



Catalyst Fund 2022 Grant Awards

August 2022

The Network for Landscape Conservation is pleased to announce 13 Catalyst Fund grant awards for Partnerships working to implement community-grounded conservation and stewardship at the 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 progress in protecting the ecological, cultural, and community health of the landscapes they call home. In the face of large-scale challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental injustice, landscape-level efforts are imperative—and investments in the collaborative infrastructure and coordination capacity of enduring Partnerships to bring people together across jurisdictions is essential for achieving success at this scale. For more information on the Catalyst Fund: <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 supporting Indigenous leadership in landscape conservation and stewardship.

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Bi-State Tribal Natural Resource Committee, \$25,000 over two years

The ancestral homelands of the Paiute (Numu), Washoe (Wa She Shu), and Western Shoshone (Newe) are located east of the Sierra Nevada mountains, along the border what is today California and Nevada. This landscape encompasses nearly 5 million acres of sagebrush steppe and supports numerous wildlife species, including the iconic Bi-State sage-grouse, a geographically isolated and genetically distinct population of Greater sage-grouse. For nearly two decades, collaborative conservation efforts have been coordinated to improve ecosystem health and benefit sage-grouse populations in this landscape, but these efforts have not consistently taken into consideration traditional lifeways and cultures. In recent years it has become clear that there is need for increased Tribal involvement and the integration of Tribal perspectives into on-going Bi-State conservation strategies.

As such, the Bi-State Tribal Natural Resource Committee has emerged to ensure that Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and values are incorporated into integrated solutions to the complex ecological issues of the landscape. Catalyst Fund support will provide dedicated coordination support for the Committee, with an emphasis on broadening outreach and engagement with Tribal members. Additionally, funds will support the convening of two annual workshops to develop strategies around a Tribal monitoring program and a pinyon health monitoring program. Expanded capacity for the

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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Committee will serve to will amplify Tribal perspectives within the Bi-State landscape, ensuring that conservation actions not only protect the natural ecosystems but also protect and promote cultural values—and in doing so, demonstrate a model for integrating across knowledges to create holistic solutions to landscape-scale socio-ecological issues that recognize the centuries of experience that Tribes carry in managing natural resources.

Blackstone Watershed Collaborative, \$25,000 over one year

With its headwaters located in Worcester, Massachusetts—the second most-populated city in New England—the Blackstone River is the longest tributary to Rhode Island’s Narragansett Bay, and is the second largest source of freshwater to the bay. The Blackstone watershed spans 475 square miles across south-central Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island. The river flows through the ancestral homeland of the Nipmuc Nation, but its history since European colonization has left it with a reputation as a heavily developed, urbanized river. Nonetheless, more than 50% of the watershed remains forested. Continued urban growth and accelerating climate change impacts threatens the ecological resilience of the watershed, and the communities that are found within it.

The Blackstone Watershed Collaborative works to ensure a healthier and more resilient watershed that supports the ecology, economy, and culture of the landscape. Funding will support a new coordination position, and will support the development of a governance structure to guide the Collaborative moving forward. Additionally, support will enable the Collaborative to develop a prioritization framework and a fundraising plan for advancing priority projects. With its legacy as an urbanized watershed, these investments will strengthen the Collaborative’s capacity to build engagement to ensure that those most vulnerable to climate change impacts have a voice in shaping the efforts to improve climate resilience and implement ecological restoration projects across the Blackstone watershed.

Butte Creek Watershed Restoration Collaborative, \$25,000 over one year

Butte Creek is a tributary to the Sacramento River, and flows for approximately 90 miles through what is now northern California. This watershed is the ancestral territory of the Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria. Hydraulic mining and other post-colonial impacts have destroyed much of the Mechoopda people’s ancestral lands, and Butte Creek is one of the last remaining intact sources of culturally significant living resources for Tribal members and cultural practitioners—including the last wild run of spring Chinook salmon, hundreds of riparian plant species, oak woodlands, and a diversity of ecological services that protect not only Tribal members but all communities that depend on this watershed for quality of life. The Mechoopda Tribe is currently repatriating the Butte Creek Ecological Preserve, which will underscore the Tribe’s critical role in the restoration of the entire watershed.

