



## Founding Executive Director Saving Yellowstone

### THE SEARCH

Saving Yellowstone, a nonprofit organization founded to preserve the Yellowstone Ecosystem, seeks a visionary, collaborative, and entrepreneurial founding Executive Director (ED) to launch the organization through its first stage of growth and impact. In doing so, the ED will play a crucial role in protecting one of the last nearly intact temperate-zone ecosystems on the planet.

The Yellowstone Ecosystem covers about 22 million acres across the central Rocky Mountains and is a flagship site among conservation groups, one of the world's foremost natural laboratories for landscape ecology, and a world-renowned recreational destination. The Ecosystem includes Yellowstone National Park, Grand Teton National Park, numerous national forests and wildlife refuges, and a constellation of state and privately held lands that span a diverse and deeply interconnected North American wilderness.

After recognizing that fencing on his own property was threatening crucial migratory patterns of local ungulates, TD Ameritrade founder Joe Ricketts founded Saving Yellowstone with a goal to unite private citizens, landowners, and public agencies through science-based research, collaborative partnerships, and innovative conservation strategies. Saving Yellowstone will bridge the gap between public and private lands, ensuring the long-term health of this irreplaceable wilderness. As demographic changes, private development, and greater visitor numbers further threaten the Yellowstone Ecosystem, Saving Yellowstone will educate and inspire people while connecting them with resources to make impactful and evidence-driven changes.

The founding Executive Director will bring this ambitious vision to reality, developing innovative solutions to complex conservation challenges, and uniting diverse stakeholders around shared conservation goals. They will shape the vision and strategy of Saving Yellowstone and cultivate a broad network of supporters. In doing so, they will have the opportunity to establish a lasting legacy of protection for one of North America's most iconic ecosystems.

Saving Yellowstone has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this recruitment. Applications, nominations, and inquiries can be submitted to the parties listed at the conclusion of this document.

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## ABOUT SAVING YELLOWSTONE

Saving Yellowstone is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to preserving the Yellowstone Ecosystem. Founded in 2025, the organization will focus on critical conservation priorities to maximize impact on the Yellowstone Ecosystem:

- **Protecting and restoring vital natural connections:** We work to maintain and re-establish pathways that allow wildlife and natural processes to move freely across the landscape.
- **Preserving essential wildlife habitats:** We prioritize safeguarding critical areas where diverse species live and thrive.
- **Conserving natural migration routes:** We aim to protect the important paths that species use for seasonal movements.
- **Safeguarding water resources:** We focus on preserving the health and availability of water for both nature and communities.
- **Managing and preventing threats to ecosystems:** We work to control and prevent factors that can harm the health and balance of natural environments.
- **Developing strategies for a changing environment:** We create and implement plans to help natural systems adapt to ongoing environmental shifts.

Saving Yellowstone believes in the strength of working together and will use a range of methods to collaborate with others:

- **Creating collaborative incentive programs:** We develop initiatives that encourage shared conservation efforts.
- **Facilitating voluntary land protection:** We help establish agreements that protect land for conservation purposes.
- **Providing community engagement and education:** We connect with communities to share knowledge and foster participation in conservation.
- **Developing platforms for shared information:** We create ways for partners to exchange scientific data and insights.
- **Engaging in collaborative land management:** We work with others on planning and managing natural areas across different boundaries.
- **Promoting sustainable practices:** We encourage approaches that support both environmental well-being and local economies.

More information on the organization's goals and approach is available the [Saving Yellowstone website](#).

Saving Yellowstone will rely on Hugo Enterprises LLC, an investment holding company established by Joe Ricketts, for administrative support, including human resources, payroll, and legal counsel. They will also partner closely with [Ricketts Conservation Foundation](#), which studies, protects, and enhances populations of at-risk species in the Yellowstone Ecosystem.

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## ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The founding Executive Director will be charged with establishing Saving Yellowstone as an impactful conservation organization that bridges the gap between private and public lands. Reporting to the Chairman of the Board, the Executive Director will develop and execute the organization's strategy in service of its mission: to build a broad coalition of stakeholders to conserve the Yellowstone Ecosystem in the face of increasing population growth and development that places greater strain on the region. The organization's public-facing work and stated partnership approach require a leader who can unite private landowners, conservation groups, public agencies, and local communities around shared conservation goals.

The Executive Director will build and lead the organization, serve as its chief ambassador, and cultivate trusted relationships with landowners, conservation organizations, governmental officials, business leaders, donors, and community stakeholders. This leader must be equally comfortable shaping strategy, building institutional capacity, advancing fundraising, and representing the organization publicly in a complex and often sensitive landscape. They will be a persuasive storyteller and passionate conservation leader, drawing local and national attention to an iconic ecosystem.

