

Dear Chestnut Friends,

The first half of 2019 was marked with exciting new scientific discoveries, which shed new light on our breeding program, coupled with unique external challenges, making us resolute to stay the course towards mission success. As a result, we are emerging out of this time stronger and more determined than ever to use all of the resources and research at our disposal to ultimately restore the American chestnut species.

In April of this year, after extensive data analyses based on genomic testing and mapping, our director of science Dr. Jared Westbrook, along with his scientific collaborators, learned that the inherited traits for blight resistance are much more complex than originally hypothesized in the Burnham Plan, created decades ago. Since our founding in 1983, the field of genomics has burgeoned in scope and affordability, which we have embraced to unlock the answers to blight resistance at the molecular level. These new discoveries would not be possible without the confidence and generous support from a great number of private foundations, philanthropists, donors and members.

In July, 73 chapter science leaders, board members and staff gathered in Abingdon, VA to help chart a new course in the breeding program. The atmosphere of this meeting was one of renewed energy and resolve. We are intentionally embracing new technologies to ensure we are not only using one pathway to our goal of restoring a keystone species. Multiple pathways is the theme behind our 3BUR science protocol: Breeding, Biotechnology and Biocontrol United for Restoration, now being implemented in real time. It is going to take all the methods in 3BUR to bring back our tree. We all agree that this is an audacious, long-term conservation rescue mission never before attempted at this scale, which is why we need to use all available knowledge and resources to reach our goals.

Let us continue to embody our core values: Optimism, Patience, Science-based Decisions, Innovation, Integrity, and Collaboration. Our mission is based on hope and innovation, and these attributes will carry us forward to overcome any challenges we may face. We will continue keeping you informed of our progress through TACF's *eSprout* newsletter, updates on social media, and soon to be launched virtual "town hall" meetings. Join us on this amazing journey; we need each one of you to support us as we continue to grow and thrive.

With gratitude,

Lisa Thompson

TACF President and CEO