosystem function and climate resilience are threatened.

The Eno-New Hope Landscape Conservation Group works to conserve landscape connectivity within this landscape to protect biodiversity and natural resources for current and future generations. Funding will be used to hire a Coordinator and to solidify Group governance structures. The funding will also enable the Group to develop a strategic action plan to guide work around implementing its landscape conservation plan. By leveraging the early momentum around the drafting of a landscape conservation plan, this support will build critical capacity within the Group to proactively pursue collective action around its collective vision of conserving landscape connectivity within the Eno-New Hope landscape.

**The Natural Treasures Alliance, \$25,000 over two years**

*Open Landscape Conservation Partnerships recipient*

The “Cradle of Southern Appalachia” encompasses southeast Tennessee, northeast Alabama, and northwest Georgia. Defined by some of the oldest mountains in the world, this is a largely intact and highly biodiverse landscape that boasts a unique blend of forests, canyons, and pristine streams. Drawn in part by the scenery and natural beauty of the landscape, the region is experiencing rapid population growth and a surge in development that is threatening to fragment the natural landscape and endanger much of the biodiversity.

The Natural Treasures Alliance works to conserve the lands that sustain the region’s people with wholesome food, renewable forests, clean air, and fresh water. Funding will provide dedicated staff support to oversee the Alliance’s work plan, including quarterly Alliance-wide convenings to ensure

collaborative partner engagement and the development of communications materials to engage non-traditional conservation partners around the importance of natural spaces as a driver of public health and the economy. The funding also will enable the Alliance to develop a collaborative conservation blueprint for working lands that underscores the value of locally produced foods, materials, and goods to the sustainable regional economy. The Alliance has just completed a planning process that resulted in an impressive landscape conservation vision for the Cradle of Southern Appalachia; this support will enable the Alliance to leverage that planning process and build a truly cross-sector approach to achieve the board scale land conservation to sustain the local communities in this unique landscape.

### **New York Highlands Network, \$25,000 over one year**

*Open Landscape Conservation Partnerships recipient*

The Highlands landscape of southern New York—a string of mountains spanning both sides of the Hudson River—is nationally recognized for its biodiversity, and is significant to local communities and New York City as a source of recreation and drinking water. However, the proximity to New York City also places this landscape at risk, with habitat fragmentation threatening biodiversity and eroding the region’s currently high climate resilience.

The New York Highlands Network works to ensure the ecosystems and communities of the Highlands region continue to thrive, focusing on connecting conserved properties in a resilient network of lands that supports flora and fauna migration and quality recreational experiences. Funding will provide dedicated staff support to oversee the Network’s work plan, including convening two all-partner meetings. Additionally, support will enable the Network to create a digital map-based land parcel tracking system to streamline communications across partners and facilitate rapid and coordinated conservation actions; and to synthesize research around collaborative financing models to facilitate joint-financing by partners. As a sub-landscape within the broader four-state Highlands region, this support will enable the Network to accelerate its work in its own landscape while amplifying its conservation success across the broader landscapes in which it is nested.

### **Oconee Watershed Partnership, \$25,000 over two years**

*Open Landscape Conservation Partnerships recipient*

The Oconee River watershed is located in the upper portion of the Altamaha River watershed, Georgia’s largest river. The Altamaha has been identified as one of the three East Coast watersheds that will experience the greatest increase in urban land cover in the coming decades. The Oconee watershed itself is modeled to experience a more-than-50% increase in population over the next thirty years, putting the watershed’s forests at risk of conversion and loss to development.

The Oconee Watershed Partnership works to advance strategic conservation to sustain healthy forests and habitats and secure drinking water resiliency for local communities. Funding will support the growth of a part-time Partnership Coordinator position to full time. The expanded staffing will enable the Partnership to formalize governance structures and develop a strategic conservation plan for the watershed. Additionally, the Partnership will develop a landowner engagement blueprint and a synthesis of conservation finance options within the watershed. The support at this moment will harness the Partnership’s early momentum and accelerate its capacity to pursue collective action around landscape-scale conservation to ensure a healthy watershed and a strong local economy.

**Safe Water Conservation Collaborative, \$25,000 over two years**

*Open Landscape Conservation Partnerships recipient*

The Potomac River is the second largest river of the Chesapeake Bay, and its headwaters are located in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia. The river serves as a major drinking water supply for the DC Metro region, and the two eastern-most counties of the panhandle—Jefferson and Berkeley counties—are being impacted by some of the fastest population growth rates in the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed. This development pressure is impacting the condition of local watersheds and underscoring the importance of source water protection.

