



THE WILDLANDS
— CONSERVANCY —

Behold the Beauty

FALL 2025

A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



“They’re deer!” “No, they’re elk!” “What are elk?”

These are the excited questions of children experiencing Wind Wolves Preserve for the first time. For three decades, children from across under-resourced communities in the greater Bakersfield area – nearly 225,000 in total – have had the chance to visit the Preserve, where many of them see their first tule elk, a species once on the brink of extinction and now thriving under The Wildlands Conservancy’s protection.

The magic of moments like these reflects the vision of David Myers, our founding executive director, as well as our founding donor whose extraordinary philanthropy made the first three decades of our work

possible. They didn’t just set out a vision, together they built it into a lasting organization and a powerful force for conservation. Both of our co-founders have passed. David’s passing this spring reminds us that the vision he and our founding donor set in motion continues to guide our work and that carrying it forward now depends on the dedication of donors, volunteers, partners, and friends like you.

As we celebrate our 30th Anniversary, we recognize that the purpose of an organization is to advance a cause, and our efforts continue to expand and create tangible outcomes. In just the past few months, we’ve:

- » Released hundreds of critically endangered mountain yellow-legged frogs at Bluff Lake Reserve, creating the largest wild population of the species and hope for its future.

- » Completed permanent protection on the final 1,720 acres of the larger 14,120-acre conservation effort in the Carmel Valley at Rana Creek now under ownership of the Esselen Tribe of Monterey County.
- » Opened the Estero Americano Coast Preserve after a decade of strategic effort, offering free hiking access on the Sonoma coast.
- » Continued our daily work of welcoming tens of thousands of visitors for free and providing outdoor education to thousands of kids from under-resourced communities.

As we carry forward our founders' vision, this newsletter shares a reflection of our impact, our hopes for the future, and the important work underway today. Thank you for your interest in our mission and being part of our cause.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frazier Maney". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Frazier Maney
Executive Director

BEHOLD THE BEAUTY: OUR CORE BELIEFS AND PRINCIPLES

Behold the Beauty is more than a motto, it's our guiding philosophy. It reflects the belief that nature is the source of life, and that people are part of it.

In wild places, we find stillness, belonging, and a sacred connection that reveals who we are beyond the noise of daily life.

To Behold the Beauty is to slow down, be mindful, and foster love and respect for life in all its forms.

FIRST TENET

The Earth is sacred.

We are committed to boldly protecting the Earth through private land acquisition and securing these lands forever with the strongest legal means possible.

SECOND TENET

Access to nature is a birthright.

Our preserves and programs are open to all people for free every day, reducing the socio-economic barriers that promote disconnection from the natural world.

THIRD TENET

Children are the future protectors of the Earth.

Each generation inherits the beauty of the natural world and the responsibility to care for it. Our free outdoor education programs, with a particular focus on youth from disadvantaged communities, help cultivate the next generation of stewards and conservation leaders.

FOURTH TENET

Nature is resilient.

We work with nature to heal human impacts to the beauty of the land, restart natural processes, and rewild native species.

FIFTH TENET

Modern environmental crises pose an urgent threat to the Earth and people.

To address the climate, extinction, and pollution crises, we focus on projects that are truly additional to existing compliance and regulation, and respect the intrinsic value of nature.

SIXTH TENET

Saving land is a permanent commitment.

Every conservation project carries with it a promise: to remain committed to protecting,

stewarding, and advocating for these places so they remain wild and whole for those who come after us.

SEVENTH TENET

Beauty calls us to act.

Wherever there is a place of great beauty and biodiversity, people will be given the eyes to see it, the mind to understand it, and the passion to protect it. We support and lead advocacy efforts by those who have answered that call.

EIGHTH TENET

Humans are a part of and not separate from nature.

We welcome passive recreation at our preserves, ensuring use of the land is consistent with the protection of its wild character. By placing these limits, we uphold both the beauty of nature and our place within it.

On the front cover: Tule elk captured on camera by a ranger at Wind Wolves Preserve. Photo by Nick Carver. On the back cover: Volunteers take a group photo before they head out across Wind Wolves Preserve at the annual Tule Elk Count in September 2025. Photo by Melissa Dabulamanzi.



