



**AMERICAN
PRAIRIE**

Celebrating
the Indomitable
American Spirit

Kristine McDivitt Tompkins awarded 2023 Ken Burns American Heritage Prize

Presented by American Prairie in celebration of the indomitable American spirit

NEW YORK, NY — President and co-founder of Tompkins Conservation and former CEO of Patagonia, Inc., **Kristine McDivitt Tompkins** accepted the 2023 ***Ken Burns American Heritage Prize*** at an event held on May 10 at the American Museum of Natural History.

Named in honor of America’s most revered visual historian and documentary filmmaker, the [**Ken Burns American Heritage Prize**](#) recognizes an individual whose body of work has advanced our collective understanding of the indomitable American spirit.

Ms. Tompkins is known for her incredible work as an American conservationist, committing the past 30 years to protecting and restoring wild beauty and biodiversity by creating national parks, restoring wildlife, inspiring activism, and fostering economic vitality as a result of conservation. Mr. Burns welcomed Ms. Tompkins by calling her, “an outstanding American who is not only an inspiration to American ideals, but who has left an indelible mark on and legacy to the planet.”

Mr. Burns went on to say, “America set the bar for land conservation by establishing the National Park System and Service, and two private organizations central to this evening’s celebration – Tompkins Conservation and American Prairie – are taking land conservation a big step further. Their parallel missions, based on scientific observation and study, take us into the realm of nature – not just for enjoyment – but for saving it, preserving it, and expanding it.”

Ms. Tompkins and her late husband, Douglas Tompkins, have protected approximately 14.8 million acres of parklands in Chile and Argentina through Tompkins Conservation and its partners, making them among the most successful national park-oriented philanthropists in history. Through Tompkins Conservation and its offspring organizations, she has helped to create or expand 15 national parks in Chile and Argentina, two marine national parks in Argentina, and works to bring back species that have gone locally or nationally extinct, such as the jaguar, red-and-green macaw, and giant river otters in Northeast Argentina, as well as Darwin’s rheas and extremely endangered huemul deer in Chile. As president of Tompkins Conservation, she works closely with the organization's now independent offspring, Rewilding Argentina and Rewilding Chile.

“The Tompkins’ largess stands as the most significant donation of land in history by a private entity to a country,” said Mr. Burns.



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After receiving the bison bronze, Ms. Tompkins thanked Mr. Burns and American Prairie saying, “I think it’s really apt that the greatest conservation project, in our minds, in North America is honoring their twin down in South America, and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.”

Ms. Tompkins was then joined on stage by American Prairie CEO Alison Fox for a conversation about the similarities between the two conservation organizations. Ms. Tompkins called the Montana-based nonprofit, “...the high mark for conservation, in our opinion, in North America.

“As someone once said, ‘landscape without wildlife is just scenery and we are not in the scenery business’,” said Ms. Tompkins. “We are in the business of bringing back fully functioning ecosystems, and the American Prairie project, that’s one of the most important things that I see in it. It’s changing the idea of what conservation really is in this generation.”



Ms. Tompkins received the honor from Mr. Burns and American Prairie’s National Board of Directors Chair, George Matelich. The evening’s festivities included additional remarks by Ms. Fox and Mr. Matelich.

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About American Prairie

American Prairie's vision is to create a vast and collaboratively managed prairie destination that serves as a fully functioning ecosystem for wildlife, and offers visitors permanent access to the landscape that shaped our nation's character. American Prairie also offers visitors an opportunity to learn about and connect with nature on a truly grand scale. Learn more at americanprairie.org.

About Ken Burns

[Ken Burns](http://kenburns.com) has been making documentary films for over 40 years. Since the Academy Award®-nominated *Brooklyn Bridge* in 1981, Mr. Burns has gone on to direct and produce some of the most acclaimed historical documentaries ever made, including *The Civil War*, *Baseball*, *Jazz*, *The War*, *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*, *Prohibition*, *The Roosevelts: An Intimate History*, *The Vietnam War*, *Country Music*, and, most recently, *The U.S. and the Holocaust*.

Future film projects include *The American Buffalo*, *Leonardo da Vinci*, *The American Revolution*, *Emancipation to Exodus*, and *LBJ & the Great Society*, among others.

Mr. Burns's films have been honored with dozens of major awards, including sixteen Emmy® Awards, two GRAMMY® Awards, and two Oscar nominations. In September of 2008, at the News & Documentary Emmy Awards, Mr. Burns was honored by the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences with a Lifetime Achievement Award. In November of 2022, Mr. Burns was inducted into the Television Academy Hall of Fame.

About Kristine McDivitt Tompkins

Kristine McDivitt Tompkins is the president and co-founder of Tompkins Conservation, an American conservationist, and former CEO of Patagonia, Inc. For 30 years, she has been committed to protecting and restoring wild beauty and biodiversity by creating national parks, restoring wildlife, inspiring activism, and fostering economic vitality as a result of conservation.

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Through Tompkins Conservation and its offspring organizations, Rewilding Argentina and Rewilding Chile, she has helped to create or expand 15 national parks, including two marine national parks, in Argentina and Chile, and works to bring back species that have gone locally or nationally extinct, such as the jaguar, red-and-green macaw, and giant river otters in Northeast Argentina, as well as Darwin's rheas and extremely endangered huemul deer in Chile.

Ms. Tompkins served as Patron for Protected Areas for the UN Environmental Programme from 2018-2022. The recipient of numerous honors, she was the first conservationist to be awarded the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy. Her 2020 TED Talk "Let's Make the World Wild Again" has been viewed over two million times. Learn more at tompkinsconservation.org.