In this context, the Butte Creek Watershed Restoration Collaborative works to give greater voice to the Tribe in guiding and advancing coordinated watershed restoration efforts throughout the watershed. Catalyst Fund grant support will enable the Collaborative to convene three Collaborative-wide meetings, and will support the establishment of an Executive Committee and the drafting of a charter to clarify strategic direction and governance. Support too will allow the Collaborative to convene seasonal stakeholder watershed tours and to develop communications materials that capture the Collaborative’s comprehensive vision for ecosystem restoration within the landscape. These investment in formalizing this Indigenous-led Collaborative will establish the foundation of Tribal leadership in the restoration and stewardship of the Butte Creek watershed, and provide the vehicle for Tribal and non-tribal partners to collectively accelerate the efficiency and scalability of restoration efforts throughout the watershed.

Cold Hollow to Canada Regional Conservation Partnership, \$25,000 over two years

The Cold Hollow Mountains stretch across seven towns in northern Vermont, marking the northern extent of the Green Mountains ridgeline. These mountains are part of the world's largest remaining intact temperate forest, the Northern Forest, which stretches across the northeastern United States and southeastern Canada. The ridgelines and valleys of the Cold Hollows provide a critical linkage area for maintaining connectivity throughout the Northern Forest, and also offer significant recreation and economic value to the local communities. With development pressures growing, forest cover is declining in the region and forest fragmentation is accelerating, meaning that this ecologically irreplaceable landscape is increasingly becoming highly threatened.

The Cold Hollow to Canada Regional Conservation Partnership works in this landscape to maintain ecological resilience in a way that supports—and is supported by—the local human communities. Through this community-grounded approach, the Partnership focuses efforts around three pillars: sustainable stewardship, forestland conservation, and community empowerment. Funding will expand the dedicated coordination capacity for the Partnership, with a focus on growing stakeholder engagement and increasing partner coordination. The expanded coordination position will also enable the Partnership to develop a conservation strategy for prioritizing land conservation opportunities within the landscape. This investment in coordination capacity will be critical to creating the framework to deliver conservation outcomes that will not only sustain this local landscape but will also contribute to sustaining the ecological integrity and resilience of the entire Northern Forest.

Greater Chilkat Watershed Advisory Group, \$25,000 over two years

The Greater Chilkat Watershed is comprised of the Chilkat, Chilkoot, and Ferebee Rivers and spans nearly 2,000 square miles across the Alaska-British Columbia border in southeast Alaska. This landscape is defined by rich and fecund ecosystems along the coast and rugged mountains and glaciers inland, with myriad dynamic ecological systems between. This intersection of coastal and interior ecosystems gives rise to notable biodiversity: the landscape is home to Alaska's highest vascular plant species richness and stands as one of the highest-value watersheds for salmon habitat in the state. The abundance of fish, wildlife, and other resources has supported the Jilkaat and Lkoot Tlingit since time immemorial, and continues to support them today; the rural communities of Deishu/Haines and Klukwan—one of the longest continuously-inhabited human settlements in North America—are located in the watershed. Although it remains relatively intact, the unpredictable effects of climate change are accelerating in this landscape, and ongoing and proposed industrial development is threatening its integrity and resilience.

The Greater Chilkat Watershed Advisory Group works to advance watershed management, conservation, and restoration that is rooted in traditional Indigenous knowledge and values. Catalyst Fund support will enable the Group to conduct a strategic planning process to guide efforts in the coming years to develop a comprehensive ecosystem-based conservation plan for the Greater Chilkat watershed, and to develop stakeholder outreach efforts to ensure the plan builds from a foundation of deep community engagement. In a landscape of such ecological and cultural significance, these investments to strengthen the Group's capacity to collaborate will create the shared framework for aligning, leveraging, and coordinating ongoing conservation efforts—and will be critical to accelerating the actions and results that will ensure the myriad values of the landscape persist into the future.

