



Embargoed until 8:00 a.m. MT on July 16, 2024

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Trust for Public Land Names Dr. Carrie Besnette Hauser as its next President and CEO

A Proven Leader in Multiple Sectors, Hauser is Poised to Enhance TPL's Impact in Connecting Everyone to the Benefits and Joys of the Outdoors

July 16, 2024 — Trust for Public Land (TPL) is proud to announce the appointment of Dr. Carrie Besnette Hauser as its incoming President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Her tenure will begin on October 1, 2024. Hauser brings a wealth of experience in public policy, philanthropy, higher education, the outdoor industry, and community engagement, making her an ideal leader for TPL's next chapter.

Hauser has most recently served as President and Chief Executive Officer of Colorado Mountain College, a uniquely financed, public, undergraduate institution with eleven campuses spread across Colorado's central Rocky Mountains. CMC trains students in fields aligned with the outdoor and tourism-focused economies of its region. Under her leadership, CMC was named a Hispanic Serving Institution, invested over \$100M in campus facilities and affordable housing, and increased graduation rates to historic levels among nearly every student group while closing equity gaps. For her historic tenure and accomplishments, Hauser will conclude her service with CMC on August 16, 2024 as the first President Emerita in the college's history.

Hauser's background also includes executive leadership roles at the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, Metropolitan State University of Denver, Daniels Fund, and Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education. She has served on numerous boards including the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission, Great Outdoors Colorado, and American Rivers.

An avid outdoorswoman, Hauser has climbed to the Mount Everest basecamp and has summited Mount Kilimanjaro, Mount Rainier, and Colorado's 58 highest peaks (14ers). She held the proud title of "Swamper" while working many summers on the Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park. Her personal and professional passions align with TPL's mission to connect everyone to the outdoors, including underserved rural, urban, and tribal communities.

*“We are thrilled to welcome Carrie as our next President and CEO,” said **Lucas St. Clair, Chair of TPL’s Board of Directors.** “Her passion for the outdoors, commitment to equitable access to nature, and extensive community leadership will propel TPL’s mission and team forward. Carrie understands the profound impact that access to the outdoors can have on individuals and communities, and her leadership will help us bring these benefits to even more people across the country.”*

*“Carrie’s vision and dedication to ensuring that everyone can achieve their full potential, which includes benefitting from outdoor spaces and nature, are remarkable,” added **Happy Haynes, TPL Board Member and Former Executive Director of Denver Parks & Recreation** who has seen Dr. Hauser’s work in action for many years in multiple contexts. “I am confident that under her leadership, TPL will continue to create and expand effective partnerships and bold public policy to ensure healthier, more connected communities everywhere.”*

*“I am so excited to join Trust for Public Land and its passionate team of staff, partners, donors, and community partners,” said **Hauser.** “TPL’s powerful and impactful purpose of ensuring that the outdoors and nature are accessible and beneficial to everyone is a positive and unifying goal that is so needed in our society. Whether collaborating to open a neighborhood park in a densely populated city, expand or connect hiking and biking trails, or preserve ranches with sprawling landscapes essential to migrating birds, animals, and thriving rural economies. TPL’s blended commitment to equitable outdoor access in both rural and urban communities make it uniquely positioned to elevate and expand the transformative power of the outdoors.”*

Hauser follows Diane Regas, whose tenure as President and CEO saw significant advancements in TPL’s mission and impact. Under Regas’ leadership, TPL protected millions of acres of public land, established numerous parks and trails, and ensured that nearly 9.7 million people have access to quality green spaces within a 10-minute walk of home. Additionally, she spearheaded TPL’s initiatives to bridge the outdoor equity gap and drove significant support for TPL’s mission and programs. These efforts included the creation of the Black History and Culture program and the rejuvenation of the Tribal and Indigenous Lands program. Recently, TPL announced an effort to restore nearly 30,000 acres to the Penobscot Nation, the largest land return between a U.S.-based nonprofit and a tribal nation in history.

In January, TPL Board of Directors commenced a national search for the organization's next President and CEO. Supported by the national search firm, Boardwalk Consulting, the selection of Dr. Carrie Besnette Hauser was recommended by a transition committee of current and former TPL board members to the full national board, which voted unanimously to name Hauser the next President and CEO. She will be based in Colorado.

As TPL amplifies efforts to expand outdoor access through equity, health, climate, and community commitments, Dr. Hauser’s leadership will advance key initiatives such as transforming asphalt schoolyards into green spaces for learning and play, ensuring a 10-

minute walk to a park for everyone, preserving Black history and culture sites, partnering with Indigenous communities, making communities more resilient to climate change through landscape-scale conservation, connecting thousands of miles of urban, suburban, and wildland trails, and fostering strong communities and economies through the expansion of parks and protection of public lands.

