

Behold the *Beauty*

Fall 2026

A Message From Our *Executive Director*



Dear Friends and Supporters,

This summer, we lost an author who has inspired a generation. In his enduring poem, "The Peace of Wild Things," Wendell Berry writes of those moments when we find ourselves weary of the weight of modern life, when fear for the future wakes us in the quiet hours of the night. His remedy is profoundly simple and reflects the roots of our mission, and captures so eloquently the transformative power of nature. When we connect with the natural world, our perspective shifts away from our immediate anxieties and toward something enduring, tranquil, and greater than ourselves.

I often think about how closely this experience mirrors the act of finding a purpose greater than our own personal needs. When you devote your time, energy, or financial resources to a cause you care about deeply, a similar transformation takes place. Pursuing a passion — or supporting a mission like land conservation — is an act of stepping outside the self. It bridges the gap between our individual lives and the larger, mysterious, interconnected world around us.

Both of these experiences point to a truth which is universal to the human experience: to truly find ourselves, or to uncover our greatest sense of purpose, we must first find a way to become part of something greater. By investing in the protection of open spaces, wildlife corridors, and the joyful laughter of children, you are not merely preserving landscapes — you are sustaining the sanctuaries that restore the human spirit, and joining in a grand and noble cause greater than any one of us.

As this year comes to a close, I invite you to renew your connection to the Earth and to those special people closest to you. Thank you for joining us as we strive towards achieving our goals, whether as a donor, program participant, visitor, or volunteer, and for choosing to be part of a legacy far greater than any of us could build alone.

Warm regards,

Frazier Haney
Executive Director

Gifts of the *Earth*

Before his passing in 2025, Wildlands co-founder David Myers was writing a collection of essays. The following pages include one of his completed pieces, a reflection of his spirit and Wildlands' philosophy.

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 cover: San Luis Obispo Bay stretches out from Avila Beach and Wild Cherry Canyon. On page 7: The oak-studded hills of Wild Cherry Canyon. Photos by Jack Thompson.



Photo by Jack Thompson

GIFTS OF THE *EARTH*

SAND TO SNOW NATIONAL MONUMENT
MORONGO VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

by David Myers

THE GIFT OF A MOTHER'S VOICE is universally heard in our promptings to defend the Earth, so much so, that wherever there's a place of great beauty and biodiversity, someone has been given the eyes to see its Beauty, someone has been given the intellect to understand the importance of its biodiversity, and someone has been given the passion to answer the call to protect the Earth. Sand to Snow National Monument's roots fold back upon the Sand to Snow Wilderness Interface Project in which The Conservancy bought 60,000 acres that linked wildlife corridors from its privately-owned Pipes Canyon Wilderness to Joshua Tree National Park Wilderness to the south where The National Park Service and Friends of Big Morongo Canyon became project partners. The project linked San Gorgonio Wilderness to the northwest where The U.S. Forest Service and San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust became project partners, and it linked Bighorn Mountains Wilderness to the northeast where the Bureau of Land Management and Sierra Club became project partners—over 20 partnering groups in all. The San Bernardino Mountains, as part of the Transverse Range, is one of two major east-west trending ranges in the United States. Sand to Snow National Monument spans over 10,000 feet of elevation and every life zone from desert to alpine. Over eons, north and south plant migrations followed retreating glaciers, landing plants at elevations and slope aspects that resulted in San Bernardino Mountains' 1,500 native plants, making Sand to Snow our nation's most botanically diverse National Monument. How long since you've answered the call to help locals save a special place of Beauty? Or has Earth called you to defend it? Forget skill sets, it's about passion born of witnessing its wonders.

San Luis Obispo County's *Wild Cherry Canyon*

On the cusp of permanent protection and extraordinary possibilities

Rising from the coast behind Avila Beach, Wild Cherry Canyon is one of the most significant remaining undeveloped — and unprotected — landscapes along California's Central Coast. Its coastal prairie, oak woodlands, chaparral, riparian forests, and headwater streams support exceptional biodiversity and form an important piece of the approximately 12,000-acre Diablo Canyon Lands, a largely intact coastal landscape extending toward Montaña de Oro State Park.

