



WESTERN REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Tribal Engagement Committee

February 2026

ENHANCING RESILIENCE TO
AVOID CASCADING DISASTER



WESTERN REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Today's Agenda



- **Welcome and Introductions**
- **Featured Presentations:**
 - **Picuris Community Solar Phase II** by Wayne Yazza Jr., Director of Utilities, Pueblos of Picuris (former Governor for the Pueblo of Picuris) and Celestino Yazza, Utilities Technician, Pueblo of Picuris
 - **Nevada Native Seed Partnership** by Mervin Wright Jr., Nevada Restoration Tribal Liaison, The Nature Conservancy
- **Next Steps and Actions**
- **Around the Phone Updates**





Wayne Yazza, Jr.

Director of Utilities
Pueblo of Picuris



- ***Director of Utilities, Pueblo of Picuris***
 - ❑ Led the creation of the tribe's Utility Department
 - ❑ Department manages potable and wastewater services, solid waste management, the construction of Community Solar Phase I & II projects, and the expansion of broadband services.
 - ❑ Overseen numerous Capital Outlay projects, including the renovation of the Tribal Administration Offices and the Interpretive Museum, as well as the new construction of the Tribal Health Station, Senior Center, Solid Waste Station, Water Utilities/Pump House, Tribal Works building, and the Travel Center.
- Extensive experience working with federal and state government agencies.
- His vision is to achieve tribal self-sustainability and stabilize electricity costs through full ownership of all generation and storage resources on Picuris lands. Guided by his cultural beliefs, he is dedicated to preserving the traditions of his ancestors and maintaining an inherent respect for the environment.
- **Former Governor for the Pueblo of Picuris**
- **Member of the Pueblos of Picuris and Santa Clara and the Navajo Nation**
- Level 1 certifications in both Water Treatment Operation and Wastewater Collection

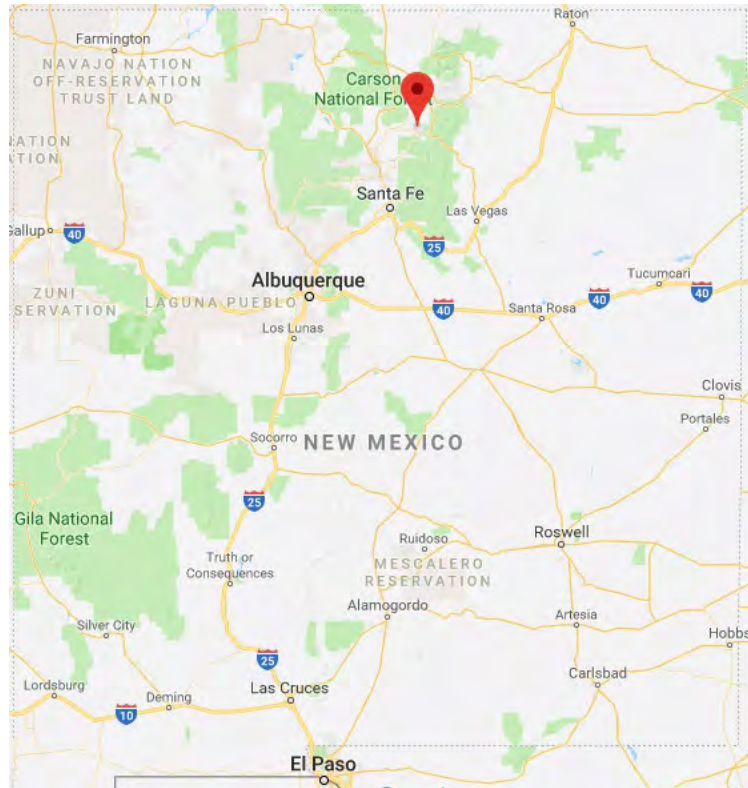


PICURIS COMMUNITY SOLAR PHASE II

By
Wayne Yazza Jr.
Director

Celestino Yazza
Utilities Technician

**Presentation to Western Regional
Partnership Tribal Engagement Committee
Friday, February 27, 2026**



About Picuris Pueblo

Pueblo Governor is Craig Quanchello



Picuris Pueblo is located 60 miles north of Santa Fe, and 24 miles southeast of Taos on scenic Highways 75 & 76.

Picuris Pueblo currently has 306 members and 90 homes.

Our traditional way of life starts with respect of the land and nature and our natural resources.

Our everyday life consist of farming, hunting, providing for our families and honoring our culture by practicing traditions and beliefs as our ancestors did before us.

