

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



CELEBRATING
20 YEARS



Tyonek

TRIBAL
CONSERVATION
DISTRICT

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VISION & STRATEGIES

Our vision is that **Tebughna lands, waters, and people are healthy and connected in perpetuity.**

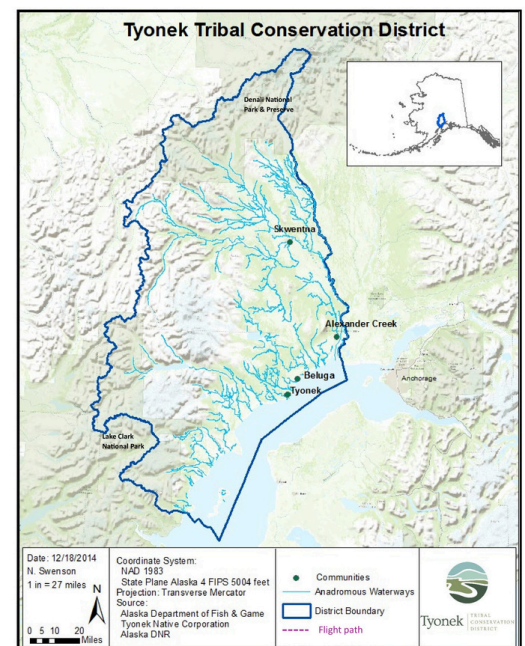
To that end, our projects focus on the following strategies:

- Monitor and restore fish and wildlife habitat
- Improve food security through community agriculture
- Provide conservation education and outreach
- Support sustainable practices through waste reduction and energy conservation

DISCOVER OUR WORK

The Tyonek Tribal Conservation District (TTCD) supports tribally-led conservation and natural resource management across 6.6 million acres surrounding Tyonek, Alaska in Western Cook Inlet. The District's boundaries align with Alaska Game Management Unit 16B and include the communities of Tyonek, Beluga, Shirleyville, Alexander Creek, and Skwentna.

Explore the interactive district map on our new website **ttcd.org** to learn more about TTCD's ongoing conservation projects. You'll also find newsletters, program updates, and valuable resources for community members and partners.



OUR STORY

Twenty years ago, Tyonek community members continued a long-standing tradition of caring for both the land and its people by establishing the Tyonek Tribal Conservation District (TTCD). In late 2005, TTCD was established through a landmark agreement between the Native Village of Tyonek, Tyonek Native Corporation, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. We became Alaska's first Tribal Conservation District and the 31st in the nation, marking a powerful step toward formalizing local stewardship of Tyonek land and natural resources.

In early 2006, TTCD's first board members—Angela Peter, Connie Downing, Randy Standifer, Sr., and Robert Stephan, Sr.—began meeting quarterly with other leadership from the Tribe and Corporation, volunteering their time and expertise to build the Tyonek Tribal Conservation District from the ground up. Throughout this foundational period, staff from USDA-NRCS Alaska played a key role, attending meetings and offering critical technical support. Over the next several years, this team worked tirelessly to develop bylaws, incorporate TTCD as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, identify natural resource priorities, and cultivate meaningful partnerships with federal and state agencies. In 2009, Ron Stanek of the Alaska Department of Fish & Game became TTCD's first at-large board member, further strengthening the District's leadership and capacity.

The new board held strategic workshops with hundreds of stakeholders across the District, helping to shape TTCD's original priorities: improving water and air quality, addressing declining salmon populations, supporting forest health, and managing the spread of invasive species. Their original plan recognized that the 134 miles of remote gravel roads built during oil and gas exploration in the 1960s and '70s had become essential routes for hunting grounds, berry patches, economic opportunities, and emergency access. However, these roads also posed serious barriers to salmon habitat, due to the use of under-engineered culverts at stream crossings.

With support from the Tyonek Native Corporation Trust (TNC Trust) in 2011, TTCD hired its first staff member, Christy Cincotta, to be a Natural Resources Technician. Christy went on to become TTCD's first Executive Director in 2012. Just one year later, the Tyonek Garden was born, planting the seeds for the Tyonek Grown program. That same year, the organization completed its first fish barrier culvert replacement—an initiative that has since expanded to 15 successful culvert replacements, restoring 61.1 miles of critical stream habitat and more than 590 acres of lake ecosystems in Western Cook Inlet.



