



THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT FOUNDATION

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ABOUT THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT FOUNDATION

The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) is a nonprofit conservation, education, and scientific organization with 20+ staff members located from Vermont to North Carolina, an 18-member board, and an annual budget of 3 million dollars. Founded in 1983 and based in Asheville, NC, TACF and its 16 state chapters are employing traditional breeding and modern genomics to develop, and ultimately restore, American chestnut populations. TACF is primarily supported by private philanthropy and targeted research funding.

In 1989, TACF established the its flagship breeding facility in Meadowview, Virginia, to carry out a strategy of introducing blight resistance genes from the Chinese chestnut tree into American chestnut trees. Staff at Meadowview continue to preserve and study the breeding progress through generations of hybridization. The farm at Meadowview currently includes thousands of trees at various stages of the breeding process supported by a state-of-the-art greenhouse and plant technology laboratory. TACF research at the Meadowview facility is complemented by volunteer work in regional breeding and conservation orchards.

Meadowview Research Farms are at the heart of TACF's scientific research efforts. However, TACF science staff also collaborates closely with partners from colleges and universities, state and federal government agencies, volunteer conservation groups, and private industries. This collective effort will help TACF achieve mission success.

Through decades of traditional breeding and more recent genomic research, TACF has learned that blight resistance is a complex trait controlled by many genes. Today, TACF takes a holistic approach, utilizing the multi-pronged research strategy of genome-assisted breeding, new efforts at disease resistance gene discovery, and the assessment of a transgenic blight-resistant American chestnut. These research tracks are integrated and complementary, intended to provide flexibility as technology advances and scientific understanding creates new opportunities.



WHY THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT?



More than a century ago, an estimated four billion American chestnuts were flourishing in the eastern United States from Maine to Alabama, the tree's native range. They were among the tallest and fastest-growing trees in the forests and provided a steady supply of nuts for people and wildlife. The American chestnut tree was all but destroyed by an imported fungal blight early in the last century. The loss of this tree was economically, ecologically, and culturally catastrophic in Appalachia and adjoining areas. With its demise, a dominant feature of the original forest was gone. Now, there are few people alive who remember this majestic tree. Thankfully, an ambitious effort to rescue this iconic species and preserve the original character of the eastern hardwood forest is well underway.

As its name implies, the tree was uniquely American. A dominant species in numerous forest types, it sometimes reached enormous sizes. Because of its decay resistance, chestnut barns and homes have endured for centuries. Its extracted tannins were a principal raw material for the once-large tanning industry. Its wild-collected nuts, sold and distributed into big-city markets, were an important source of cash in rural areas, and the regularity of its mast crops provided reliable sustenance to many species of mammals and birds.

Just as the tree's history and the stories that surround it are remarkable, so is its future. Unlike many other species, the American chestnut tree can help heal an estimated one million acres of scarified land that has been abandoned after surface mining. Because of its size, rapid growth, long life, and decay resistance, if the American chestnut were returned to its former ecological role, it could contribute substantially to carbon sequestration. The food available from a mature American chestnut tree is three to five times more abundant, and much more nutritious, as compared to oak trees of a similar size. When restored, its prolific nut production may help take wildlife pressure off commercial crops. Because it played such a key ecological role, the restoration of American chestnut would contribute significantly to the health of temperate forest ecosystems, potentially help mitigate global climate change, and provide an enhanced quality of life along its range.

The American chestnut is a symbol for the hope that exists for all threatened species. TACF has played the lead role in rescuing this species through its innovative breeding and genetic research for four decades. TACF's long-term goal is to create self-sustaining populations, with disease-resistant trees growing stronger in each succeeding generation. TACF is restoring a growing legacy for decades and centuries to come.

Mission, Vision and Core Values

Mission: TACF's mission is to return the iconic American chestnut to its native range.

Vision: TACF's vision is a robust eastern forest restored to its splendor.

Core Values:

OPTIMISM
PATIENCE
SCIENCE-BASED DECISIONS
INNOVATION
INTEGRITY
COLLABORATION

Adopted by the TACF Board of Directors, these core values are organizational guidelines to ensure the mission to restore the American chestnut to its native forests is a success. The organization will persevere with patience and optimism in this long journey. TACF will make science-based decisions with the integrity necessary to evaluate its work and represent it to the public with transparency. Because the underlying science is advancing rapidly, TACF must continually innovate and collaborate with its key stakeholders and remain open to new technologies and ideas.



Position: President & CEO
Reports to: Board of Directors
Location: Asheville, North Carolina

The strength of TACF lies in the diversity and passion of its vast constituency – its staff, chapters, citizen-scientist volunteers, board members, donors, and research partners. Its mission was built on the groundbreaking work of its founders in a bold and courageous effort to bring back a functionally extinct species, with no guarantee of success. Yet, with sound science and tenacity, TACF’s progress in pursuit of the most ambitious and complex species rescue effort ever attempted has inspired scientists, plant breeders, and conservationists around the world.