Our tranquil village rests along the banks of the Rio Pueblo which nourishes the evergreens, cottonwoods, aspens, grasses and flowers that blanket our valley and surrounding mountains. The scenic beauty is unsurpassed in New Mexico, **The Land of Enchantment.**

Picuris pueblo is nestled in a setting of serene beauty in what is known as the **"hidden valley"** of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in Northern New Mexico.









Tribal Considerations



- Traditional Values of the Tribe and its relationship to Mother Earth
- Self determination
- Remove dependency on third party energy infrastructure
- Protection from external threats:
 - Wildfires that impact utility Grid
 - Cyber security concerns
 - Terrorism
- Decrease cost of electricity and foster economic growth

Community Solar Phase I Completed 2017



Phase I of Picuris Community Solar commenced commercial operation in January 2018.

The 1 MW project utilized a combination of funds from a Department of Energy (DOE) Grant and a conventional loan. Energy produced goes directly into the Kit Carson Electric Cooperative grid.

The tribe derives revenue from a power purchase agreement with Kit Carson Electric Co-op.

The tribal buildings and tribal member homes are billed by Kit Carson as any other consumer subject to the PRC approved rates.

The surplus generated by the difference of the monthly revenue received and the monthly loan payments has allowed for a \$ 75 subsidy per household for the four winter months and \$ 50 subsidy per household for the remaining eight months.

Community Solar Phase II (Under Construction)



The Pueblo has secured another DOE grant for a Solar Microgrid project that would provide electricity directly into the tribal buildings, tribal member homes and economic development buildings that would include the new travel center complex. The matching requirements for the tribe has been reached from funds from Wells Fargo and from 11th Hour Project Foundation.

The microgrid design includes energy storage that would support the electricity needs when the solar array is not generating and would be available for backup if the utility grid is off line. The tribe partnered with Sandia National Labs to provide an energy analysis that would be used as the basis for requesting grant funds.

The microgrid will reduce the cost of electricity and will be significantly less than the present cost that uses the Kit Carson Coop system. The goal is that with both solar projects, the tribal household members would have their electric bills completely subsidized.





Phased Development of Grid-Connected Microgrid

Phase I – 1 MW Solar Array – Completed 2018.

PPA with Kit Carson Electric Co-op generates revenue
Subsidizes cost of electricity to tribe.

Phase IIa – Build 750 kW Solar Array – Broke ground in October 2023

Completion in May 2024. Annual production 1.6 GWh

Phase IIb – Build 250 kW Solar Array planned extension of Phase IIa

In conceptual stages; Estimated Annual production 480 MWh

Phase III – Add 1 MW/4 hour Energy Storage: 2024/2025

Contract with Sandia Lab for system specs and RFP

Phase IV – Complete microgrid with solar, energy storage

backed up with natural gas generators- planned for 2025/2026

Entire energy infrastructure and microgrid is located on sovereign tribal land

Phases IIa and IIb Solar Array



Phase IIa under construction has 1,440 Trina Solar panels w/2 Solar Edge 330 kW inverters
Phase IIb planned will have 420 Trina Solar panels w/1 Solar Edge 330 kW inverter

Dedicated 2.3 mile 15 kV feeder underground and overhead sections connect Phase II Solar Array to Pueblo loads



1.3 mile is underground to assure high reliability by protecting it from extreme weather



Phase II Solar Array Under Construction



January 30, 2024



April 25, 2024: Ground posts for racks being set in place

Trenching and Installation of the Dedicated 1.3 mile 15 kV feeder



←
Cross section of
underground
power cable



1.3 mile 15 kV feeder underground section completed in three weeks on November 10, 2024

Includes fiber for high speed communication and control of Phase II solar array



Termination of feeder on Pueblo side



Archeological Mapping to Locate Buried Artifacts on the Overhead Pole Route May 2024





Mervin Wright Jr.