For more than 25 years, people on California's Central Coast have worked toward a future for Wild Cherry Canyon that permanently safeguards this sublime natural landscape which has been threatened by intensive development.

That future is on the path to becoming a reality. With a $42 million grant approved for the project by the State Coastal Conservancy this past September, and championed by California Senator John Laird, we have an opportunity to raise the remaining $8.5 million to complete this extraordinary project. This moment has been made possible by the generations of local advocates, Tribal partners and conservationists who have cared for and fought to protect this gem from intense development. With your support, The Wildlands Conservancy can close the funding gap that will allow us to acquire, care for, and open this 2,060-acre landscape to free public access. Your gifts are critical to successfully complete this conservation acquisition, and will be highly leveraged against secured public funds.

Writing the Next Chapter

Permanent protection gives us the chance to think in generations and to pursue our most far-reaching conservation goals. To restore native habitat and wildlife like California Red-Legged frogs on a landscape shaped by decades of human use. To create opportunities for the public to experience views from hilltop vistas over San Luis Obispo Bay and enjoy a new section of the California Coastal Trail. To work with Tribal communities whose relationships with this land reach far beyond any conservation transaction. And, over time, to create immersive camping opportunities for kids and families to experience this remarkable part of the Central Coast and discover something larger than themselves.

A future Wild Cherry Canyon Preserve could be a place where a child walks beneath the oaks for the first time, looks west toward the Pacific, or spends a night outdoors far from the noise and light of the city.

We want those experiences to be meaningful. That vision will take time, careful planning and diligent effort to materialize. To this end, Wildlands is participating in the Diablo Canyon Lands Conservation Planning Project, working alongside local communities and Tribal partners to help shape conservation, public access and Tribal access across this larger landscape. At Wild Cherry Canyon itself, our first responsibility is to study the land and its values, begin early management and guided public tours, and build the long-term stewardship capacity necessary for everything that follows.

For more than a quarter century, the central question surrounding Wild Cherry Canyon has been whether it could be protected. We are now closer than ever to being able to ask a different question: What can this land become?

Because of The Wildlands Conservancy's clear mission and track record of preserving land and providing access to nature, that question can be clearly answered. With the support of so many in the local community and across the State of California, we are proud to be on track to add the land to our nature Preserve System and honored to have the opportunity to help write the next chapter in the conservation story of Wild Cherry Canyon.



Wild Cherry Canyon is closer than ever to permanent protection because of more than 25 years of persistence.

We are deeply grateful to Senator John Laird, the State Coastal Conservancy, The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County, Tribal partners, and the many local advocates who have worked for decades to protect this extraordinary landscape.

Building the Next Generation of Conservation Leaders, *Seventeen Days at a Time*

By Aaron Hooyboer, Outward Bound Adventures Program Manager



At 6:30 in the morning, Seawood Cape Preserve feels very far from Outward Bound Adventures' home in Pasadena. Fog hangs low over camp as students pull on layers, make breakfast, and pack lunches before heading to work alongside The Wildlands Conservancy's staff.

For some, this is their first camping trip. Now they are spending 17 days hundreds of miles from home. The excitement eventually runs into homesickness, exhaustion, conflict, and the reality of getting up to work when you are tired.

It is also enough time for people to stop being strangers.

I have spent much of my career thinking about what outdoor access actually means. Transportation, equipment, and a campsite can get a young person through the door. But getting outside is only the beginning. The experience becomes meaningful when young people are trusted with real responsibility and given enough time to find out what they can do.

That is what makes the time students spend at The Wildlands Conservancy's preserves different. The students are not there to watch conservation happen. They are part of it.

That opportunity grew from a relationship between Outward Bound Adventures (OBA) and The Wildlands Conservancy (TWC) that began years earlier, when Wildlands co-founder David Myers met OBA Executive Director Charles Thomas.

Together, the organizations created something ambitious: bring high school students to a preserve for 17 days, pay them to complete restoration work, and surround that work with camping, leadership, exploration, and career exposure.

The paid work matters. Students have to arrive on time, use tools safely, communicate with a crew, and finish hard assignments even when they are tired. They also see that caring about the environment and earning a living do not have to be separate things.

