

# THRIVING FRESHWATER FISHERIES

*Community-led management is delivering lasting benefits for people and the planet.*

Freshwater fisheries support millions of livelihoods, supply food for billions of people, and are central to local, traditional, and Indigenous cultures—but freshwater ecosystems are under threat. Since 1970, freshwater plant and animal populations have declined by 83 percent. If these trends continue, nearly a third of freshwater fish are at risk of extinction, which would jeopardize the health of nearby communities and the broader ecosystem.

## A COLLABORATIVE, LOCALLY-DRIVEN APPROACH FOR SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE MANAGEMENT

Though freshwater fisheries face significant challenges, there are reasons for optimism. With the right partnerships, policies, and enabling approaches, we can conserve biodiversity while improving food security and promoting equity. That's where The Nature Conservancy comes in; we partner with communities, governments, NGOs, and stakeholders across 10 river basins in Latin America and Africa to establish science-based, community-led conservation strategies that can be scaled globally.

Our approach is built on four pillars: fisheries co-management, community governance and leadership, gender equity and human rights, and science and policy.

## OUR 2030 GOALS



**7.3 million hectares** of lakes and wetlands conserved



**63,000 kilometers** of river systems conserved



**517,000 people** with improved security of rights or decision-making over lands, waters, or resources



**400,000 people** with improved sustainable, place-based economic opportunity

### CONTACT

Allison Aldous, Ph.D.  
Director, Freshwater Fisheries  
aaldous@tnc.org

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## FISHERIES CO-MANAGEMENT

Community-led co-management promotes collaboration between fishing communities and governments on decision-making and governance processes, enhancing communities' ownership and rights.

In **Tanzania**, co-management is achieved through Beach Management Units (BMUs), village institutions that create and enforce their own regulations, collect data, and educate community members on sustainable fishing and financing; more than 54 lakeshore villages near Lake Tanganyika have established BMUs.

## GENDER EQUITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Women comprise half of the freshwater fisheries workforce and hold unique natural resource knowledge. However, they are often underrepresented in fisheries management decision making. Engaging both men and women through gender-transformative approaches is essential to advance household wellbeing, improve food security, and strengthen the effectiveness of fisheries conservation efforts.

In the **Brazilian Amazon**, TNC has reached more than 600 women through trainings focused on rights and gender inclusion. Beyond capacity building, we engage fishing associations to improve women's access to decision-making spaces, and we provide guidance to government agencies to foster gender-transformative change at a broader scale.

## COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Indigenous Peoples, traditional communities, and local residents have long conserved their lands and waters in reciprocity with nature, positioning them to sustainably manage freshwater ecosystems into the future. TNC partners with these communities to co-create freshwater conservation strategies that improve peoples' lives and safeguard biodiversity.

**Ecuador's Napo Basin**, 70% of which is under the stewardship of Indigenous peoples, is threatened by unsustainable development; Indigenous rights to mitigate these threats are limited. TNC provides legal and educational tools that support Indigenous conservation leadership and community-led monitoring of water quality and biodiversity. We collaborate with communities to maintain freshwater reserves and advance culturally aligned economic opportunities.

## SCIENCE AND POLICY

A key challenge for freshwater fisheries is insufficient data to inform management decisions and policymaking. To address these shortcomings, TNC and collaborators are developing easy-to-use tools that assess management trends, fishery health and productivity, and regulation compliance.

Our world-class science serves as the foundation of our policy solutions. On a local, national, and international scale, we provide guidance for evidence-based regulations, funding priorities, and management strategies that align with social and environmental goals.

Partners and collaborators have been key to our success and will be critical to meeting our 2030 goals. Together, we can transform the way freshwater fisheries are sustained—for people and nature. Scan the QR code or visit [freshwaterfisheries.org](https://freshwaterfisheries.org) to learn more and get involved.