What People Are Saying

- **United States Sen. Michael Bennet, former Superintendent of Denver Public Schools:**

"Trust for Public Land has left an indelible mark across Colorado and the country, benefiting hundreds of urban and rural communities. Having recently served as a commencement speaker at CMC's Leadville campus, I know firsthand Dr. Hauser's impact on Colorado's mountain region over the past decade. I am excited to see her focus her talents nationally with TPL. Her leadership will undoubtedly strengthen TPL's efforts to create lasting positive impacts on the communities they serve."

- **United States Sen. John Hickenlooper, former Governor of Colorado, and Mayor of Denver:**

"I have known Carrie for more than 20 years and have seen firsthand her dedication to public service and community building. The economic impact of the outdoor economy in Colorado and nationwide is immense, and Trust for Public Land's work in connecting everyone to the outdoors is vital. Carrie's leadership will further amplify the organization's impact, ensuring that our public lands continue to provide economic benefits and recreational opportunities for communities everywhere."

- **Walter Isaacson, author and former CEO of CNN, Editor of Time Magazine, and CEO of the Aspen Institute:**

"I first got to know Carrie during my tenure at the Aspen Institute. She possesses a visionary approach and profound understanding of how people and places can mutually interact and thrive. Her ability to inspire and engage a wide range of people with different viewpoints is truly remarkable and needed today more than ever. I am excited to watch how she applies her executive skills and love of the outdoors to strengthen Trust for Public Land's commitment to communities and elevate the national dialogue around conservation, climate, and equitable access to nature."

- **Peg Portscheller, Chair, Colorado Mountain College Board of Trustees:**

"Carrie has demonstrated exceptional leadership during some of the most volatile times, including navigating Colorado Mountain College through a recession, the COVID-19 pandemic, and a housing crisis in our region. During her tenure, graduation rates among all student groups have reached historic highs and

organizational culture is as healthy and strong as it has ever been. Her care for others, resilience, and dedication have positioned CMC for continued success and growth, and I am confident that Trust for Public Land will thrive under her leadership."

- **Ernest House Jr., Senior Policy Director, Keystone Policy Center and former Executive Director of the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs:**

"Keystone Policy Center served as the third-party facilitator of Colorado's ballot-initiated wolf reintroduction process, so I observed Dr. Carrie Besnette Hauser effectively and fairly manage many complex and contentious meetings while she served as Chair of the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission. She also guided Colorado Mountain College through a journey to understand the Indigenous history of the lands on which CMC's eleven campuses are located. That effort concluded with a rare transfer of land near Cortez, CO owned by CMC to the Crow Canyon Archaeological Center for perpetual preservation and coordination with Tribal nations across the region. Carrie is an ideal choice to join Trust for Public Land as its next leader."

- **Tom Kiernan, CEO American Rivers:**

"Carrie was a long-time board member for American Rivers and co-chaired the Southwest River Council when it was first formed. I've had the pleasure of experiencing firsthand Carrie's passion for connecting people with our public lands and waters. Joining Carrie on a trip down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon last summer, I saw her deep appreciation and respect for the tribal communities that have called the basin home for thousands of years. TPL will thrive under Carrie's leadership and her natural instincts to partner and collaborate."

- **Jackie Miller, Executive Director of Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO):**

"I have had the privilege of working closely with Carrie Besnette Hauser when she served on the board of Great Outdoors Colorado, and I have always been impressed by her vision and dedication to outdoor equity. Carrie brings a wealth of experience and a deep understanding of the importance of connecting communities to nature. I am thrilled to support her as she takes on the role of President and CEO of Trust for Public Land, and I look forward to seeing the transformative impact she will have on outdoor access and conservation."

- **Kyle Hybl, CEO of El Pomar Foundation and Chair Emeritus, University of Colorado Board of Regents:**

"Carrie Besnette Hauser's leadership in philanthropy and public policy makes her an exceptional fit for Trust for Public Land. At El Pomar Foundation, we believe in the

power of nonprofits and philanthropy to create better futures and have partnered with TPL in recent years. Carrie's commitment to community engagement and bridging divisions will be instrumental in advancing TPL's mission. I am confident her leadership will drive impactful initiatives that benefit and unite communities through the power of the outdoors."

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About Trust for Public Land: Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national nonprofit that works to connect everyone to the benefits and joys of the outdoors. As a leader in equitable access to the outdoors, TPL works with communities to create parks and protect public land where they are needed most. Since 1972, TPL has protected 4 million acres of public land; created 5,420 parks and trails, and over 200 Community Schoolyards® projects; and raised \$94 billion in public funding for parks and public lands. To learn more, visit [tpl.org](https://www.tpl.org).