*Nevada Restoration Tribal
Liaison*
The Nature Conservancy

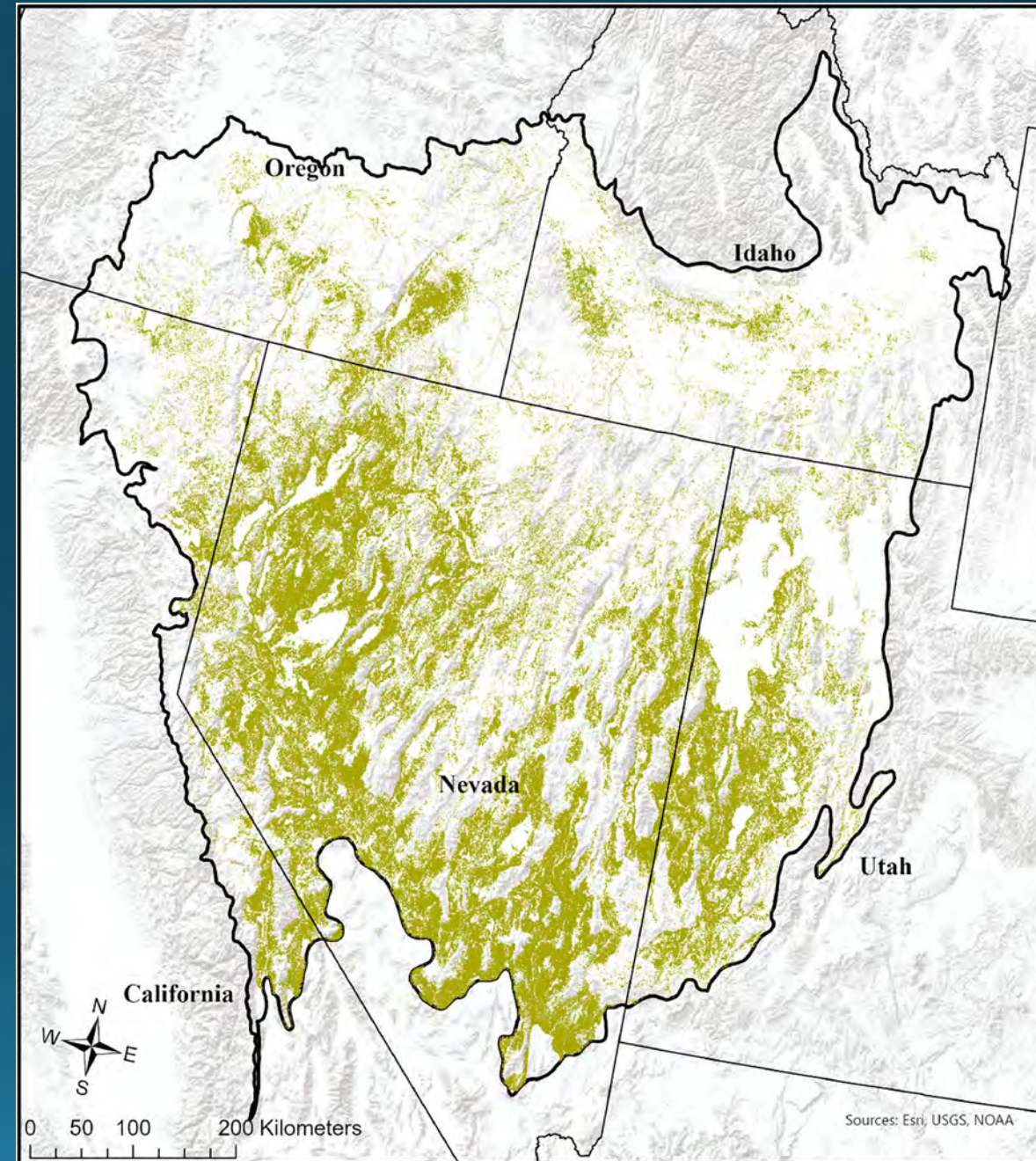


- **Nevada Restoration Tribal Liaison, The Nature Conservancy**
- **Leadership experience** and service in tribal governance, natural resources, cultural resources, and environmental protection. **Previously:**
 - Pyramid Lake Fisheries, Executive Director, 2022 to 2024
 - Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe Natural Resource Manager
 - Pyramid Lake Paiute Reservation: Tribal Chairman (3 terms), Vice Chairman (3 terms), Environmental Manager, Environmental Director, GIS Specialist, Director of Water Resources
- **Education:**
 - M.S. Hydrologic Sciences University, Nevada Reno
 - B.S. Agriculture Engineering, California State University at Chico
- 2022 Tribal - EPA Region 9 Conner Byestewa Jr. Environmental Award
- Has resided all his life on the Pyramid Lake Paiute Reservation in northern Nevada.

