

# Conservation Working For America

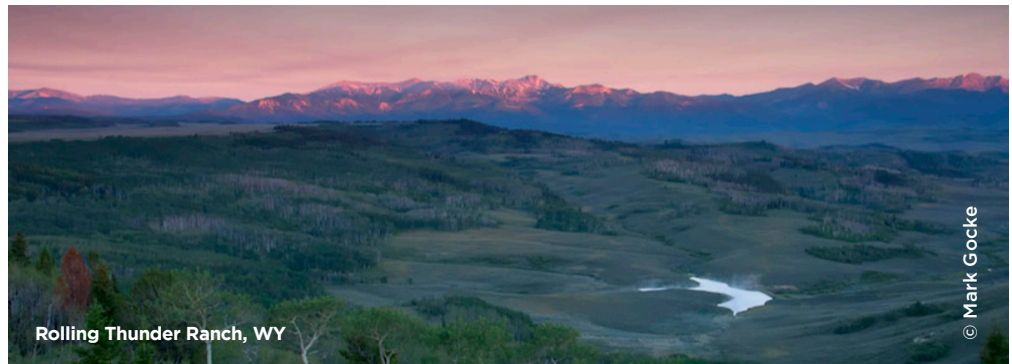
SPRING 2018 | CONSERVATIONFUND.ORG

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## CONNECTING PEOPLE AND NATURE

### Ranching with a conservation mind

Imagine looking out over a vast and scenic Wyoming landscape, nearly 9,000 feet in elevation. From there you can see three mountain ranges—the Wyoming Range to the west, the Gros Ventre Range to the east and the Wind River Range to the south. This land also serves as a boundary with the Bridger-Teton National Forest and 20,000 acres of protected ranchland. On any given day, you'll likely see pronghorn, sage grouse, Shira moose or perhaps mule deer as they travel along the longest migration route in the lower 48. This area is home to the largest concentration of Shiras moose in the United States. The landscape also is comprised of traditional cattle ranches, sustaining the livelihoods of ranching families for generations.

Now imagine that you are the owner of this 8,000-acre landscape, the Rolling Thunder and Rim ranches. With views like this you can only imagine the pressure to carve it up and develop it. What would you do—subdivide it for housing that would sever critical migratory paths and break up the ranchlands, or perhaps something different?

Landowner Tim Delaney and his family chose to do something different with Rolling Thunder and Rim ranches. By protecting the land with conservation easements, it will be kept intact now and forever. Since 2008, we have been working alongside conservation-minded families like the Delaneys, and key partners like the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, to ensure critical lands in Wyoming's Upper Green River Valley are permanently protected as working ranches and wildlife corridors. This collaboration takes patience and dedication but results in lasting benefits for people, agriculture and wildlife.



## Can you be a rancher and a conservationist? Ask Tim.

**Q** When and why did you begin ranching? Is it a family tradition?

**A** No, ranching was certainly not a family tradition. I'm a principal in a heavy highway construction firm that builds large-scale commercial wind farms and infrastructure, like roads and bridges in upstate NY. But we've raised draft horses and some cattle here on a very small basis.

**Q** What led you to purchase a ranch out west?

**A** The property that we used to visit in Colorado each year was getting sold off piece by piece, continually decreasing recreation opportunities. We decided to find our own place that had both a recreational and agricultural component. In 2009, we fell in love with Rolling Thunder Ranch in Wyoming. A neighboring rancher leases summer grazing rights on our land—last year 600 head of yearlings grazed on the property.

**Q** What conservation initiatives have you introduced at your ranch?

**A** Being in the construction business, I couldn't help but apply my construction planning mindset to ranch improvements. Conservation planning makes a lot of sense economically, both today and for the future value of the ranch and its agricultural operation. Our experience has been that conservation can certainly go hand-in-hand with ranching—they are mutually beneficial.

**Q** You recently created a detailed conservation plan for your land, correct?

**A** We did. Our conservation objectives are to manage the property for wildlife, hunting and recreation, while maintaining a viable summer livestock operation. So we designed our conservation plan to be a living document that requires annual updating. It was put together with the help of many partners, including the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Having committed partners is the only way we were able to make this story happen.