The group leaves Pasadena and travels north, spending several days at Jenner Headlands Preserve before continuing to Seawood Cape Preserve. Across the expedition, students complete eight paid restoration workdays, removing invasive plants, planting native species, maintaining trails, improving future campsites, thinning parts of the forest, and taking part in ecological monitoring.

Salmon monitoring created another kind of connection.

"When I got to do the salmon monitoring, that was a light-bulb moment for me," one student said. "There's been so much damage, but people are coming together to bring them back. To be a part of that was really beautiful to me. This is something I can see myself doing in the future."

A classroom lesson can explain why an ecosystem needs restoration. Carrying branches, cutting

Continued On Page 12

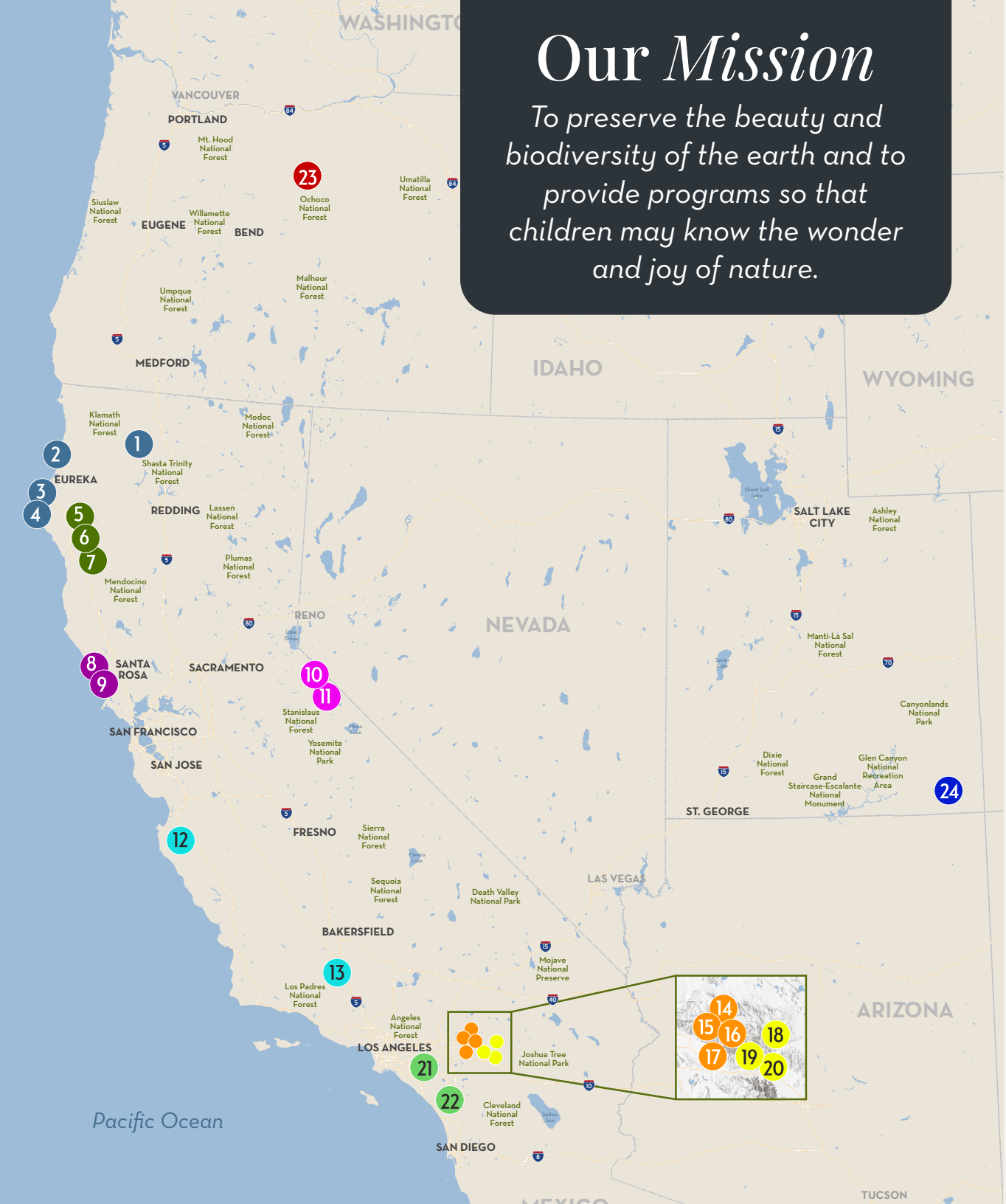


"When I got to do the salmon monitoring, that was a light-bulb moment for me."