Building upon decades-long progress in breeding programs, TACF is exploring new scientific developments to accelerate work. Following advances in understanding of the chestnut genome, the Foundation is using genomic selection to improve the ability to identify the most blight-resistant trees. TACF is using landscape genomic technology to refine understanding of how to effectively capture the existing genetic variation in resistant American chestnut populations destined for restoration of the species. TACF has assisted the process of obtaining federal agency approval for the use of SUNY-ESF's transgenic American chestnut in developing seedlings suitable for restoration. Advances in restoration ecology and other genomic engineering developments will build on and complement this work to restore the American chestnut.

TACF is at an exciting moment in time. The Board of Directors, staff, chapters, members, and volunteers stand ready to embark upon an exciting future as pioneers in the preservation of North America’s forest legacy despite continued and increasing threats from introduced pests and pathogens. Leading the organization through this process and increasing its financial resources and capacity will be key endeavors for the new leader as they shape the future of the organization. The next President & CEO will lead the Foundation into a new era.

Equally important to visioning the future, the next leader will review, examine, develop, and implement strategies that will transform TACF working culture and environment into a “best in class” nonprofit conservation organization whose significance transcends its current mission. This experienced leader will appreciate, create, and establish systems to support effective functions organization-wide, including across the state chapter system. They will continue to build and structure a team that supports these endeavors, and will lead, share power, and follow, as needed, in an organization that values collaboration and seeks to raise all voices in service to its mission. Stellar communication, consistency, and bold decisive and visionary leadership are required to accelerate progress.

CANDIDATE PROFILE



TACF seeks an accomplished leader who demonstrates understanding and enthusiasm for the organization’s unique vision and mission. This person must be ready to join with the Board, staff, members, volunteers, and collaborative partnerships to lead TACF in the ever-evolving process of defining and implementing its strategic goals.

The ideal candidate might come from any one of a variety of professional backgrounds but must, above all, display outstanding leadership skills at multiple levels. The position requires an understanding of relationship-driven philanthropy, partnerships, board governance, and skillful management of both administrative and scientific staff. Such leadership should be coupled with a genuine enthusiasm for the goals of environmental conservation and should motivate staff, membership, and all supporters to meet the challenges involved in the restoration of an iconic American forest tree. Because the scientific efforts required for this mission demand the application of a broad range of ever-evolving scientific disciplines, strong candidates should display at least a minimum knowledge of the basic principles of modern biology.

Provided the high standard for leadership is convincingly met, the candidate might have a specific professional background that ranges from scientific project management to fundraising, nonprofit management, or government relations. Experience can include the skillful management of scientific research to a proven track record raising significant financial resources from individuals, foundations, corporations, and public entities. Regardless of background, the successful candidate will exhibit exceptional interpersonal skills to effectively interact with the Board, staff, scientists, environmental advocates, policy leaders, governmental officials, donors, and other key stakeholders.

The President & CEO must be able to articulate the mission of TACF to a diverse constituency and maintain effective and efficient external communication. This individual must be confident, decisive, thoughtful, and have the appropriate skills and presence to work in an effective, collegial, and collaborative manner across the country. An extraordinary level of professionalism and the ability to transform a culture are key.

The ideal candidate will be a strong and effective leader and listener with an inclusive, team-oriented management style that inspires, empowers, motivates, and develops staff. The candidate will be successful if they possess an enthusiastic and inquisitive mind to serve as an intelligent spokesperson for a mission that has a strong scientific component. Above all, TACF is looking for a candidate who has a spirit of optimism and adventure suitable for the challenges ahead.

TACF's Equal Employment Opportunity Statement

TACF is an Equal Opportunity Employer and is committed to providing an equal opportunity to all qualified individuals who are seeking employment, and to all current employees. A Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice ethic is a priority and is being continually integrated into TACF's corporate culture which is dedicated to supporting a diverse, inclusive workplace. TACF does not discriminate based on race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual or gender preference, veteran status, disability, pregnancy or related condition, ancestry, medical condition, physical handicap, or any other protected class or status.

TACF is a certified living wage employer dedicated to a just and sustainable economy.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS / TO APPLY

Salary/Benefits:

Salary is competitive and commensurate with experience and qualifications. The salary range for this position is \$150,000-\$175,000.

The American Chestnut Foundation offers employees a competitive benefits package commensurate with much larger non-profit organizations including health insurance benefits, and optional dental and vision coverage, beginning on the first day of the month following the date of hire, as well as a 403(b) Retirement Plan. After two years of service, TACF will match eligible employee contributions up to 5% of deferred wages. All amounts from an employee's contributions and company match are 100% vested.

TACF offers generous PTO, along with at least 12 paid holidays and sick time.

For More Info and To Apply

To apply, please submit a current resume and letter of introduction to Kittleman & Associates, LLC at <https://bit.ly/3UhwFQJ>.

To learn more about the programs and activities at The American Chestnut Foundation visit: <https://acf.org/>.