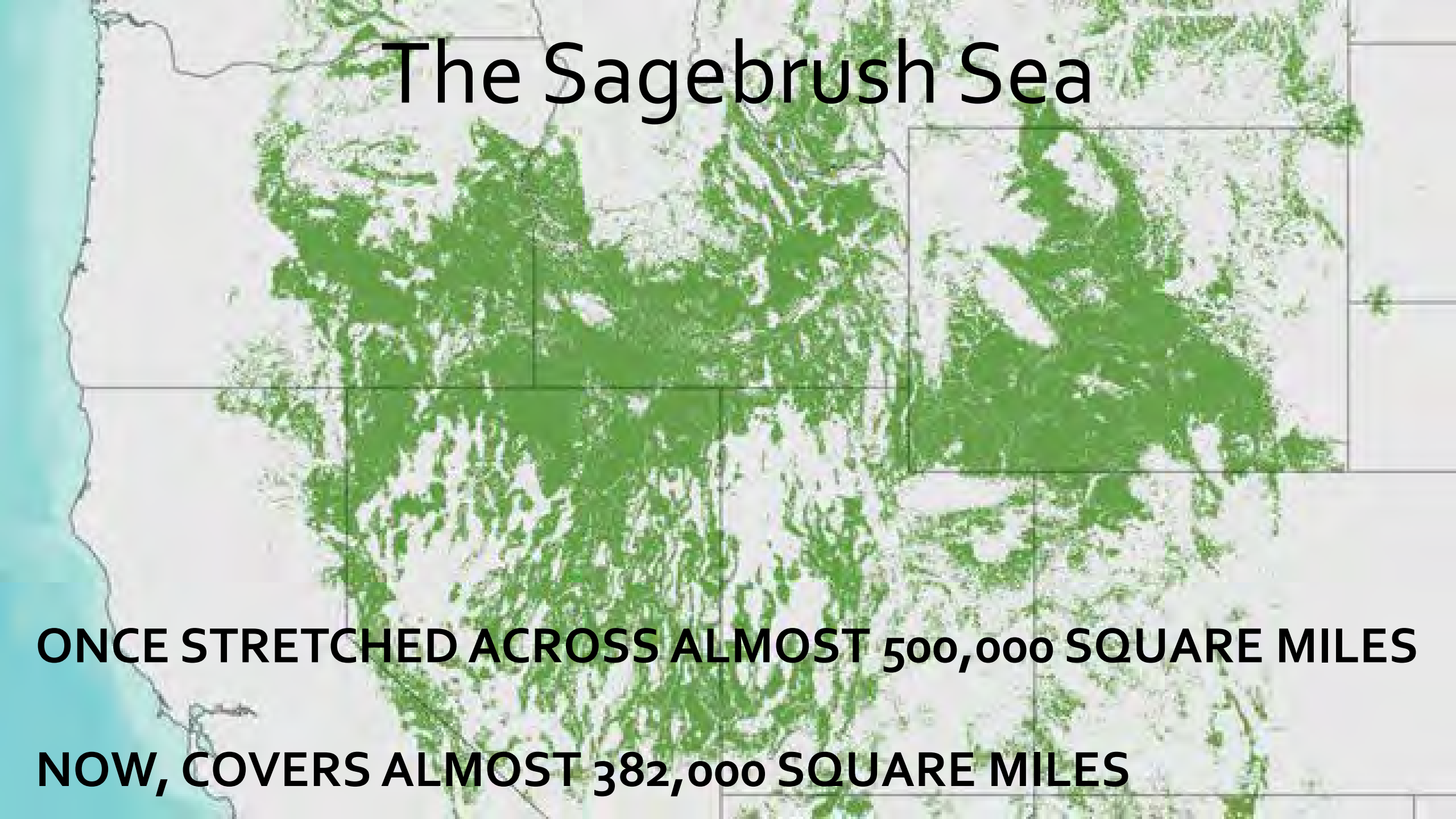
NATIVE PLANT RESTORATION

Mervin Wright Jr.
Nevada Restoration Tribal Liaison
The Nature Conservancy

Western Regional Partnership
February 27, 2026

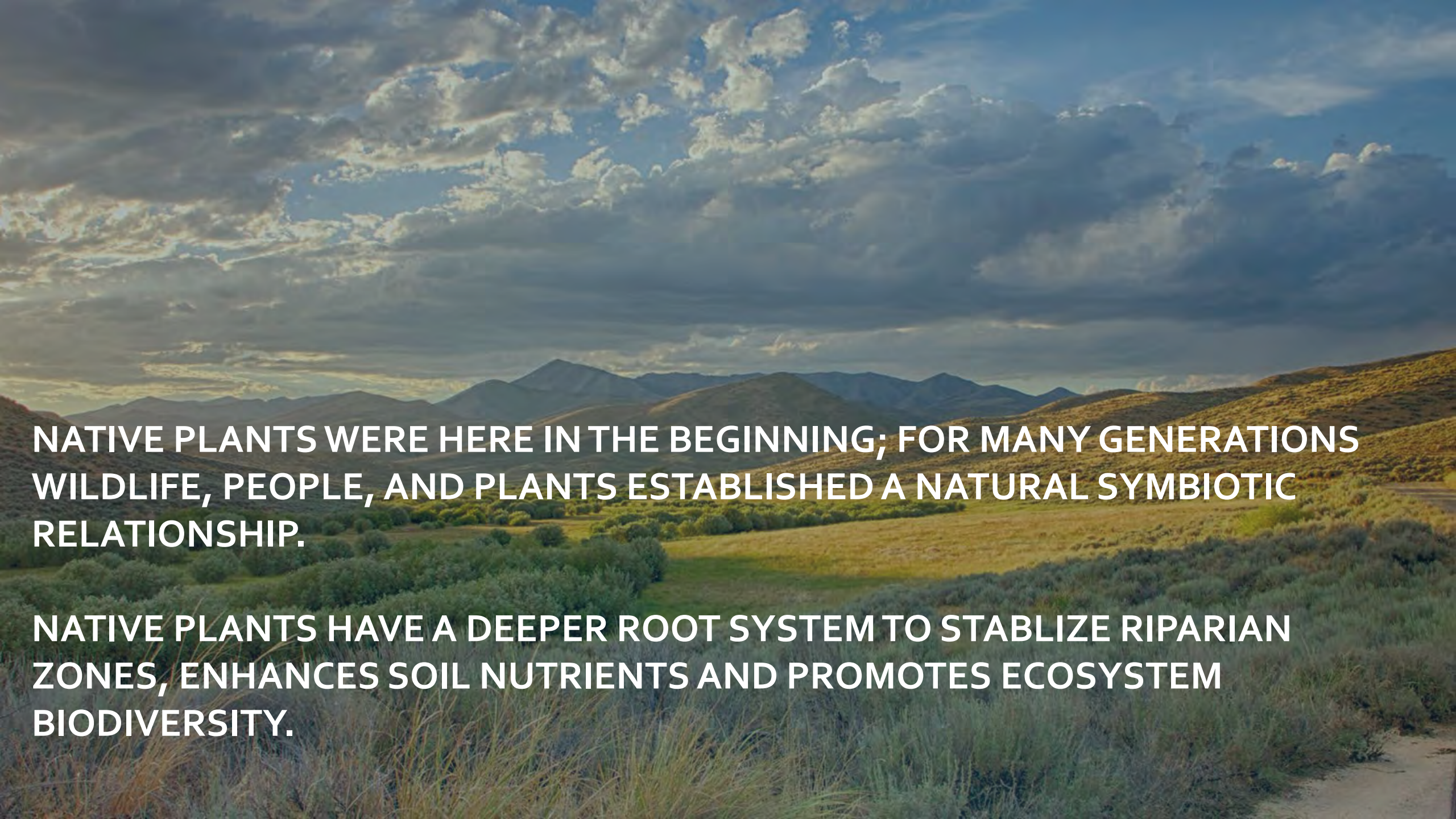


The Sagebrush Sea

A map of the western United States, specifically the states of California, Nevada, Idaho, and Utah. The map shows the distribution of sagebrush, which is highlighted in green. The green areas are concentrated in the central and eastern parts of the region, particularly in the Great Basin. The map also shows state boundaries and the coastline of California.