Photo by Jack Thompson

GIFTS OF THE EARTH

*PIONEERTOWN MOUNTAINS PRESERVE
PIONEERTOWN, CALIFORNIA*

by David Myers

THE GIFT OF WILDERNESS. Behold the untamed wilds of Pipes Canyon Wilderness! At 24,000 acres, it's the largest roadless, nonprofit wilderness in California, having jumbo rocks, rock stacks, and mountains of rocks that rival Joshua Tree National Park. The original blueprint of the steep geologic cascade of the San Bernardino Mountains to the desert floor is left intact here. Hikers often trace with their boots the brushstrokes of time as they tightrope the twisting veins of quartz that separate layers of geologic history. There's no sideboards, no confinements, no limitations on your imagination here. Alone, amid primeval influences, you can index your true humanity—the worth of yourself—the value of just one human being standing alone, looking through the stars into the face of the entire universe. Amber balls, made by Serrano Indians, sightings of which are treasured when you come across these curious marble-size objects in the Pipes Wilderness. If you saw thousands of these amber balls in a bin at a rock shop in Yucca Valley, they would lose the value of their rarity. One Gift of Wilderness is how it revalues each of us when we're taken out of the bin of overpopulated places. On Wilderness trails every hiker is greeted by another as a long lost friend. The Wilderness is where we all can regain “the dignity of room and the value of rareness.” Though every human being is a casting of clay among 8 billion similar castings, each casting is one that shall never be cast quite the same as you ever again. That's what makes every human being worthy of our appreciation, our understanding, and respect. After days alone in the contemplative wilderness, you yield to a longing for loved ones. You leave the life-affirming wilderness resolute to be the youest you.

A LIVING LEGACY OF CONSERVATION



For thirty years, The Wildlands Conservancy has delivered on our audacious vision through bold action. Our timeline, found later in this newsletter, highlights this record of impact – from supporting outdoor education across Southern California, to advancing major trail and public access initiatives, to securing the largest land conservation gift in U.S. history.

Of all these achievements, we are most proud of our 24 nature preserves spanning 210,000 acres across California, Oregon, and Utah. This preserve system has been the foundation for us to pursue our deepest vision: restore ecosystems, rewild

native species, and open preserves daily for free to all people for outdoor education and recreation.

These preserves consistently turn bold vision into lasting and tangible outcomes you can experience today – endangered least Bell's vireo singing in restored willows at Whitewater Preserve, children exploring native gardens and discovering wildlife at Oak Glen Preserve, or sweeping views of the Pacific from the coastal grasslands of Jenner Headlands Preserve. Together, they form a living legacy of conservation action.

While our work began in California, the need for stewardship reaches far beyond. Wild, irreplaceable places across the American West – and the plants, animals, and human communities that depend on their beauty and resilience – face increasing threats. These landscapes need champions willing to act boldly and swiftly, with a strategy for lasting conservation outcomes that will withstand the winds of political change.

Today, the need is greater than ever. Federal and state land agencies are grappling with budget shortfalls and growing obstacles to protecting new lands, even as a wave of vast legacy ranches comes onto the market. Meanwhile, more people across an ever-urbanizing West are seeking the refuge and renewal of nature. These realities demand a conservation approach that is lasting, active, and accessible to all.

This is our focus for the decade ahead. Our roots will always be in California, where our founders proved that our model can succeed. But the need for lasting protection stretches across the West, and with your partnership, we will continue to carry forward a simple truth that has guided us from the start: safeguarding important landscapes, restoring their beauty, rewilding wildlife, and opening them freely to all people is not only possible, it is essential to protecting the environment and the wild beauty that sustains us all.

This page: An American coot greets a group of students during their free outdoor education field trip to Oak Glen Preserve. Photo by Elba Mora. Opposite page: A hiker crests a hill and takes in views of the Pacific at Jenner Headlands Preserve. Photo by Elba Mora.



“At a time when wild places face increasing threats, our preserves offer both refuge for nature and access for people.”

- Dana Rochat,
Acquisitions Director,
The Wildlands Conservancy

REWILDING THE LANDSCAPE

From near extinction to renewal, a return decades in the making.



