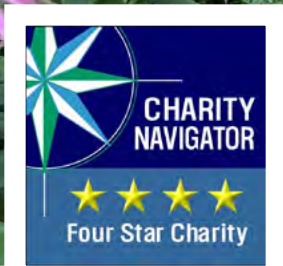




2023 ANNUAL Report



McDonald Farm, Naperville

We save land. We save rivers.

MISSION

We improve the health of our communities by preserving and restoring natural areas and open space, protecting rivers and watersheds, and promoting stewardship of our environment.

VISION

We envision a sustainable region where, through education and collaboration:

- **Protected natural areas** provide habitats for wildlife and places where people can enjoy nature forever.
- **Public and private partnerships** accelerate the pace of land preservation for the enrichment of all.
- **People benefit** from and enjoy clean and healthy streams, wetlands, and lakes.
- **All land development incorporates stewardship of the environment.**
- **People understand and embrace conservation issues**, and act to preserve the environment.

The Conservation Foundation is a recognized expert and reasoned voice on conservation issues and, with the help of our members and donors, we provide the leadership required to achieve this vision.

WE BELIEVE:

Every person, regardless of where they live or their social-economic status, deserves clean water, clean air, healthy food, and safe access to nature as a way to be healthy and happy.

WHO WE ARE



WELCOME TO OUR ANNUAL REPORT

The following pages are full of amazing statistics, and behind each one are inspiring stories of your dedication and generosity. Each and every impact we have comes back to YOU, our members and donors. Yes, our staff, board members and volunteers work incredibly hard, but they could not do what they do without your support.

I hope this report will paint for you a vivid picture of a vibrant organization that is having deep impact in our region, thanks to you and the many other supporters who give to us in many different ways. Our long-term programs successfully connect people to nature right in their own neighborhoods, while fresh initiatives are addressing the changing needs of our communities and our environment. As you flip through these pages, take a moment to soak in all of the good being done with your involvement in a world that really needs it, and let's celebrate the wins we've achieved together! Thank you for being part of this community and helping us keep local nature thriving!