- Outward Bound Adventures Student

Our *Mission*

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



California

NORTH COAST

1. Beaver Valley Headwaters Preserve (2021)
2. Seawood Cape Preserve (2019)
3. Eel River Estuary Preserve (2008)
4. Sounding Seas Dunes Reserve (2006)

EEL RIVER CANYON

5. Emerald Waters Reserve (2019)
6. Eel River Canyon Preserve (2021)
7. Spyrock Reserve (2005)

SONOMA COAST

8. Jenner Headlands Preserve (2013)
9. Estero Americano Coast Preserve (2015)

EASTERN SIERRA NEVADA

10. West Walker River Preserve (2019)
11. Two Rivers Preserve (2015)

CENTRAL COAST RANGES

12. Rana Creek Preserve (2023)
13. Wind Wolves Preserve (1996)

SAN BERNARDINO MOUNTAINS

14. Bluff Lake Reserve (2000)
15. Bearpaw Reserve (2002)
16. Galena Peak Wilderness Reserve (1996)
17. Oak Glen Preserve (1996)

CALIFORNIA DESERT

18. Pioneertown Mountains Preserve (1995)
19. Whitewater Preserve (2006)
20. Mission Creek Preserve (1995)

SOUTH COAST

21. Mariposa Reserve (2005)
22. Santa Margarita River Trail Preserve (2018)

Oregon

JOHN DAY RIVER

23. Enchanted Rocks Preserve (2021)

Utah

FOUR CORNERS

24. Speaking Springs Preserve (2023)

Sharing the Gift of *Wonder*

Celebrating a Beloved Volunteer Docent

The Wildlands Conservancy believes that every child should experience the wonder and joy of nature. At four of our preserves — Oak Glen, Mission Creek, Whitewater, and Wind Wolves — we connect some of Southern California's most underserved youth to the natural world through our free outdoor education field trips. These field trips are often the first experience a child has in nature and they can spark a connection that lasts a lifetime. Our outdoor education teams include passionate and dedicated docents that freely share their knowledge and love of nature with elementary students, encouraging exploration and discovery, and nurturing that spark of connection.

Randy Vaughan was one such docent. The team at Whitewater Preserve wanted to share a bit about Randy with you:

After joining us in 2018, Randy helped guide countless local students on interpretive walks among the willows and streams of Whitewater Canyon. With his warm smile and quiet demeanor, Randy shared his love and knowledge of geology, biology, and the natural world with students and staff alike.

Returning each year for docent orientation, he enriched our programs and shared his knowledge with new docents. Beyond his time with students, we'll remember the conversations in between — hearing about his latest travels with his wife, his sense of humor, and the warm smile he brought with him each time he joined us.

Whether at Whitewater or Mission Creek, Randy had an eye for details, noticing the minute changes of the season and planning his walks to give his group the best experience of nature's wonders great and small. Each morning, Randy was there to greet students as they stepped off the bus, ready for another day of exploring the canyon.

We thank Randy for the time and passion he shared with us over the years. He has been a special part of our Whitewater Preserve community, and we are grateful for the many memories he leaves with us as he steps away from his docent role. Thank you, Randy, for being part of our team and for all you have given to the youth in our community and preserve.



Share Your Love of Nature with the Next Generation

Our volunteer docents help make outdoor education possible, welcoming students to our preserves and encouraging them to explore, ask questions, and discover the wonder and joy of nature. Learn more about becoming a docent and helping create meaningful experiences for children in your community by visiting us at wildlandsconservancy.org/volunteer.