In 1998, a small herd of tule elk crested the rolling hills of The Wildlands Conservancy's Wind Wolves Preserve, 93,000 acres where the Transverse and Coast Ranges meet in Southern San Joaquin Valley. Just 19 individuals, returning to a landscape after their long absence. Tule elk, endemic to California, were once believed to be extinct in the late 1800s, until a single small group was rediscovered and quietly protected on private land. With only a few dozen surviving into the 20th century, they were slowly and carefully brought back across the state. Their release here was a symbol of hope, a test of possibility. Could a nearly-lost species reclaim its ground?

Almost three decades later, the answer thunders across the grasslands: Yes!

More than 500 tule elk now roam Wind Wolves Preserve, forming one of the largest free-ranging herds in California. This success didn't happen overnight. It came through decades of habitat restoration, corridor protection, and careful stewardship, work that continues year after year with the help of tribal partners, scientists, and land managers.

A new chapter is underway. In partnership with

the Tule River Indian Tribe and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, The Wildlands Conservancy is preparing to translocate tule elk from Wind Wolves Preserve to the Tule River Reservation. The effort will restore elk to a part of their ancestral range and to a community that has long cared for the land they once roamed.

Rewilding isn't just about a species. It's about the ecological web that elk help sustain, the grasses they graze, the predators they support, the balance they bring to a recovering landscape. And it's about people: volunteers who wake before dawn on late summer mornings to count elk on rugged hillsides and rolling grasslands, and rangers who remove invasive plants to restore native grasses, and supporters who believe that returning wildness to the land is both possible and essential.

The tule elk's journey, like all rewilding, follows a long arc: bending toward resilience, reciprocity, and return. "This is what rewilding looks like," reflects Landon Peppel, The Wildlands Conservancy's Deputy Director of Conservation and Restoration Programs. "Careful, committed, and deeply collaborative. It's about bringing back what was lost, and it only happens because people believe in it. Every supporter, every partner, every person who shows up makes this possible."