TTCD and partners cut the ribbon on the 2024 Lower Tyonek Culvert, the largest fish passage project in Alaska.

As momentum grew, so did the District's capacity. In 2013, TTCD partnered with the Native Village of Tyonek to develop a Long-Term Environmental Plan, helping guide future conservation projects grounded in community needs and values. TTCD then expanded its team and impact by hiring a Conservation Project Manager and launching the Tyonek Youth Conservation Science (TYCS) Program, bringing culturally grounded science education into the classroom at the Tebughna School.



Tebughna School students release salmon fry under an ADF&G permit as part of the Salmon-in-the-Classroom curriculum.

In the years that followed, TTCD expanded its impact across the region. The completion of a Watershed Action Plan in 2016 provided a strategic framework for coordinating restoration efforts throughout Western Cook Inlet. By 2018, TTCD played a key role in launching the Invasive Pike Partnership and helping to establish the Mat-Su Elodea Task Force—two initiatives critical to protecting native fish populations and preserving aquatic ecosystems.



A TTCD Conservation Technician pulls up elodea during an elodea survey at Big Lake in the Mat-Su.

OUR STORY (CONTINUED)

Over the past two decades, TTCD has grown from a single-staff office into a recognized leader in tribal conservation, grounded in collaboration, cultural knowledge, and scientific practice. Despite the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, TTCD remained resilient, adapting to new realities while maintaining its mission-driven programs. Following the pandemic, the organization entered a new chapter of growth and adopted a mantra of resilience: *"Changing cycles strengthens us"*. Most recently, TTCD has been working to finalize a Coastal Resilience Plan and conduct a comprehensive Food System Assessment with our partners to support long-term sustainability and climate adaptation in Tyonek—efforts that reflect the organization's expanding capacity and forward-looking approach. Today, TTCD's team includes 10 year-round staff, 7 seasonal staff, and 7 dedicated board members.



TTCD staff with the Tebughna School students at the 2025 Garden Blessing, celebrating the start of the growing season.

This growth has been possible thanks in large part to the enduring support of the Tyonek Native Corporation Trust. Its initial seed funding of \$91,834 in 2011 was a pivotal investment that launched TTCD and laid the foundation for our development. Since then, the Trust has remained our primary source of non-federal matching funds. Within just two years of that initial investment, TTCD was leveraging additional support from state and federal sources. And over the past 15 years, that partnership has yielded impressive returns: for every dollar contributed by the Trust, TTCD has secured an average of \$9.60 in external grant funding.



TTCD's Senior Habitat Director introduces members of NRCS's Joint Regional Tribal Conservation Advisory Council to our programs.

Multi-year cooperative agreements with agencies like the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) have been especially critical in expanding our work in agriculture, fish passage, and invasive species management. Today, we manage between 25 and 31 grants and contracts annually, a testament to the strength of these partnerships and our growing operational capacity.



Tyonek community members harvesting at the 2025 Potato Harvest event.

Even as we celebrate this progress, we remain attentive to new challenges. While our grant and contract-funded programs remain strong overall, the Tyonek Grown program has faced increased vulnerability this year due to rising national competition for small agriculture funds. TTCD is projected to maintain baseline funding for our Habitat and Outreach programs through 2026, but the fiscal landscape is shifting. In response, we are prioritizing a more diversified funding approach to ensure continued food security in our region—supporting local subsistence, gardening, and food distribution for all who depend on the District's resources.

From restoring salmon streams to empowering youth, from reviving traditional food systems to integrating cultural values with environmental stewardship, TTCD's first 20 years have been rooted in strengthening our land and community. As we celebrate two decades of work, we honor the generations of knowledge that guide us and look ahead with deep gratitude, renewed purpose, and a shared commitment to the next chapter of conservation in Tyonek. On behalf of our Board and Staff, thank you to the long-term partnerships that perpetuate our healthy and connected lands, waters, and people!