Sincerely,

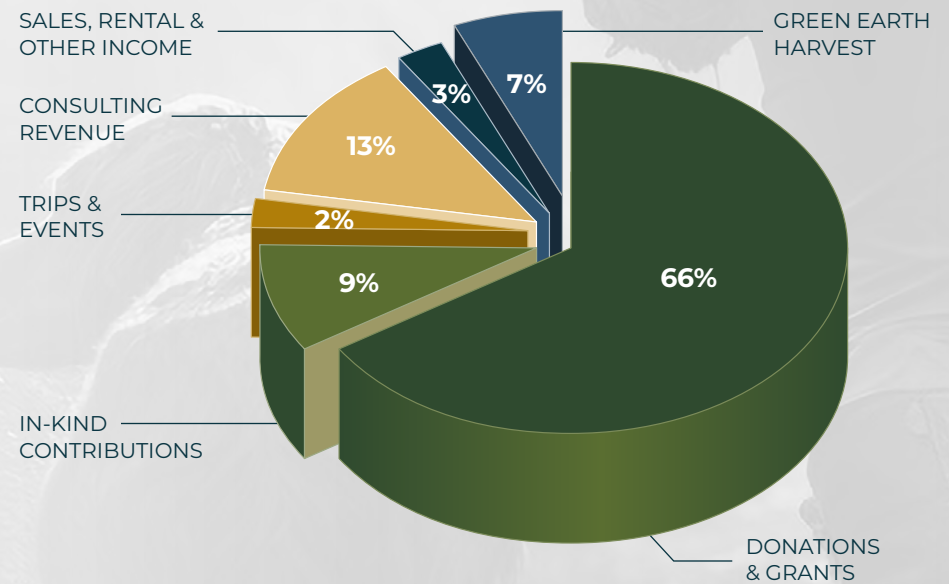


Brook McDonald, President/CEO

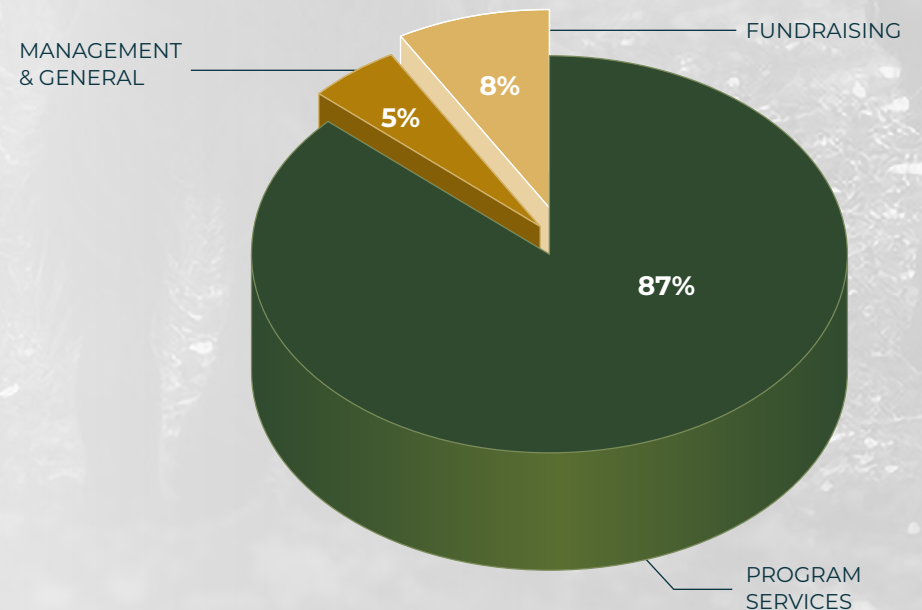


Our McDonald Farm Headquarters, Naperville

2023 REVENUE



2023 EXPENSES



LAND PRESERVATION

Preserved 4 properties totaling 146.7 acres:
3 purchases, 1 conservation easement



Piloted a **Farm-to-Pantry Program**, nourishing more than 400 families from six DuPage and Will County food pantries with freshly picked organic produce

Restored & managed more than 1,137 acres of natural areas



Fed more than 650 families with healthy organic produce grown locally at McDonald Farm through our **Green Earth Harvest program**



Certified 35 properties **Conservation@Home & Conservation@Work** & advised hundreds more



Advanced the **Aux Sable Springs watershed plan** with the purchase of two properties adjacent to the creek

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Our strategic goal is to be more inclusive, impactful and relevant to the people & communities we serve, growing & adapting our conservation programs to meet local needs.



Established partnerships with affinity groups & targeted underserved communities with **conservation programming**



Conducted 40 **Nature Rx** events reaching over 700 participants



Served more than 1,600 children through **environmental ed**



Designed **interpretive signs** at O'Hara Woods (Romeoville) in both English & Spanish, reflecting the local community's diverse demographics

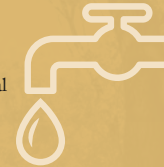


Held **30 forest therapy** experiences for partners, children, & others

Sold over 3,000 native plants, trees and shrubs at our **annual plant sale**, & distributed thousands more to homeowners



Our **Next Generation Advisory Council** held their annual Trivia Night Fundraiser, three professional development seminars, and three **Conservation on Tap** networking events.



Added a 3rd site and gathered over 250 volunteers for **It's Our Fox River Day**, and more than 500 volunteers collected 7 tons of trash and cleaned 47 river miles in the **DuPage River Sweep**



Installed three new **pollinator & other native plant demonstration gardens**



Our **Inclusion Council** met quarterly to advise the organization on the execution of our Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Action Plan, & an internal DEI Staff Committee meets regularly for trainings, guest speakers, discussions & planning.



WATER QUALITY

Provided professional staffing to 4 local watershed groups that work to protect the stream resource quality for 7.4 million people



Completed a new **Salt Smart training manual & curriculum** for public agencies & private contractors who lay salt in the winter

The DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup, staffed by The Conservation Foundation, **championed the removal of the Fullersburg Woods Dam** & began **restoration on Salt Creek**

Distributed **930 rain barrels** to local communities



Assumed leadership of the **Take a Hike Challenge**, engaging over 1,400 participants

Expanded our **Nature Rx** program into Kane County

Implemented nine **Conservation In Our Community** initiatives in three counties



Brought the **Mighty Acorns®** curriculum to 49 classrooms

Received support from more than 500 farm and natural areas restoration volunteers

THE RECYCLED NATURE OF YOUR DONOR DOLLAR

Everything we are, and have, and need - it all comes back to the land. It's our sanctuary, our source of sustenance, what our shelter is built upon, and the solution to some of the gravest social, economic, and environmental concerns facing humanity today. It's our past, our present, and our future.