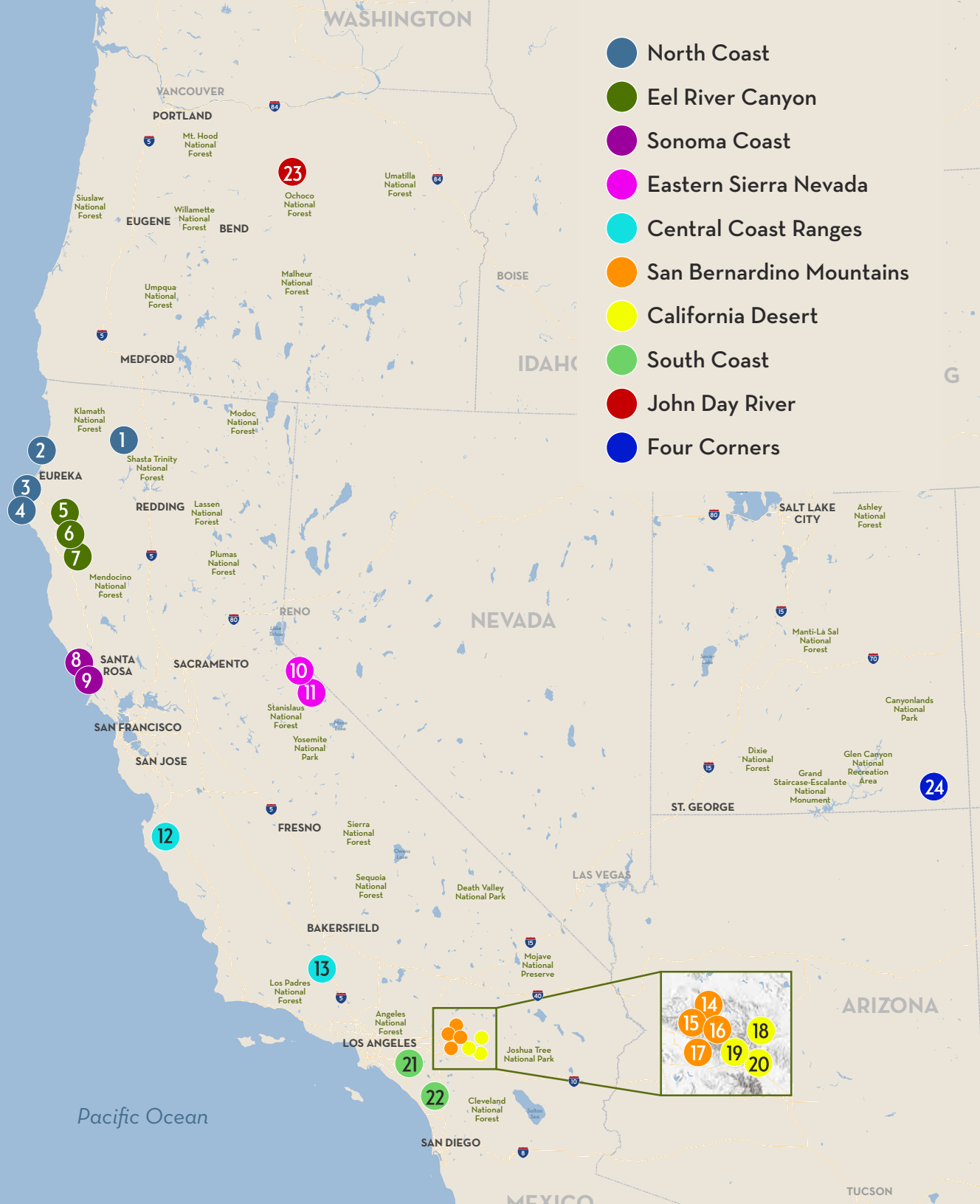


Top photo: Tule elk are released at Wind Wolves Preserve in 1998. Bottom photo: Volunteers glass the rugged hillsides of Wind Wolves Preserve in search of elk at the annual Tule Elk Count in September 2025. Photo by Melissa Dabulamanzi. Opposite page: A herd of bachelor elk peek over a hill at Wind Wolves Preserve. Photo by Reema Hammad.



"The return of tule elk
to our ancestral lands is
not only about restoring
wildlife – it's about
restoring identity, balance,
and connection. "

- Franklin Carabay, Jr.,
Vice Chairman,
Tule River Tribe



THIRTY YEARS OF IMPACT

1995

The Wildlands Conservancy

Established as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization to preserve the beauty and biodiversity of the earth and to provide programs so that children may know the wonder and joy of nature.



Pioneertown Mountains Preserve¹⁸

Originally named Pipes Canyon Preserve, The Wildlands Conservancy's first conservation acquisition of 25,500 acres establishes the largest privately owned wilderness.

Mission Creek Preserve²⁰



1996

Wind Wolves Preserve¹³

The 93,000 acres link five major California regions, creating one of the state's largest wildlife corridors and refuges for endangered species. Volunteers restore miles of streams and plant tens of thousands of natives. Habitat improvements benefit burrowing owls, San Joaquin kit foxes, blunt-nosed leopard lizards, and tule elk, which were reintroduced in 1998 and now number more than 500.

Oak Glen Preserve¹⁷



1997-2002

California Desert Land Acquisition

Made possible through \$45 million in private and public funding, The Wildlands Conservancy donates the largest private land gift in U.S. history to permanently protect 587,000 acres in the Mojave Desert.



1998

The Outdoor Discovery Program launches at Wind Wolves Preserve.

Wildlands launches its first staff-led outdoor education program, creating a model of free, hands-on learning that has since connected more than 225,000 children to nature.



1998-NOW

Santa Ana River Trail & Parkway

A decades-long effort to complete a 110-mile trail from the San Bernardino Mountains to the Pacific, expanding public access, restoring habitat, and creating parks along Southern California's largest river.



2000

Bluff Lake Reserve¹⁴

This rare montane wetland and surrounding forest in the San Bernardino Mountains, protects endangered species habitat supporting mountain yellow-legged frog and unarmored threespine stickleback.