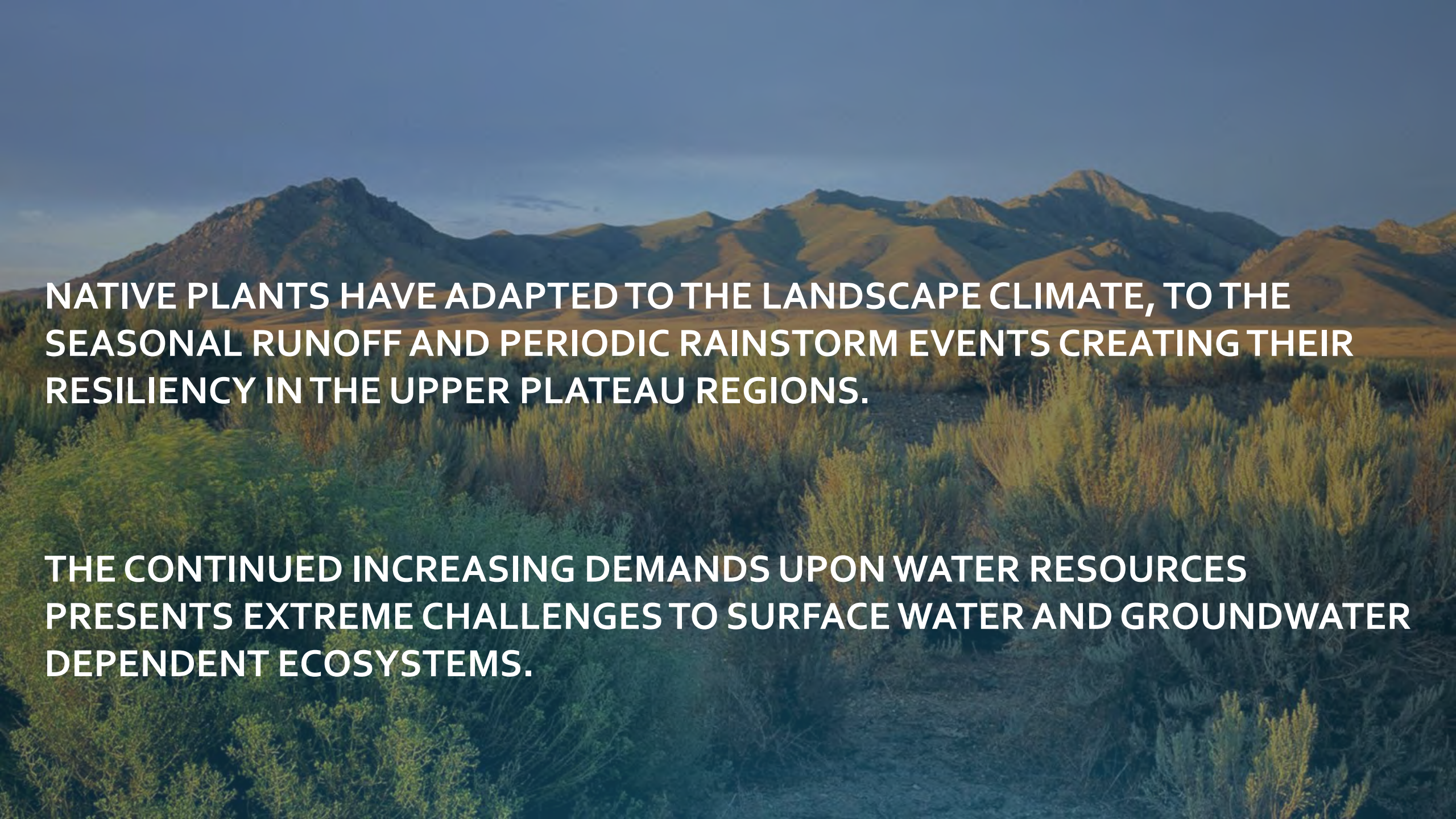
ONCE STRETCHED ACROSS ALMOST 500,000 SQUARE MILES

NOW, COVERS ALMOST 382,000 SQUARE MILES

A landscape photograph showing a wide, grassy valley with scattered shrubs and small trees. In the background, a range of mountains is visible under a sky filled with large, dramatic clouds. The lighting suggests late afternoon or early morning, with warm tones on the landscape and cooler tones in the sky.

