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The Next 100 Years of Conservation

Ensuring People and Nature Thrive through Environmental and Economic Innovations



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Thomas Minney serves as the State Director of The Nature Conservancy in West Virginia. He and his team are responsible for working with the West Virginia Business Unit to set landscape-scale programming and build cross-boundary approaches to ensure effective conservation in the face of large-scale threats like climate change and opportunities such as forest carbon and renewable energy.

The Nature Conservancy has helped protect over 120,000,000 acres worldwide, working with local communities to protect, conserve and manage natural resources for the benefit of people and nature. We have been in West Virginia since 1963, and a primary focus of our more than 55-year history has been investing deeply in iconic landscapes like Dolly Sods, Cheat Mountain, Smoke Hole and New River Gorge to conserve their natural wonders.

Over the next century, we must go beyond protecting lands from conversion to rising to the challenges of climate change and economic diversification. To do this, we must envision a West Virginia where conservation and economy are inextricably linked – protecting nature while exploring nature-driven economic return.

The Nature Conservancy prides itself on being solutions-focused, and we work with a wide variety of stakeholders, such as individuals, landowners, state and federal agencies, businesses and industry, to bring together multiple interests and viewpoints to build conservation visions and approaches toward practical, lasting results. These collaborative efforts represent a key element we all must adopt as we rise to the next century's challenges.

Looking forward, there are several investments The Nature Conservancy and West Virginians can make to ensure a Mountain State where nature and people thrive.

Investing in Defining and Protecting a Resilient and Connected Network of Lands that Can Sustain Nature and People in the Face of Climate Change

The Nature Conservancy science shows West Virginia is a globally and regionally important continental corridor of connected and resilient forests, lands and waters. This network can absorb and ameliorate the impacts of climate change and offer refugia and migration pathways to plants and animals to survive changing climates.



Protecting nature. Preserving life.

Using this science to direct conservation investment to and development priorities away from crucial areas can ensure precious conservation dollars get the best return on investment and that West Virginia remains a natural stronghold of global importance. Building an integrated vision for conserving this network is crucial.

Investing in The Development of Renewable Energy on Formerly Mined and Disturbed Lands

West Virginia has hundreds of thousands of acres of formerly impacted lands suitable for the development of renewable energy resources like solar and wind. Directing the development of renewables to impacted lands not only keeps important, undisturbed natural areas intact, but can also contribute economically to both landowner and state coffers as we add to the state's portfolio of energy revenue, tackle climate change and ensure West Virginia does not lose renewable energy business to other states.

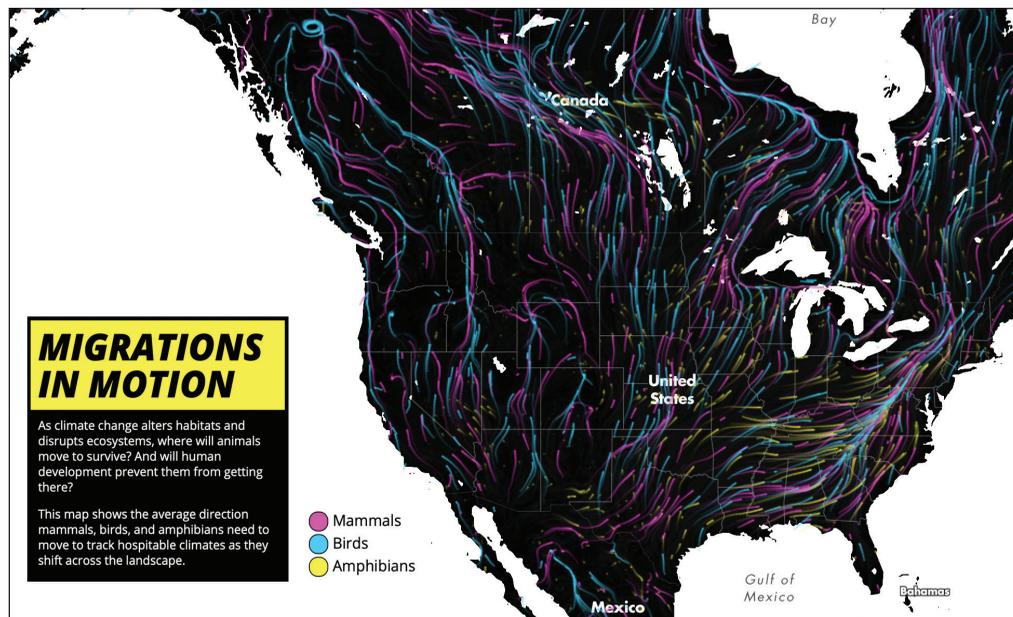
Investing in Revenue-Producing Natural Climate Solutions, Like the Expansion of Forest Carbon Credit Agreements in West Virginia

West Virginia's vast forests are globally important for the carbon they capture and

store. Climate change is the defining challenge of our time, and managing our forests to capture carbon while producing forest products is a necessary goal. The Nature Conservancy brought innovative programs like Working Woodlands, which matches forest carbon credit dollars, to West Virginia forest owners to ensure good forest management practices and secure beneficial timber and forest carbon outcomes while maintaining forest land ownerships.

Expanding Tourism and Outdoor Recreational Opportunities

One third of the nation's population is a day's drive away from West Virginia. Exploring how to deepen investment in maintaining and growing nature-based outdoor recreation can ensure we are looking at conserving and protecting our most outstanding natural resources while deepening revenues through tourism. Many of the major landscapes where The Nature Conservancy has invested already show the results of what such investments can reap. Canaan Valley/ Dolly Sods, Cheat Mountain and New River Gorge have set the stage for what can be developed and expanded.



their contribution to the health of our body and souls. The challenges of now require a boldness to build a Nature and Economy movement that looks at conservation and economy as complementary and creates a West Virginia that pairs the innate love of nature with a focus on entrepreneurship and exploration of economic diversification. Let's look to a future that maintains our Wild and Wonderful West Virginia while expanding natural climate solutions and nature-based economic opportunity. With focus on true innovation, we can address the most pressing issues of our time, maintain a connection to the land and ensure prosperity for generations to come. ▽

Photo Caption 1 The Migrations in Motions map above projects how animal species will migrate to new habitats as the climate changes.

Photo Caption 2 Fall colors show at The Nature Conservancy's Bear Rocks Preserve along the Allegheny Front (Credit: Kent Mason).

"A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in."

GREEK PROVERB

Conservation for the next 100 years will still be grounded in the vision of giants like Teddy Roosevelt, John Muir, Gifford Pinchot and Rachel Carson. We must and will protect those places that have intrinsic natural value for both their beauty and