2000

Coal Canyon Wildlife Corridor

A \$4.2 million-dollar project that permanently protects a critical linkage between Chino Hills State Park and the Santa Ana Mountains, securing safe passage for mountain lions and other wildlife in one of the nation's most threatened urban regions.

2001

Blue Sky Meadow

The 183-acre Blue Sky Meadow Outdoor Science Institute is donated to the Los Angeles Education Foundation, to support acclaimed residential programs that promote academic excellence and environmental awareness.



2002

The Outdoor Discovery Program launches at Oak Glen Preserve.

The program has since reached nearly 175,000 youth.



2002, CONT.

Bearpaw Reserve ¹⁵

This rugged 600 acres hosts rare wildlife and a group campground, offering a wild setting where habitat is protected and people can connect with nature.

2005

Mariposa Reserve ²¹



Spyrock Reserve ⁷

The Wildlands Conservancy's first Northern California preserve, Spyrock protects a stretch of the Eel River and helps lay the groundwork for the Emerald Necklace vision.

2005-NOW

Eel River Emerald Necklace Project

Launched with the Spyrock Reserve acquisition, this project envisions a chain of preserves along 110 miles of the Wild and Scenic Eel River. Today, five locations are protected, with ongoing conservation advancing the vision and supporting the Great Redwood Trail.



2006

Whitewater Preserve ¹⁹



Irving & Jean Stone

Sounding Seas Dunes Reserve ⁴

This preserve protects fragile coastal dunes and critical habitat for the threatened western snowy plover.

2008

The Outdoor Discovery Program launches at Whitewater Preserve

Nearly 50,000 children have participated in free programs here.



Eel River Estuary Preserve ³

This 1,300-acre estuary protects tidal wetlands, dunes, and grasslands that sustain diverse wildlife, and is the site of the largest coastal wetland restoration on private land on the West Coast.

2009

Green Path North Opposition

After delivering 30,000 postcards in opposition, the campaign stops Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's proposed Green Path North transmission corridor from the eastern Mojave to Los Angeles, protecting habitat and viewsheds at Pioneertown Mountains and Oak Glen preserves.

2009-2016

National Monuments Campaign

An advocacy campaign to establish Mojave Trails and Sand to Snow national monuments builds on the California Desert Land Acquisition. Wildlands rallies support with a road trip across Historic Route 66, which runs through the heart of the Mojave, and hosts a pivotal public meeting at Whitewater Preserve, where 1,000 people gather with Senator Dianne Feinstein. On February 12, 2016, the monuments are designated – a historic milestone that Wildlands proudly continues to defend.



2013

Jenner Headlands Preserve ⁸

Acquired by Sonoma Land Trust in 2009 with support from The Wildlands Conservancy and others, the 5,630-acre Preserve transfers to Wildlands and is a model on the Sonoma coast for restoration and public access.

2015

- Two Rivers Preserve ¹¹



- Estero Americano Coast Preserve ⁹



2017

- Galena Peak Wilderness Reserve ¹⁶
Originally part of Oak Glen Preserve, this wilderness reserve protects montane forests and rugged canyons while offering backcountry access.

2018

- Santa Margarita River Trail Preserve ²²



2019

- Emerald Waters Reserve ⁵
The Preserve protects 4.5 miles of the Wild and Scenic Eel River, safeguarding salmon and steelhead habitat and adding another link in the Eel River Emerald Necklace.

- West Walker River Preserve ¹⁰
The Preserve protects rare riparian habitat and native vegetation, providing a refuge for bear, deer, bobcat, and quail, while also offering anglers access to the West Walker River.

- Seawood Cape Preserve ²



2021

- Eel River Canyon ⁶
This 29,600-acre preserve protects 10 miles of the Eel River, safeguarding riverfront forests and wildlife – including elk, steelhead trout, and salmon.

2021, CONT.

- Enchanted Rocks Preserve ²³
The first acquisition outside California, the Preserve protects 14,000 acres along the Wild and Scenic John Day River in Oregon.

- Beaver Valley Headwaters Preserve ¹



2023

- Speaking Springs Preserve ²⁴
Speaking Springs Preserve, within Bears Ears National Monument, protects a red rock canyon in a cultural landscape and desert springs, and is co-stewarded with the Bears Ears Inter-tribal Coalition. Its strategic location provides public access into the greater region.