Nesika Wilamut, \$25,000 over two years

The mainstem of the Willamette River forms at the confluence of the Coast and Middle forks southeast of Eugene, Oregon, and flows northward for nearly 200 miles before emptying into the Columbia River near Portland. The river basin was the ancestral homelands of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz; today it is home to more than two-thirds of Oregon's population and more than three-quarters of its economic output. The watershed supports significant biological diversity, including 31 native fish species, 18 amphibians, 15 reptiles, 154 birds, and 69 mammals. Currently, 36 of these species are listed as threatened, endangered, or species of significant conservation concern. The primary cause of these declines is the loss of critical habitat, as pressures on the basin's water supply and quality, fish, wildlife, and wild places are increasing due to human population growth, land use conversion, climate change, and large-scale agriculture.

Nesika Wilamut ("Our Willamette" in the language of the Chinook Wawa) works to catalyze, align, and leverage efforts to create a healthy river system and thriving communities with meaningful connects to the Willamette River. Catalyst Fund support will activate and support an Indigenous Advisory Council. Support will enable the Indigenous Advisory Council to participate actively in the network's annual conference, and will facilitate the Council's participation in the identification of network priorities via annual strategic planning retreats. This investment will support the Nesika Wilamut network's efforts to take a decolonized approach to its work and will accelerate efforts to ensure that the Willamette watershed supports a river that is not only swimmable, fishable, and drinkable, but also accessible for cultural, spiritual, and recreational practices.

Salt Valley Watershed Landscape Conservation Partnership, \$25,000 over one year

Located in southeastern Nebraska, Salt Creek is a tributary to the Platte River. Its watershed covers roughly 1,650 square miles across much of Lancaster and Saunders counties, with the landscape a mix of rural and urban—Lincoln, Nebraska's second largest city, is located within the watershed. Though impacted by the urbanization around Lincoln, the landscape remains marked by unique natural resources—including assemblages of tallgrass prairie, saline wetlands, and riparian corridors—that offer potential for connectivity and access to nature for local communities. Of note, the landscape's saline wetland communities—arising from groundwater flowing through porous rock formations containing salt deposits left from the Western Interior Seaway, the ancient inland sea that once covered much of North America's Great Plains—are one of the most unique and threatened wetland communities in the state: Once estimated to cover more than 20,000 acres, now only 4,000 acres of this rare ecosystem exists and continues to provide critical habitat to birds, invertebrates, and wildlife.

Within this landscape, the Salt Valley Watershed Landscape Conservation Partnership works to connect a network of greenways and natural areas to support a thriving, resilient landscape for people, plants, and wildlife. Funding will support the hiring of a part-time coordination position. Funding will also support the development of a conservation plan for the landscape and a strategic action plan for Partnership. In a landscape of unique natural resources that faces increasing urbanization impacts, this expanded coordination capacity will accelerate the Partnership's efforts create a framework for supporting a diverse range of community voices in charting a future for a connected and resilient landscape that supports both human and natural communities.

Shoal Creek Watershed Consortium, \$25,000 over one year

The Shoal Creek watershed is situated in the western bluffs of the Missouri Ozark Plateau. Sixty-six miles in length, the creek flows east to west to merge with the Spring River in Kansas, which then flows south into Grand Lake of the Cherokees in Oklahoma. The Creek represents a vital resource for both people and nature in southwest Missouri: it is the primary drinking water source for the cities of Joplin and Neosho, and the watershed is home to several species of conservation concern, including the Ozark cavefish, Arkansas darter, and Neosho mucket.

The Shoal Creek Watershed Consortium works to restore and conserve the natural stream and wetland systems that provide critical habitat for wildlife and drinking water for hundreds of communities. Funding support will expand dedicated coordination support for the Consortium. This will enable the Consortium to focus on expanding stakeholder outreach efforts and on developing communications strategies, including the development of an updated website, traditional and social media outreach, and outdoor education programming to connect schools and communities to restoration efforts. Through these investments in deepening engagements with local communities, the Consortium will accelerate its efforts to advance restoration efforts in ways that empower local communities to understand, shape, and own the conversation work of this watershed into the future.