Key responsibilities for the Executive Director include:

### *Strategic Leadership*

- Develop and execute a clear, actionable strategy that advances Saving Yellowstone's mission and conservation priorities.
- Translate the Board's vision into measurable organizational goals, operating plans, and outcomes.
- Identify opportunities for meaningful impact through coalition-building, policy engagement, land conservation partnerships, scientific collaboration, and community-based initiatives.
- Help position Saving Yellowstone as a respected and effective voice on the future of the Yellowstone Ecosystem.

### *Organizational Building and Management*

- Build the organization's infrastructure, systems, and operating discipline to support growth and long-term effectiveness.
- Recruit, lead, and develop staff and consultants as the organization grows.
- Establish strong internal processes for planning, budgeting, communications, development, and program execution.
- Ensure effective stewardship of financial, human, and reputational resources.
- Partner with the Board to support sound governance, strategic alignment, and organizational accountability.

### *External Relations and Public Leadership*

- Serve as the leading public voice and spokesperson for Saving Yellowstone.

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- Build trusted relationships with key constituencies, including landowners, ranchers, conservation nonprofits, governmental agencies, elected and appointed officials, business leaders, community leaders, and research partners.
  - Represent the organization in public forums, stakeholder meetings, conferences, donor settings, and media opportunities.
  - Communicate persuasively and diplomatically across audiences with differing interests, perspectives, and priorities.
  - Advance a collaborative, solutions-oriented reputation for the organization.

#### *Coalition and Partnership Development*

- Build and sustain a broad coalition of stakeholders committed to conserving the Yellowstone ecosystem.
- Identify areas of shared interest among public, private, nonprofit, and community actors and turn them into productive partnerships.
- Foster relationships that bridge public and private lands in ways consistent with the organization's mission and partnership approach.
- Convene stakeholders around practical conservation strategies informed by science, local realities, and long-term stewardship.

#### *Fundraising and Resource Development*

- Lead fundraising efforts in partnership with the Board, including major donor cultivation, foundation outreach, and strategic partnerships.
- Articulate a compelling case for support tied to the organization's mission, strategy, and measurable impact.
- Help build a durable funding base to support organizational sustainability and programmatic growth.
- Steward donor relationships with professionalism, transparency, and enthusiasm.

#### *Program Oversight*

- Oversee the development and execution of programs and initiatives aligned with Saving Yellowstone's conservation priorities.
- Ensure that the organization's work is grounded in credible science, practical implementation, and collaborative problem-solving.
- Monitor progress, assess outcomes, and refine strategy based on results and changing conditions in the region.

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## QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The selected candidate will bring many, if not all, of the following qualifications and characteristics:

- Senior leadership experience in a nonprofit, conservation, public policy, philanthropy, land use, or mission-driven organization. Experience working in land conservation, wildlife conservation, natural resource policy, rural community engagement, or Western regional issues is preferred.
- Passion for conservation and stewardship.
- Demonstrated success developing strategy and turning vision into operational execution.
- Strategic judgment and a builder's mindset.
- Strong record of relationship-building across diverse stakeholders, especially in complex, multi-party environments.
- Experience serving as a public-facing leader, spokesperson, or institutional representative and political and interpersonal savvy
- Fundraising experience, including cultivating major donors and strategic funding partners.
- Excellent communication skills, with the ability to inspire confidence, build trust, and navigate sensitive issues with diplomacy and judgment.
- Strong management and organizational leadership skills, including team leadership, budgeting, and operational oversight.
- Deep alignment with the mission of conserving the Yellowstone Ecosystem through collaborative, science-based approaches.
- Familiarity with the Yellowstone Ecosystem and the opportunities and challenges associated with growth, development, habitat conservation, migration corridors, and public-private collaboration is preferred.
- Experience working with private landowners, governmental agencies, and community leaders.
- Comfort building an organization in an entrepreneurial, high-growth stage and the ability to balance ambition with pragmatism.
- A collaborative leadership style as well as resilience, adaptability, and persistence.

## COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

A location in the Yellowstone Ecosystem is preferred, and a substantial regional presence will be required for the position.

While the final compensation will depend on the candidate's experience and qualifications, the salary range is expected to fall between \$275,000-\$300,000.

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## APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. For best consideration, please apply by July 15, 2026. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and resumes with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website:

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/saving-yellowstone/executive-director>

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*This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Saving Yellowstone. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by Saving Yellowstone would supersede any conflicting information in this document.*