- Rana Creek Preserve ¹²



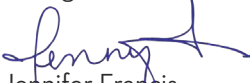
A FISCAL YEAR IN REVIEW

Year Ending June 30, 2024

The Wildlands Conservancy's financial results for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024 reflect a landmark year for land conservation. Total revenue was \$65.9 million, including more than \$40 million in grant funding, of which \$38.075 million was restricted for land acquisition. These funds, primarily from public sources, supported the acquisition of more than 25,800 acres, described on the next page. This funding was not available for operational use. Non-cash contributions also increased significantly, including a generous excess value donation from the seller of Rana Creek Ranch – allowing us to acquire the property below market value.

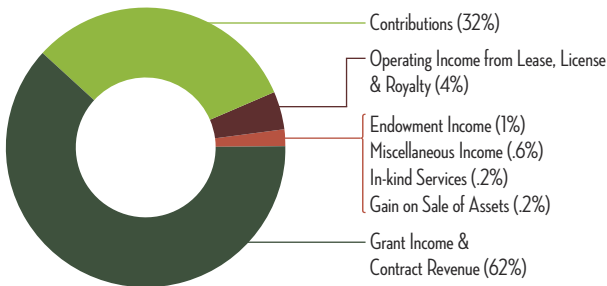
Together, these extraordinary transactions increased our total assets by 34%, from nearly \$181 million to more than \$242 million, while enabling the permanent protection of tens of thousands of acres of critical habitat and the expansion of free public access and outdoor education opportunities.

To our public agency partners, foundation supporters, individual donors, and nonprofit collaborators – thank you. Your support made this historic year possible.

With gratitude,

Jennifer Francis
Chief Financial Officer

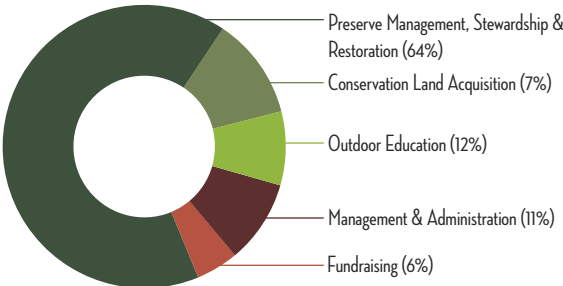
TOTAL REVENUE

\$65,992,405



OPERATING EXPENSE

\$11,642,133

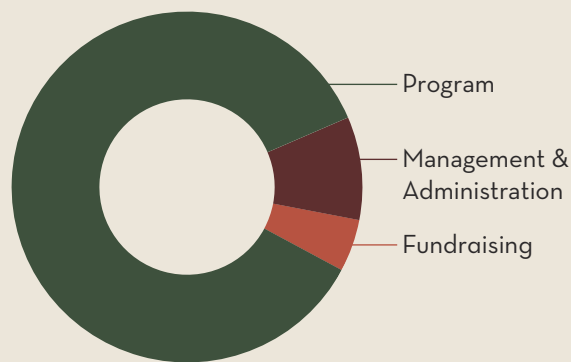


Assets & Liabilities

Assets	2024	2023
Cash and Equivalents	\$ 228,290	478,696
Investments	202,624	2,548,705
Accounts Receivable	954,984	861,437
Contracts Receivable	690,946	247,449
Pledges Receivable	1,191,338	-
Prepaid Expenses	58,424	60,734
Livestock Inventory	599,523	530,072
Notes Receivable	1,844,434	1,470,244
Land Acquisition in Progress	538,559	6,091,250
Land Held for Resale	17,445,013	6,497,130
Land Held for Conservation		
Protected by Legal Instruments	121,143,792	81,309,910
Pending Legal Instrument Protections	83,003,693	66,726,203
Vehicles and Equipment	3,015,684	2,854,308
Buildings and Improvements	24,072,735	23,387,266
Construction in Progress	3,499,636	2,664,521
Accumulated Depreciation	(15,807,470)	(14,768,361)
Net Depreciable Property	14,780,585	14,137,734
Total Assets	\$ 242,682,205	180,959,564