The Safe Water Conservation Collaborative works to advance conservation and stewardship to protect safe, clean drinking water for the communities of the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia. Funding will enable the Collaborative to move through a strategic planning process and begin implementation of the plan that emerges. Building on progress to date in bringing together a broad coalition of water utilities, conservation organizations, and community partners, this support will catalyze the Collaborative by creating the long-term road map for success.

**Santa Cruz Watershed Collaborative, \$25,000 over two years**

*Open Landscape Conservation Partnerships recipient*

The riparian systems of the Santa Cruz Watershed, a National Heritage Area in central Arizona that links the Sky Island mountains and the Sonoran Desert valley bottoms, have supported the longest continuous record of agriculture in the United States, at over 4,000 years. However, many of the creeks and rivers that once flowed perennially and supported key riparian habitat are now channelized riverbeds that run only during seasonal rains.

The Santa Cruz Watershed Collaborative works in the Tucson basin of the watershed to restore the hydrological and ecological function of the watershed for the long-term benefit of natural and human ecosystems. Funding will enable the Collaborative to hire a Coordinator, and will support the finalization of a Watershed Restoration Plan. Additionally, the support will enable the Collaborative to formalize its governance structure, coordinate and advance the efforts of its working groups, and convene semi-annual partner forums to strengthen stakeholder engagement. These investments will build upon the critical momentum of the Collaborative to ensure a broad, diverse network of partners are working collaboratively to achieve a holistic vision for the restoration of this unique watershed.

**Tásmam Koyóm Land Partnership, \$25,000 over one year**

*Indigenous-led Partnerships recipient*

Tásmam Koyóm is the Maidu name for a valley in Plumas County in northeastern California. This valley was an important population center within the traditional homeland of the Mountain Maidu for many generations. Following Euro-American settlement during the 19<sup>th</sup> century Gold Rush, the valley was re-named “Humbug Valley.” Although the Maidu are a tribe without federal recognition status, in September, 2019, the valley lands were returned to the Maidu people by Pacific Gas & Electric.

The Tásmam Koyóm Land Partnership works to restore the ancestral landscapes of the Maidu using traditional ways. Funding will support the finalization of an adaptive management strategy and facilitate action planning to translate the strategy into implementation of the phased restoration program for the landscape. The return of Tásmam Koyóm is historic and marks the first acquisition of tribal homelands

by the Maidu. By empowering robust strategic and action planning, this funding will catalyze not only the restoration of this landscape but also the broader effort to reacquire the ancestral lands of the Mountain Maidu as a vast and unique park system and cultural touchstone for the Maidu people.

**Upper Willamette Stewardship Network, \$25,000 over one year**

*Open Landscape Conservation Partnerships recipient*

The Upper Willamette River Basin, located within the Willamette valley of Oregon, is defined by the Long Tom, McKenzie, and the Coast Fork and Middle Fork Willamette River sub-basins. This geography is characterized by the riverine, oak woodland, grassland, and mixed conifer forest habitats of the Western Cascade ecoregion, and has a long legacy of Indigenous habitation and stewardship.

The Upper Willamette Stewardship Network works with communities within this landscape to care for its land and water. Funding will enable the Network to undertake a restoration and conservation asset inventory, to develop a strategic restoration and stewardship prioritization across the landscape, and to develop and begin implementing a coordinated tribal engagement strategy that centers tribal values and priorities within the Network's efforts. Capitalizing on impressive progress around a coordinated, collaborative approach based on shared vision, values, and priorities, this support will catalyze the Network's capacity to advance strategic conservation, restoration, and stewardship efforts within the Upper Willamette landscape in a manner that honors and deepens relationships with tribal partners and Indigenous communities.

**Wishpush Working Group, \$25,000 over two years**

*Indigenous-led Partnerships recipient*

The Southern Territories of the Yakama Nation stretch across four counties along the Columbia River in southern Washington state. Wishpush (beaver) have been integral to the ecology of this landscape since time immemorial, and are of great significance culturally to the Tribe. Beginning with the arrival of Euro-American settlers however, beaver were trapped nearly to extinction, undermining the ecological health and climate resilience of the watersheds and eroding the cultural heritage of the Tribe.

The Wishpush Working Group works to coordinate and develop a strategy to retain and restore beaver, recognizing the manifold benefits the species confer to the watersheds within the landscape as well as the cultural significance to Yakama Nation. Funding will support the development of a strategic plan to guide the Working Group and prioritization mapping within the landscape. Funding will additionally support education and outreach efforts within communities around the importance and benefits of beaver. By facilitating the development of a cohesive strategy, this funding will catalyze the Working Group's efforts to conserve this ecologically and culturally important species across the landscape to create healthier and more resilient watersheds.