Sincerely,

Laurie Stuart, Executive Director



TYONEK GROWN PROGRAM

What began as a vision for a community garden has grown into Tyonek Grown—a community-rooted program that now encompasses agriculture, hydroponics, conservation, education, technical assistance, and more, supporting food sovereignty, youth leadership, and ecological stewardship

The Tyonek Garden

Since inception, the Tyonek Garden has grown into a 1-acre property that currently grows more than 25 different types of crops across 10,000 square feet of cultivated land. With two high tunnels, solar-powered infrastructure, drip irrigation, and a new educational yurt erected in 2025, the garden is more than a farm—it's a gathering place, teaching tool, and symbol of community resilience.

Twelve community garden beds serve local households, while seasonal events like the Garden Blessing, Harvest Party, and Potato Harvest invite neighbors to reconnect with the land and each other. Weekly Farmer's Markets provide access to fresh, local produce and create opportunities for connection.

Youth Employment & Education

Since its inception, Tyonek Grown has placed youth at the center of food production. Each season, local teens join the garden crew, gaining valuable paid work experience while contributing to their community's food sovereignty. From seeding and transplanting to harvesting and market sales, youth take part in every stage of the growing cycle.

Beyond the garden, interns expand their understanding of conservation and career pathways through field trips, farm tours, and workshops. In 2025, youth traveled to Anchorage and Palmer to explore diverse farming models and community gardens. On-the-job learning is also complemented by educational lessons on soil health, ecosystem management, marketing, and sustainable agriculture. Youth also participate in habitat monitoring and professional development trainings, building both technical and leadership skills.

Growing Year-Round with Hydroponics

At Tebughna School, students plant, care for, and harvest diverse vegetables from indoor hydroponic systems that supply ingredients for school meals and double as living science labs.

Nutrition and Garden Education

Whether in the classroom or around the garden beds, nutrition and gardening education are central to Tyonek Grown. At Tebughna School, students engage in cooking demonstrations, gardening, and harvest celebrations that bring healthy, local food into daily meals.

For adults, community workshops—like this year's jam-making and pickling classes led by the UAF Tribes Extension program—highlight seasonal food preservation and healthy cooking techniques rooted in local food systems. In addition, nearly a quarter of Tyonek households participate in the Tyonek Garden Club, receiving access to garden beds, seeds, and tools, along with one-on-one support from trained interns and garden mentors to strengthen local gardening skills and food knowledge.

On-Farm Conservation

In collaboration with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and other partners, Tyonek Grown incorporates conservation practices into agricultural production designed to sustain the land. Crop rotation, reduced tillage, cover cropping, habitat restoration, and season-extension strategies help enhance biodiversity, restore pollinator habitats, improve soil health, and increase yields year after year.

Tyonek Gather

In 2023, Tyonek Gather launched as a pilot project in partnership with the Native Village of Tyonek, aiming to connect households with locally grown and harvested foods from across the state. To date, the program has sourced from more than 45 Alaskan producers, including Tyonek's own gardeners and fishers. A newly launched online marketplace now enables families to select fresh, local products each week, increasing food access while supporting Indigenous and small-scale food producers across Alaska.



HABITAT MONITORING & RESTORATION PROGRAM

The Habitat Monitoring and Restoration (HMR) Program works at the intersection of science, stewardship, and community. Through fish habitat restoration, invasive species removal, and long-term ecological monitoring, the program supports resilient ecosystems and the subsistence and commercial salmon fisheries that local communities rely on.

Restoring Fish Habitat, Reconnecting Communities

In 2025, TTCD completed its 14th and 15th culvert replacement projects, cumulatively reopening more than 60 miles of salmon habitat over the past 13 years. These newly accessible waterways now support every life stage of salmon, ensuring long-term harvest opportunities and ecosystem balance.

But the impact goes beyond fish. These upgraded crossings withstand flood events, protecting roads and access to homes, fish camps, allotments, and private parcels from washouts; they preserve vital access to cultural and subsistence sites and reconnect communities to the waters that sustain them.