CAMELBAK

Building the Next Generation of Conservation Leaders, *Seventeen Days at a Time,* Continued

back vegetation, and doing the same careful task for hours teaches something else. Repair takes time. It takes planning. It takes people who keep working when the novelty has worn off.

As the trip progresses, instructors step back and students take on more responsibility. Each person serves as Leader of the Day, helping manage time, communicate the plan, divide responsibilities, and pay attention to what the group needs.

One student put it better than I could: "It taught me that being a leader meant accepting help from others and not doing things alone."

We do not expect every participant to become a conservation professional. That is not the point. We want them to know these opportunities exist and that they belong in the conversation. Paul's story is one example of what can happen when that first trip becomes a pathway.

I helped recruit Paul into OBA. At first, he would hang around our office, but he would not sign up for a trip. Eventually, he said yes.

On his second Seawood trip, Paul was the only returning student. Instead of focusing only on his own adjustment, he helped first-time students become, as he put it, "more comfortable with the uncomfortable."

The physical work gave him direction, too. "It inspired me to do more hands-on work," he said. "Before then, I didn't really know what I wanted to do with my life."

What changed is that he knows more about himself. He knows he likes using his hands. He knows he can work outside. He knows other people can count on him.

"I never thought I could be gone for 17 days again," Paul said. "It turns out I can."

By the end of the trip, the students know how to prepare for work, take care of camp, support one another, and show up even when they are tired.

The land looks different too. Trails have been cleared. Invasive plants have been removed. Native species have been planted. The students can point to something and say: We did that.

This is why access by itself is not enough. Young people need time, responsibility, mentors, meaningful work, and a reason to return. One expedition can lead to a second trip, a leadership role, an internship, college, or a job they had never considered.

The students arrive wondering whether they can be away for 17 days. They leave having worked hard, taken care of one another, and contributed to a place that will still carry signs of their effort long after they are back home.



Note: Not to be confused with the national organization "Outward Bound", Outward Bound Adventures (OBA) is the oldest nonprofit in the nation dedicated to outdoor education for BIPOC youth. OBA is a pioneer of Transformational Experiential Environmental Education (TEEE). Every OBA course is designed to challenge and empower youth with environmental education that changes their perspective about themselves and their surroundings.

Captions: Outward Bound Adventure students this year at Estero Americano Coast Preserve (page 7) and Jenner Headlands Preserve (opposite page, this page, and page 8). Photos by Corby Hines.

A Fiscal Year in *Review*

Year Ending June 30, 2025

The Wildlands Conservancy's financial results for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025 reflect deepening work across all of our program areas: land conservation, stewardship, restoration and rewilding, and public access and outdoor education.

We advanced acquisitions that will protect significant landscapes. And we did the hard, essential work that makes conservation last: stewarding the lands we hold, advancing restoration to rewild native species, and planning for the public access and outdoor education programs that invite people into these places.

Our revenue reflects our core operating activities and donor support. Spending increased as we invested more deeply across our programs. Our total assets reflect a modest decrease, the result of selling a non-conservation property, part of how we manage our land holdings and support our mission-based work over time.

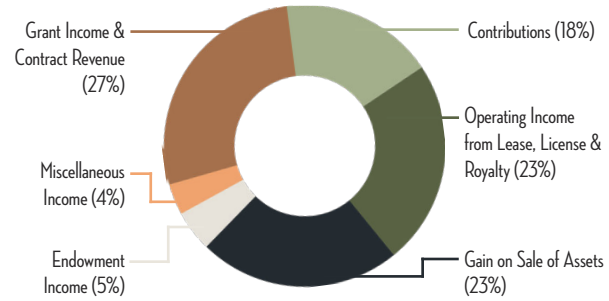
To our donors, partners, and supporters: thank you. The steady work of this year is the foundation everything else is built on, and it would not be possible without you.

