

BY Rob Riordan

This Land is Our Land

America the beautiful: here is a country as diverse as our people. This land spans tundra and tallgrass, forest and plain, mountain and shore. We are rich with freshwater and salt, great lakes and silent ponds, moody marshes and swamps loud with birdsong. From the Gulf Coast to the Great Plains, Atlantic to Pacific, our natural heritage is captured in song and story and in the national imagination.

Many of these magnificent places are already protected and conserved as the common wealth of our people. But each year, many more are lost. In fact, the United States loses about 2 million acres of open space each year to development—nearly 6,000 acres a day. Citizens from across the political spectrum recognize the need to protect these cherished natural places, as well as the open spaces of our working farms, forests and ranches.

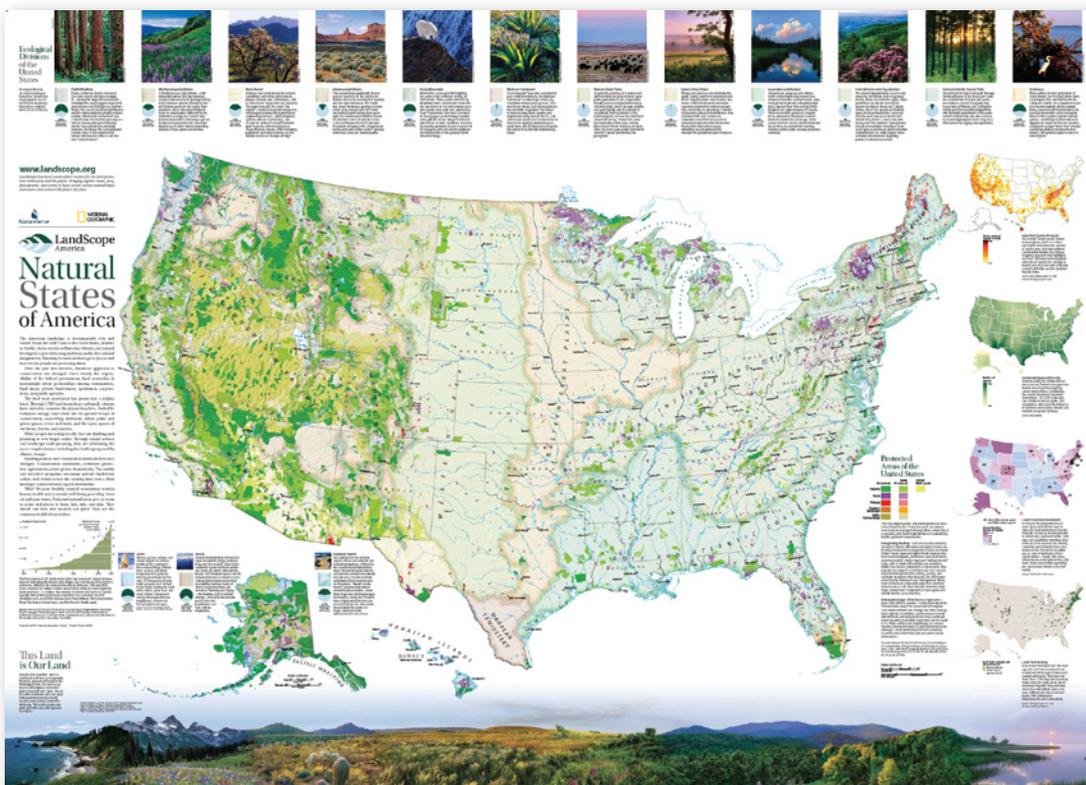
The beautiful map included with this issue of *Saving Land* tells the story of the changing face of land conservation and the continuing threats to our nation's open space. The map was produced by the National Geographic Society and NatureServe as a complement to their new LandScope America website, an online conservation guide to America's natural places and how we the people can help protect them.

What's on the Map?

The front side of the map, "Natural States of America," shows the extent of protected lands across the U.S. and highlights the important role of land trusts. The reverse side, "Open Space at Risk," depicts several major threats to open space, including development pressure, oil and gas exploration, climate change, and invasive species. The map also spotlights a dozen conservation successes made possible by joint efforts among land trusts and other conservation groups, public agencies, landowners and citizens.

How are "protected areas" depicted on the map?