Stewarding the Asqinaq, \$25,000 over two years

The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in what is now western Alaska is one of the largest river deltas in the world. Marked by a heterogeneous mix of ecosystems, this landscape supports one of the world's largest and most diverse aggregations of waterbirds; provides critical spawning and rearing grounds for Pacific salmon; and is home to populations of land-based and marine species such as caribou, moose, wolves, walrus, ringed seal, and migratory whales. More than 40 Yup'ik and Athabascan communities live a mostly subsistence lifestyle here, relying on the stewardship of these species. The Asqinaq ("place of calmness and beauty") or Hooper Bay region of the Delta is located 80 miles south of the mouth of the Yukon River. By the end of this century, more than 7 million acres across the Delta will likely salinize, flood, or be subsumed by the paired threat of rising seas and permafrost thaw. While some coastal villages have drawn international attention as they erode into the Bering Sea, the threats the broader region face from a warming climate have been largely ignored. There is a pressing need for communities and wildlife to adjust to this climate-induced reality, but climate adaptation at this scale is novel.

The Stewarding the Asqinaq initiative has emerged in response to this need, and works to weave together western science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge to advance climate adaptation at the landscape scale. The Catalyst Fund grant award will support the convening of partners in the development of a climate vulnerability assessment for the Asqinaq region as a pilot in the broader Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. This assessment will capture vulnerabilities but will also identify place-based, nature-based solutions to offer a roadmap for future implementation for the benefit of both human and natural communities. By strengthening the capacity of partners to come together to utilize the breadth of knowledges to outline vulnerabilities and novel approaches for sustaining the lands, wildlife, and ecosystem services of the Asqinaq, this work will demonstrate approaches that can be replicated more broadly throughout the Delta to accelerate climate adaptation efforts at the landscape scale.

Tri-Pueblo Coalition, \$25,000 over two years

Since time immemorial, the Pueblo Peoples have stewarded the eastern Jemez Mountains in what is now New Mexico. Important tributaries to the Rio Grande emerge out of these mountains, and the landscape is critical to the health of the Rio Grande watershed and to the availability of water—both for the local Pueblo communities and for large downstream urban areas including Albuquerque. Land management consists of a mix of Tribal, federal, state, and private entities, and over the last two and a half decades climate impacts have intensified, with significant fire disturbances impacted large sections of the landscape. Capulin Canyon on the Santa Fe National Forest is representative of the intensifying impacts: a cultural landmark for many Tribes, the Canyon has burned consecutively in the 1996 Dome, 2000 Cerro Grande, and 2011 Las Conchas fires.

Bringing together the Pueblos of Cochiti, Jemez, and Santo Domingo, the Tri-Pueblo Coalition works to utilize a Tribal framework and apply Traditional Ecological Knowledge to support ecological recovery of the East Jemez landscape and strengthen social equity within conservation by respecting traditional Tribal values of stewardship. Funding will support regular Coalition convenings, with an emphasis on building capacity with the Natural Resource Departments of the Pueblos. Additionally, funding will support efforts to foster active collaboration between the Coalition and the Santa Fe National Forest on co-management of Capulin Canyon, and support the Coalition's engagement in the East Jemez Landscape Futures Initiative, strengthening Indigenous representation where it has historically been overlooked. In a landscape that is increasingly confronting the escalating impacts of climate change, this support will provide critical capacity to the Coalition to advance Tribal-based and Tribal-led approaches to ecological restoration and stewardship—and to demonstrate a model for collaboration across Tribal communities to convene and engage in landscape-scale, socio-environmental issues.