**Tim Delaney**  
Owner, Rolling Thunder  
and Rim Ranches

## Keeping traditions alive for rural towns in New York

In Central New York's Tug Hill region, there is a strong connection between the people and the land. Communities here are deeply rooted in forestry and outdoor recreation. They have long-standing traditions like logging, hunting, fishing and snowmobiling that are a way of life. The forests on Tug Hill Plateau support these traditions and provide economic benefits to the timber and fishing industries and enhance recreational opportunities enjoyed by residents and tourists alike.

However, towns in this area have seen an uptick in forest fragmentation in recent years. As large tracts of forestland are sold off piece by piece for development, jobs in the timber industry disappear and the economies and traditions of small towns become vulnerable. In 2014, the towns of Redfield and Orwell, along with the state of New York, approached The Conservation Fund about protecting Kendall Forest—a 3,236-acre property on the Tug Hill Plateau. We knew it was a request we couldn't refuse.

Kendall Forest, a large block of timberland owned for generations by a local furniture manufacturer as a source of lumber, was poised to be subdivided into small lots. Its protection meant ensuring ongoing timber resource production, safeguarding the water quality of the sensitive Salmon River, and allowing for continued public access to recreation opportunities. It also meant protecting forestland important to the communities that depend on it for their way of life.

So we stepped up. Through our Working Forest Fund, and with generous support from the Richard King Mellon Foundation, we purchased the land in 2014 and held it while the state identified permanent funding and conservation solutions for the land. Last year, we officially transferred all 3,236 acres to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, permanently protecting Kendall Forest by adding it to the state forest system.

Perhaps Mike Yerdon, president of the Stavemill Hunt Club in Redfield, said it best: "If you eliminate the forest, then the community is not going to be the same. For the future of the community and of surrounding communities, I think it's important that we preserve these forests and have them still function for logging, hunting and fishing so people can enjoy it."

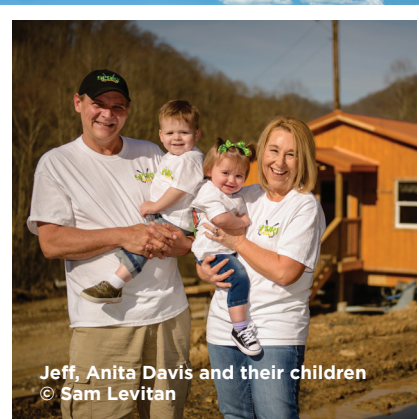


Kendall Forest, NY  
© Carl Heilman



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### ECONOMIC VITALITY



Jeff, Anita Davis and their children  
© Sam Levitan



Mingo County, WV  
© Frank Ceravalo

## The trail to economic vitality in West Virginia

Jeff Davis, a former coal miner, was born and bred in Mingo County, West Virginia. He mined coal for eight years until 2006, when he started a contracting business specializing in home remodeling and residential construction. While mines have closed in southern West Virginia, Jeff and his wife, Anita, have watched the Hatfield-McCoy Trails expand. This 600-mile network of ATV trails spans nine counties in southern West Virginia and brings thousands of visitors to the region annually. But Jeff and Anita noticed their town of Williamson, at the Hatfield-McCoy Buffalo Mountain Trailhead, was missing an opportunity.

The ATV riders coming through town had limited overnight lodging options, and Williamson was missing out on valuable tourism dollars. Jeff and Anita decided to change that. They identified 200 acres of land near the trailhead but needed financing to build lodging. Enter the Southern West Virginia Tourism Initiative, a partnership between our Natural Capital Investment Fund (NCIFund) and the Hatfield-McCoy Regional Recreation Authority, which supports sustainable tourism in the region's coal-impacted communities. Through the initiative, NCIFund joined with First National Bank to provide Jeff and Anita the loans they needed to construct eight two-bedroom cabins and a general store, install water and sewer infrastructure, and get Sport Outfitters LLC off the ground. When Sport Outfitters opens in fall 2018, it will encourage more tourists to visit for longer periods of time, generating valuable dollars that circulate locally. That's welcome news in Mingo County!