Liabilities and Net Assets	2024	2023
Liabilities		
Accounts Payable	\$ 611,724	600,573
Accrued Payroll Costs	250,471	238,271
Accrued Interest Payable	169,626	12,299
Contract Liabilities	1,010,744	19,050
Notes Payable	17,050,000	10,850,000
Total Liabilities	19,092,565	11,720,193
Net Assets		
Net Assets without Donor Restrictions	219,620,531	165,601,912
Net Assets with Donor Restrictions	3,969,109	3,637,459
Total Net Assets	223,589,640	169,239,371
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 242,682,205	180,959,564

Program Expense Ratio



PROGRAMS

Conservation Land Acquisition, Outdoor Education, Preserve Management & Stewardship

86%

\$9,972,377

MANAGEMENT & ADMINISTRATION

9%

\$1,107,121

FUNDRAISING

5%

\$562,636

MISSION-FOCUSED SPENDING

Year Ending June 30, 2024

CONSERVATION LAND ACQUISITION

During the fiscal year, The Wildlands Conservancy conserved thousands of acres across the West, expanding our preserve system and protecting critical habitat. We established Rana Creek Preserve, our first preserve on California's Central Coast, and Speaking Springs Preserve, our first in Utah. We also completed the final phase of the Eel River Canyon Preserve acquisition, safeguarding a vast stretch of Northern California's wild river corridor. In the Eastern Sierra, we expanded Two Rivers Preserve by 2,400 acres, protecting habitat connectivity for wildlife and climate resilience.

LEADING OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Since 1995, The Wildlands Conservancy has provided free outdoor education to more than 1.3 million underserved youth across Southern California. Today, more than 60,000 children and families each year participate in our programs — from guided field trips to self-paced learning on trails with interpretive signage. Each experience invites curiosity, deepens understanding, and fosters a lasting connection to the natural world.

PRESERVE MANAGEMENT & STEWARDSHIP

The Wildlands Conservancy manages the fastest-growing nonprofit nature preserve system in the West, with 25* preserves spanning nearly 210,000 acres. More than 1.5 million people visit these places each year — open to the public free of charge for hiking, camping, birding, and more. Our rangers and stewards restore native habitats, rewild species, and maintain trails and campsites, working alongside hundreds of volunteers who contribute thousands of hours annually.

*in the 2023-24 Fiscal Year

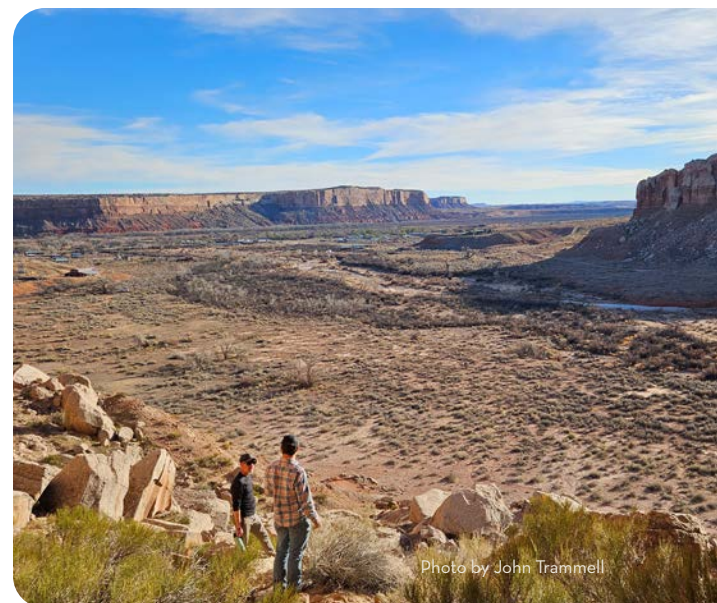


Photo by John Trammell



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THE WILDLANDS
— CONSERVANCY —

To preserve the beauty and biodiversity of the earth
and to provide programs so that children may know
the wonder and joy of nature.

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*The Wildlands Conservancy is a California 501(c)(3)
nonprofit public benefit corporation. Tax ID 33-0676450.*