The map depicts protected areas of the United States, public as well as private. "Protected areas" are defined as places with a formal intent to be maintained in a primarily natural state, either through direct ownership or easements. Lands of all ownership types are shown, including federal, state, tribal, local and private. Data sources are the Protected Areas Database maintained by the Conservation Biology Institute, supplemented with additional data compiled by The Nature Conservancy and several state agencies. Lands with a mandate of multiple use are depicted as "semi-protected." For a fine-scale view of protected areas with a



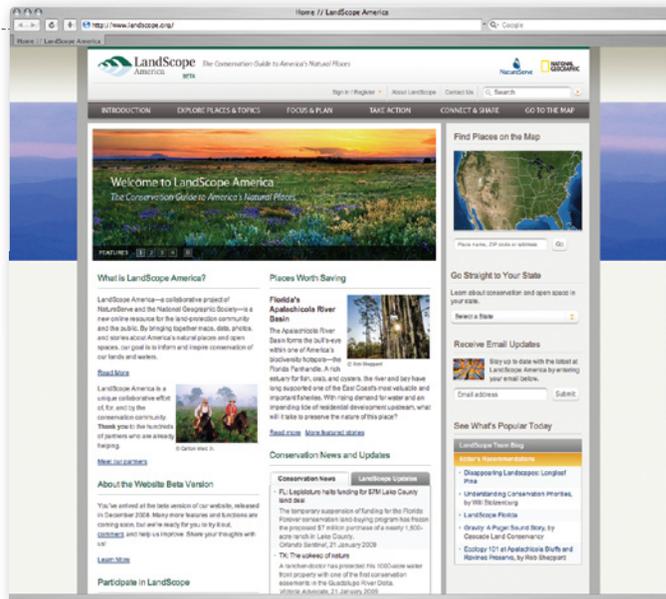
! We'd like to feature your ideas and stories in an upcoming issue. Please send your success stories, photos, tips, tools, people news or general feedback to savingland@lta.org.

vast amount of additional detail, readers can use the LandScope America website to zoom in on an interactive U.S. map.

While the map represents a good-faith effort to provide a national picture of the conservation estate, no map at this time can fully depict all protected areas. Land status and land use change over time, and digitized spatial data are not available for many privately protected lands, including land trust projects. In addition, management regimes vary widely, and the available data does not include information on the management effectiveness for each parcel. Surprisingly, no comprehensive national inventory of protected lands and open space exists, although a multi-institutional effort is underway to address this (see www.protectedlands.net). Ideally, this map will help spur support for such an effort.

Does the map include land trust preserves and conservation easements?

Yes, it includes some major land trust holdings, particularly Nature Conservancy preserves, as well as some large conservation easements. Unfortunately, comprehensive mapped data on the locations of



privately protected lands, and especially conservation easements, have not been compiled nationally, or for most states, so the ability to include them on the map was limited. In addition, many land trust preserves and easements are too small to be visible on a national-scale map.

LandScope America — www.landscape.org

LandScope America is a new online conservation and educational resource for the land protection community and the public. Developed with the assistance of more than 140 partner organizations, including two dozen land trusts, the effort is designed to help make conservation action and investment across the U.S. more strategic and effective.

LandScope America brings together maps, data and information about our environment from many sources and presents them in dynamic and accessible formats. This comprehensive, user-friendly website incorporates interactive, data-rich maps portraying conservation priorities with compelling photos, video and stories about people and places.

The website's beta version, released in December, provides the breadth of a national conservation picture, as well as in-depth information about five pilot states: Colorado, Florida, Maine, Virginia and Washington. Beginning this year, the project's second phase will extend its detailed coverage to the rest of the nation. 🍌

ROB RIORDAN, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS WITH NATURESERVE (WWW.NATURESERVE.ORG), IS THE ACTING EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE LANDSCOPE AMERICA INITIATIVE.

How Land Trusts Can Use LandScope America

- Use simple online mapping tools to create, share and print maps of your conservation projects.
- Compare multiple sets of conservation priorities, such as State Wildlife Action Plans, natural heritage program priority areas, and Nature Conservancy ecoregional priorities, in a single map view.
- View detailed current aerial photography of your region.
- Find valuable environmental data about your area or your state, served up from many credible sources, both public and private.
- Share your organization's conservation vision with policymakers, partners and local supporters.
- Connect with landowners who are looking for a land trust in their area.

Learn More

- Visit the website at www.landscape.org, use the interactive map to zoom in on your location, and explore the map views of your area.
- Provide stories and photos about your land trust's conservation projects to be published on LandScope America. To learn about becoming a LandScope partner, please contact Heather Rorer, partnership and outreach coordinator, at heather_rorer@natureserve.org.
- Send in your comments and sign up for monthly e-mail updates via the website.
- You can purchase additional copies of the map through National Geographic's online map store at www.natgeomaps.com/landscape_us_conservation.