### LAND, WATER AND WILDLIFE

## Alabama

A popular destination for fishing, wildlife viewing, boating, and paddling, the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge along Alabama's Gulf Coast recently grew by 251 acres thanks to a partnership among The Conservation Fund, the state of Alabama and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). With funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, we acquired the property on the Fort Morgan Peninsula and transferred it to USFWS. The property provides ideal coastal habitat for numerous species including endangered young adult Kemp's ridley sea turtles foraging for crab and other crustaceans; shorebirds, such as snowy, piping and Wilson's plovers and the endangered Alabama beach mouse.

## North Carolina

The Fort Raleigh National Historic Site preserves and interprets the rich cultural history of the Native Americans, European Americans and African Americans who lived on Roanoke Island and the First English settlement in the United States. A unique partnership between The Conservation Fund and Roanoke Island Historical Association will support the future of The Lost Colony outdoor drama and preserve the historic and natural landscape surrounding the National Historic Site. Proceeds from the conservation sale of 20 adjacent acres will be added to an endowment to continue America's longest-running symphonic outdoor drama and one of the top tourist attractions in the Outer Banks.

## Colorado

A rugged landscape that attracts hikers and campers who like a challenge, Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park is known for its 2,000-foot vertical canyon walls, Class V rapids and Gold Medal trout fishing. The scenic canyon features some of the steepest cliffs, oldest rock and craggiest spires in North America. The Conservation Fund recently helped the National Park Service add 2,494 acres near the visitor center and along the South Rim of the canyon. This newly conserved land will provide access for additional recreation opportunities, protect wildlife habitat and enable future utility improvements in the park, which had more than 300,000 visitors in 2017.

## Virginia

On the outskirts of the fast-growing Richmond area, the Malvern Hill Farm had been a conservation priority for decades. With a rich history dating to the late 17th century, the 871-acre property is the only documented place in the United States that saw U.S. troop activity during the three major military conflicts that occurred on American soil—the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 and the Civil War. The Conservation Fund provided a \$2 million loan to the Capital Region Land Conservancy to bridge the remaining funds needed to acquire and permanently protect the much sought-after property. Half of the property will be managed in the future by Henrico County for passive public recreation and historical interpretation, and the other half will be conveyed to the National Park Service and protected as part of the Richmond National Battlefield Park.

# THE CONSERVATION FUND

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Forest certification has fundamentally changed, for the better, the way forests are managed across the U.S. We are proud that this newsletter is printed on paper from a forest we have protected—certified to Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) standards.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

# Our Revolving Fund—America’s premier conservation tool

In 1990, The Conservation Fund established our Revolving Fund to more effectively compete in the fast-paced real estate market. Instead of creating an endowment where funds would grow but rarely be used, our Revolving Fund would always be in use, with every dollar used to buy land, and only land—no overhead, no administrative expenses. Today, dollar for dollar, our Revolving Fund has protected more land than any other land conservation vehicle. It’s the gift that keeps on giving.

But there is so much more to do. Each year, America loses over 2 million acres of open space when land is converted for development and non-conservation uses. In the past 30 years, we have lost more than 24 million acres of productive farm and rangeland nationwide and over 25 million acres of forestland. We are losing the very lands that have shaped us as a nation and defined us as a people.

And that is where we need your help. If our Revolving Fund becomes oversubscribed, it jeopardizes our ability to respond quickly and efficiently when our partners call. We need to significantly increase the size of our Revolving Fund to ensure that our nation’s most vital conservation lands aren’t lost because we weren’t able to move quickly enough to conserve them. Your support will help us keep pace on the most pressing conservation needs.

For many donors, the establishment of a named Revolving Fund within our general Revolving Fund is the perfect philanthropic legacy. A popular option for families and those designating a bequest, a gift to our Revolving Fund allows donors to support land acquisition while fueling a legacy of protected lands across the country.

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