Invasive Pike Management

Northern pike, an invasive predator, pose a serious threat to salmon populations in the Western Cook Inlet region. In ecosystems where they don't naturally occur, pike prey heavily on juvenile salmonids, which are nearly defenseless against such efficient predators. To protect native fish, TTCD and partners have focused on pike removal, extracting over 11,000 pike from local lakes and streams since the program began, including 1,736 in 2025 alone. Monitoring data shows pike populations shrinking and native fish species rebounding, clear evidence that sustained action is working. Today, two lakes in the District are within just a few years of full pike eradication, offering hope for full ecosystem recovery.

Invasive Plant Management

Elodea, Alaska's only invasive freshwater plant, forms dense mats that slow stream flow, harm salmon spawning habitat, and crowd out native vegetation. First detected in Alexander Lake—likely from float plane activity—HMR coordinates with state, federal, and local partners to survey, contain, and remove infestations early to protect salmon habitat.

In addition to aquatic invasive species, TTCD also addresses terrestrial invasives. Since 2014, we have worked to control invasive plants in the District, mapping infestations along 135 miles of remote roads and documenting all known populations. Initial control efforts targeted key entry points into the District—primarily airstrips. At the Beluga airstrip, which had the most severe infestation in the region, TTCD has reduced invasive plant densities by over 90% since 2016. Ongoing control continues, helping protect native plant communities and prevent further spread.

Data-Driven Conservation

In a region where scientific data has been historically limited, HMR has built a foundation for informed, community-led conservation. Since 2014, TTCD has collected robust data on salmon populations, habitat quality, water temperature, and stream flow across District watersheds. This includes hourly stream temperature readings from 21 sites and salmon presence surveys that feed into state-level databases like AKTEMP, a statewide water temperature database used by researchers and resource managers to assess climate impacts on salmon-bearing streams, and the Anadromous Waterways catalog, the State's official database of salmon habitat. These datasets inform conservation priorities, regulatory decisions, and community planning.

Advancing Long-Term Stewardship

Through restoration, monitoring, and invasive species management, HMR is creating long-term pathways for ecological resilience, community safety, and food security. Each project is rooted in partnership—bringing together Tribal, state, federal, and local collaborators, landowners, and funders to make lasting change.



YOUTH CONSERVATION SCIENCE PROGRAM & OUTREACH

STEM Education at Tebughna School

Through twice-monthly lessons at Tebughna School, students explore topics related to local ecology and food systems, bridging classroom learning with the world outside. In 2025, TTCD completed a place-based STEM curriculum that incorporates Dena'ina cultural components in collaboration with the Tebughna Foundation, enriching both STEM instruction and cultural identity through 29 lessons focused on local data and projects.

Each year's Salmon-in-the-Classroom experience brings life cycles into focus: from egg to fry, from dissection to release, students raise and study wild salmon before returning them to the water—an act of stewardship and celebration.

Experiential Learning Rooted in Place

During the 2024-2025 school year, students walked the riverbank during the Lower Tyonek Creek Culvert restoration and helped replant native vegetation, seeing firsthand how conservation restores fish passage. Visits to the Alaska Zoo and Anchorage Museum provided new perspectives on animal behavior, planetary systems, and careers in science.

Food Systems & Youth Workforce Development

In the school's hydroponics system and the rows of the Tyonek Garden, students learn the science of growing food and the power of feeding their community.

This year, three youth garden interns stepped into leadership roles, running the Farmer's Market, engaging in agricultural workshops, and exploring careers in food systems and conservation.

Community Outreach

With a redesigned website and a growing library of lesson plans now available to teachers across Alaska, TTCD is helping rural educators bring science to life.

Data from TTCD's habitat, food, and technical programs is informed by local knowledge holders and plays a role in ensuring that local households, landowners, partners, and leaders have the information they need to make informed responses to habitat, funding, and policy changes.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Tyonek Tribal Conservation District works closely with the landowners and community members in Western Cook Inlet to set local priorities for conservation and ensure sustainable use of natural resources for subsistence, economic opportunity, resource development, and cultural preservation. TTCD may provide technical assistance to local partners, connecting them to federal and state resources, or utilize our capacity to operationalize projects.