Upper Arkansas Watershed Partnership, \$25,000 over two years

A major tributary of the Mississippi River, the Arkansas River originates in central Colorado and flows east to the Great Plains. In its upper reaches, the river passes through a landscape that includes the Pike & San Isabel National Forests and the Collegiate Peaks Wilderness, which contains the greatest number of peaks over 14,000 feet in the contiguous United States. Amongst these mountains, river and stream valleys provide critical winter wildlife habitat and supply water resources to Front Range urban areas. The landscape is experiencing population growth, development pressure, and agricultural land conversion, and climate change is bringing drought and shifts in hydrology. Collectively, these impacts are increasing fire risks and threatening forest ecosystems and water availability to major downstream metropolitan areas.

In this context, the Upper Arkansas Watershed Partnership works to build collaboration to support a healthy and resilient watershed that protects water quality and quantity, maintains and restores fisheries and wildlife habitat, and sustains agricultural livelihoods. Funding will support contracted facilitation to provide coordination services for the Partnership. This facilitation support will enable the Partnership to develop a conservation plan to prioritize watershed protection efforts, and to develop a watershed river report card to improve external communication efforts around conservation efforts. In a landscape where a multitude of projects have emerged to address the breadth of challenges, this investment will provide critical support to solidify the framework for coordinating and leveraging the resources of partners in ways that will accelerate on-the-ground impact.

Western Klamath Restoration Partnership, \$25,000 over two years

The western Klamath Mountains of what is now northern California are the ancestral homelands of the Karuk Tribe. The 1.2 million acre landscape spans two national forests—the Klamath and Six Rivers—and is located in the Klamath-Siskiyou Mountain Ecoregion, an ecoregion of exceptionally high temperate biodiversity due to its complex terrain, climate, geology, and biogeographic history. This is a fire-adapted ecosystem, which—prior to colonization—experienced low-intensity fires every 3-10 years. The past century of fire exclusion though has severely impacted water supplies, forest health, communities, cultural resources, and threatened species. This history and the current and accelerating climate change impacts leave the landscape exposed to the risk of catastrophic fire that would threaten the landscape’s ecosystems, communities, and economies.

The Western Klamath Restoration Partnership uses cultural and contemporary knowledge to advance efforts to maintain the ecological, economic, and social and cultural resilience of the western Klamath landscape. The Catalyst Fund grant award will support dedicated coordination capacity to enable the Partnership to develop an updated 10-year restoration plan for the landscape. In undertaking this work, the Partnership will provide a venue for weaving together western science and Karuk Indigenous science in efforts to repair and restore the relationship between humans and the landscape—and demonstrate that in these traditional relationships we can find the strategies that we need for our future in facing threats like climate change and catastrophic fire.

Yuba Forest Network, \$25,000 over two years

The Yuba and Bear River watersheds in northern California extend over 1,900 square miles and are marked by a diverse array of forest types, meadows, rangeland, cropland, and iconic riparian areas. The landscape is bounded to the east by Sierra Nevada Mountains, to north by the Feather River watershed, and to the south by the American River; to the west, the uplands and foothills give way to Central Valley agriculture and grasslands. This is a fire-adapted ecosystem and historically experienced frequent fire, both naturally ignited and intentionally used as a management tool by Indigenous peoples for millennia—this is the ancestral homelands of the Nisenen Tribe and shares boundaries with the Mountain Maidu, Konkow, and Washoe Tribes as well. Over the last century, fire suppression, mining, and logging have dramatically changed the health and resilience of the forested landscape, leaving it vulnerable to growing climate-driven threats like wildfire, drought, and forest pests.

In this context, the Yuba Forest Network works to advance ecological and social benefits that build forest health and resilience at the landscape scale. The Catalyst Fund grant award will support dedicated coordination capacity for the Network, with a focus on the convening of quarterly partner meetings and the management of internal communications and partner outreach and engagement. This expanded coordination support will also allow the Network to conduct exploration and planning around three pilot priority projects. Through these investments, the Network will set the foundation that allows the shared capacity of its partners to align around a large-scale cohesive strategy to accelerate the pace and scale of forest resilience restoration across the two watersheds.