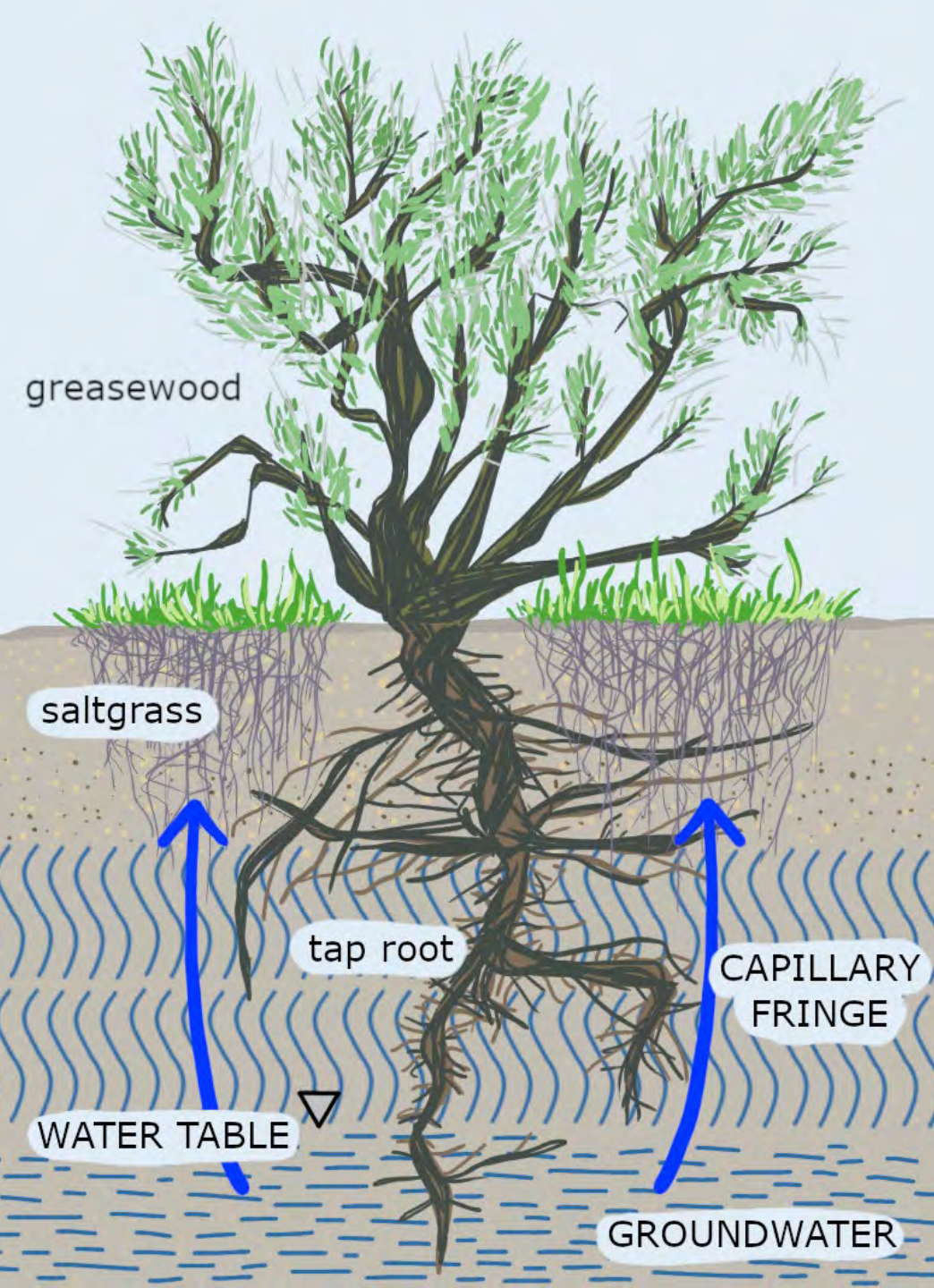
NATIVE PLANTS WERE HERE IN THE BEGINNING; FOR MANY GENERATIONS WILDLIFE, PEOPLE, AND PLANTS ESTABLISHED A NATURAL SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP.

NATIVE PLANTS HAVE A DEEPER ROOT SYSTEM TO STABILIZE RIPARIAN ZONES, ENHANCES SOIL NUTRIENTS AND PROMOTES ECOSYSTEM BIODIVERSITY.



NATIVE PLANTS HAVE ADAPTED TO THE LANDSCAPE CLIMATE, TO THE SEASONAL RUNOFF AND PERIODIC RAINSTORM EVENTS CREATING THEIR RESILIENCY IN THE UPPER PLATEAU REGIONS.

THE CONTINUED INCREASING DEMANDS UPON WATER RESOURCES PRESENTS EXTREME CHALLENGES TO SURFACE WATER AND GROUNDWATER DEPENDENT ECOSYSTEMS.



GROUNDWATER DEPENDENT ECOSYSTEMS

CAPILLARY FRINGE:

The capillary fringe is a zone above the water table where the soil is saturated with water due to capillary action.

THREATS:

1. groundwater withdrawals
2. climate
3. ungulates
4. non-native species
5. additional impacts due to human development

Workhorse Species			
Grasses	Shrubs	Forbs	Medicinal
Ricegrass (wai)	Bitterbrush (hunabe)	Sunflower (aki)	Bitterroot (kangida)
Wheatgrass (sonibihi)	Saltbrush (sunupi)	Yarrow (tooza'a)	Tea (tsudoop)
Bottlebrush (hokei)	Sagebrush (sawabve)	Balsamroot (kaiba aki)	Wildrose (tsiabve)
Bluegrass (sobi)	Rabbitbrush (sigupi)	Globemallow (piipinoodi)	Camas (passigo'o)
Wildrye (waiya)	Chokecherry (toishabui)	Yellow Beeplant (pokusinop)	Pinenut (tubva)
Fescue (puiga'yu)	Buckbrush (wiyipi)	Lewis Flax (puinatizua)	Tobacco (pahmu)
		Hoary Tansyaster (etsa)	Buckberry (wiyipui)
		Buckwheat (atsa nagodedu)	Juniper (waapi)
		Penstemon(pawannatisiua)	Bisquitroot (todza'va)
		Fleabane (puinatizua)	Mint (kaiva pah'kwana'a)

A wide-angle photograph of a vast field of wildflowers. The foreground and middle ground are filled with a dense carpet of purple flowers, likely lupines, interspersed with bright yellow flowers, possibly sunflowers or daisies. The field stretches towards a distant, low horizon under a heavy, overcast sky. The overall tone is somewhat muted due to the overcast lighting.