Coastal Resilience Planning

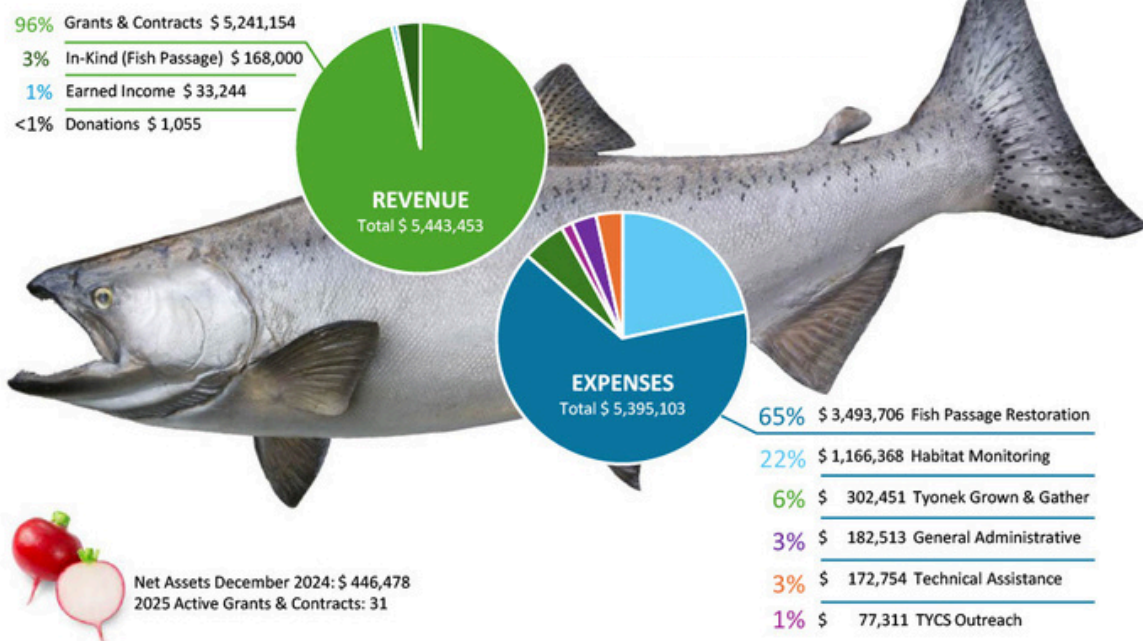
With partners at the Native Village of Tyonek, Tyonek Native Corporation, and Tebughna Foundation, TTCD is leading an effort to build a Coastal Resilience Plan by December 2026 that provides partners with comprehensive and forecast data to inform pro-active workplan goals over the next decade, as well as decision-making tools that assess which goals and activities will have the most impact on the District's priorities.

Tribal Conservation District Community of Practice

A partnership between TTCD, Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission, Knik Tribe, and Prince of Wales Tribal Conservation District is catalyzing a new Community of Practice network for participating Tribal Conservation Districts in Alaska. In 2026-2027, the network will support TCD capacity building with over \$1M in subawards provided through the Denali Commission.

FINANCIALS

SUMMARY OF 2024 AUDITED FINANCIALS



GRANTORS & DONORS 2024-2025

Alaska Food Marketing Association
Alaska Native Education Program
Alaska Pacific University
Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund
Arbor Day Foundation
Calypso Farm & Ecology Center
ConocoPhillips
Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI)
Copper River Watershed
Denali Commission
First Nations Development Institute
Fred Meyer Community Rewards
Homer Soil & Water Conservation District
Intertribal Agriculture Council

Kroger Community Rewards
Lagu Foundation
Matanuska-Susitna Salmon Habitat Partnership
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Fish & Wildlife Foundation
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
PayPal Giving Fund
Rasmuson Foundation
Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc.
State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Tyonek Native Corporation Trust
US Fish & Wildlife Service
USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Daniel Graham
Steven Holley
Kathy Justus
David Kroto
Erin Larson
Chrystal Moon
Angela Peter
Samuel Peter
Zhenia Peterson
McKenna Slivensky
Donald Standifer
Laurie Stuart
Maya Suzuki

SUPPORT OUR WORK

Thank you to our supporters and partners in 2025 for making these accomplishments possible! Your supports helps us restore Cook Inlet salmon habitat, build food security programs, provide youth education, and respond to the conservation needs of District landowners.

If you are interested in donating, please visit our website at www.ttcd.org

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