With gratitude,

Jennifer Francis
Chief Financial Officer

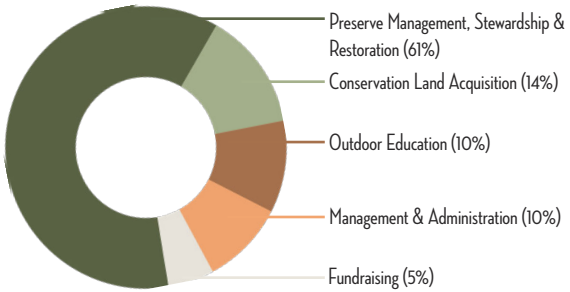
Total *Revenue*

$13,886,418



Operating *Expense*

$12,763,231



Assets & Liabilities

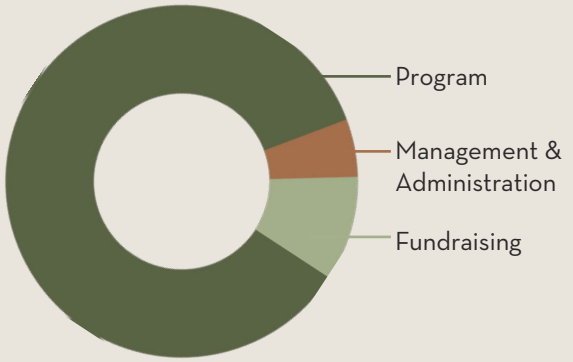
Assets		2025	2024
Cash and Equivalents	$	1,461,368	228,290
Investments		2,023,058	202,624
Accounts Receivable		1,219,594	954,984
Contracts Receivable		549,298	690,946
Pledges Receivable		322,540	1,191,338
Prepaid Expenses		92,377	58,424
Agriculture Inventory		584,393	599,523
Notes Receivable		1,532,744	1,844,434
Land Acquisition in Progress		733,133	538,559
Land Held for Resale		18,943,386	17,445,013
Land Held for Conservation			
Protected by Legal Instruments		121,143,792	121,143,792
Pending Legal Instrument Protections		76,131,375	83,003,693
Vehicles and Equipment		3,434,884	3,015,684
Buildings and Improvements		24,536,626	24,072,735
Construction in Progress		4,466,591	3,499,636
Accumulated Depreciation		(16,762,109)	(15,807,470)
Net Depreciable Property		15,675,992	14,780,585
Total Assets	**$**	**240,413,050**	**242,682,205**

Liabilities and Net Assets		2025	2024
Liabilities			
Accounts Payable	$	751,008	611,724
Accrued Payroll Costs		274,094	250,471
Accrued Interest Payable		288,720	169,626
Contract Liabilities		286,401	1,010,744
Notes Payable		14,100,000	17,050,000
Total Liabilities		15,700,223	19,092,565
Net Assets			
Net Assets without Donor Restrictions		219,828,053	219,620,531
Net Assets with Donor Restrictions		4,884,774	3,969,109
Total Net Assets		224,712,827	223,589,640
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	**$**	**240,413,050**	**242,682,205**

Mission-Focused *Investments*

Year Ending June 30, 2025

Program Expense Ratio



Programs

Conservation Land Acquisition, Stewardship, Restoration & Rewilding, Public Access & Outdoor Education

85%

$10,855,581

Management & *Administration*

10%

$1,228,705

Fundraising

5%

$678,945

Conservation *Land Acquisition*

The Wildlands Conservancy focused on conserving extraordinary landscapes through land acquisition. During fiscal year 2025, we advanced multiple major acquisitions totaling more than 35,000 acres in the West.

Stewardship, Restoration *& Rewilding*

Large-scale ecological restoration projects were initiated at a number of our preserves, including a major milestone at the Eel River Estuary Preserve where one of the most ambitious tidal restoration efforts on private land on the West Coast received conditional approval of its coastal development permit, clearing the path to restore approximately 500 acres of tidal wetlands and reconnect critical habitat for salmon and other native wildlife.

Public Access *& Outdoor Education*

The Wildlands Conservancy's preserves welcomed more than 1.5 million visitors for free passive recreation. Public access planning advanced at two newer properties being prepared to open in keeping with the organization's founding mission. More than 15,000 students participated in free, naturalist-led outdoor education programs during the year, the vast majority from underserved and economically disadvantaged communities — part of a cumulative total of more than 1.3 million youth served since the program's founding in 1998.





THE WILDLANDS CONSERVANCY

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

Board of *Directors*

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Outward Bound Adventures

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