**IDENTIFYING LOCAL NATIVE PLANTS, UNDERSTANDING THE USES,
AND DETERMINING THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR ROLE IN A COMMUNITY.**

**PROMOTING NATIVE PLANT RESTORATION INVOLVES SEED GATHERING,
SEED CLEANING, CERTIFYING SEED QUALITY, AND DETERMINING
MARKETABILITY.**

**PROVIDING TRIBES WITH SEED PRODUCTION OPPORTUNITIES SUPPORTS
VIABLE ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS.**

References

- Tyler Harris, Dustin D. Johnson, Rory C. O'Connor. A brief history of sagebrush management in the Great Basin: From removal to reduction and beyond. Society for Range Management. 2024.
- Laura A. Nunez, Allison Jones, Vera Smith, Robert Anderson. Protecting the Disappearing Sagebrush Sea. Defenders of Wildlife. January 31, 2023
- Brianna Randall. Saving the Sagebrush Biome. National Wildlife Federation Conservation. September 24, 2025.
- The Nature Conservancy. <https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/priority-landscapes/sagebrush-sea/>. January 21, 2026.
- Flo Reed. Uses of Native Plants by Nevada Indians. State of Nevada Department of Education. Carson City. 1967.
- Percy Train, James Heindricks, W. Andrew Archer. Traditional Paiute Medicine Plants from Smith and Mason Valleys. 1941.
- Quina West. First Bloom Native Plant Garden. Bishop, CA. 2010.
- Sven Liljeblad, Catherine S. Fowler, Glenda Powell. Northern Paiute-Bannock Dictionary. University of Utah Press. Salt Lake City, UT. 2012.
- <https://www.numberanalytics.com/blog/capillary-fringe-groundwater-systems> . February 18, 2026.



WRP TEC Next Steps

WRP Tribal Engagement Committee Co-Chairs



Will Micklin

- CEO, Ewiiapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians

LeRoy Shingoitewa

- Hopi Tribal Council Representative

Floyd W Velasquez Sr.

- Emergency Services Administrator, Morongo Band of Mission Indians



Roll up of Action Items



- **Please sign up for a WRP account – wrpinfo.org**
 - Invite/Encourage other Tribal members/liaisons to be part of TEC
- **Please provide input on Tribal Leadership Excel document**
- **Seeking additional TEC Co-Chair**
- **Interest in being part of a WRP Deep-Dive:**
 - Water Security/resilience
 - Wildland Fire (response/ prevention)
 - Aviation/ Airspace Needs
- **Please indicate if you:**
 - Are interested in being part of the Outreach Subcommittee
 - Have recommendations on future agenda topics
 - Have additional resources like a study/funding for the good of the team



WRP TEC Calls



March 27	
April 24	▪ Update by Traci L Morris, Ph.D. (Chickasaw Nation), Executive Director & Research Professor, American Indian Policy Institute, Center for Tribal Digital Sovereignty
May	▪ <i>Vacating call due to WRP Principals' Meeting</i>
June 26	▪ Update on WRP Principals' Meeting ▪ Making Interactive Media for Indigenous Communities - It's as easy as writing a blog by Dr. AnnMaria De Mars, President, 7 Generation Games
July 31	

Discussion items/future items:

- Tribes' land management policies with federal agencies
- How tribes are dealing with removal of tribal historical information from federal buildings

Around The Phone



Policy Changes/Updates



- [Green or not, US energy future depends on Native nations](#)
- DOE's Office of Indian Energy is pleased to announce its 2026 Tribal Energy [Webinar](#) Series page to register:
 - **March 12:** [Office of Indian Energy Program Review Mini-Series: Alaska Energy Focus](#)
 - **March 18:** [Successful Power Project Development Best Practices](#)
- [CU Boulder establishes Tribal Sustainability Leaders Fellowship](#)
- [AUDIO: Section 106 Regulations at Advisory Council of Historic Preservation](#)
- [Tribal leaders present united voice in support of the Northern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement](#)
- [Running On Empty – Facing Water Scarcity across the Southwest](#)
- [Tribes and Allies Form a Coalition Against the Delta Conveyance Project](#)
- [Timbisha Shoshone tribe sues BLM over Ash Meadows mine drilling](#)
- [Grand Staircase-Escalante Tribes Engage Congress on At-Risk Resource Management Plan](#)
- **March 3-5, 2025:** [Stewards of the Southwest Summit](#)
- [NATHPO's 26th Annual Conference & Sacred Places Summit](#) will take place **August 24-28, 2026**, will take place at the Hotel Albuquerque



Thank you!