One of our most powerful preservation tools is the ability to act quickly when the opportunity to save land arises. The Conservation Foundation's "Revolving Land Preservation Fund" (RLPF) is what enables this agility by providing critical flexibility to act, and maximizes the preservation capability of donor support. Every dollar donated leverages additional dollars from our banking partners, supporting both direct and indirect program costs related to land acquisitions. Whether it's buying and holding a property for a public agency partner or using another preservation method, being poised to move when preservation opportunities arise with a strong RLPF makes all the difference for precious local natural areas. Without the available funds to act quickly, treasured wild lands like the Dayton Bluffs Preserve in Ottawa, the Goldenstein properties in Campton Township, and Kendall County's Reservation Woods might well be subdivisions now.

HOW IT WORKS

At the request of our public open space agency partners, such as forest preserve and park districts, **The Conservation Foundation uses your donations to purchase high quality natural areas in your community, immediately protecting them.** This gives the agency who would ultimately like to own the property for public enjoyment time to apply for grants and organize other funding. Once the agency gathers its funding, usually within two years of our purchase, they then buy the property from us and we use that money to replenish the RLPF. And the next time a property of conservation significance becomes available, we then reuse your donation to purchase more endangered lands. Your donation gets recycled over and over again to protect thousands of acres of open space! If that donation had a theme song, it would be Johnny Cash's "I've Been Everywhere, Man"!

We also use interest income built from the RLPF to support our other programs and conservation initiatives that connect our children and communities to the land, protect our rivers and streams from pollution, grow healthy organic produce to feed our neighbors, and to work with local government and developers to build greener, healthier, and more sustainable communities.

THE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION'S REVOLVING LAND PRESERVATION FUND



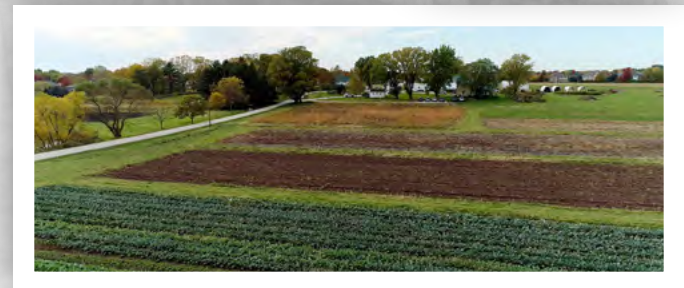
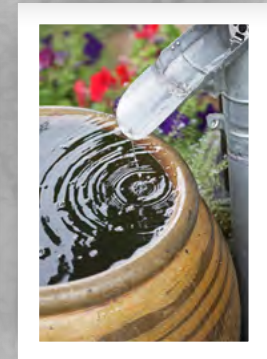
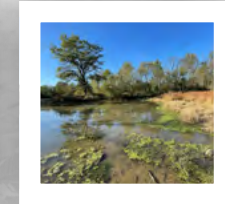
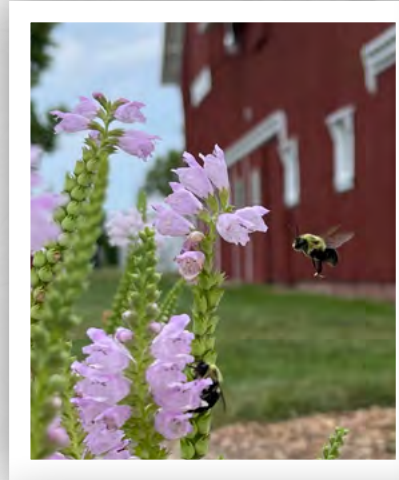
RECENT PRESERVATION PROJECTS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE RLPF

Goldenstein West , Kane County	130.3 Acres
Minooka Veterans Park Expansion , Will County	0.9 Acres
Clarke Property , Will County	6.5 Acres
Lincoln Marsh Addition , DuPage County	0.8 Acres
Baker Woods Addition , Kendall County	37.0 Acres
Aux Sable Springs Expansion , Kendall County	5.0 Acres
Goldenstein East , Kane County	112.6 Acres
TOTAL 293.1 ACRES	

THANK YOU

We would like to sincerely thank the following foundations and grantors who have contributed **\$5,000 or more annually** in support of our mission:

- Anonymous
- American Water Charitable Foundation
- AXA XL
- Ball Horticultural Company
- Bosch
- CITGO
- ComEd
- Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley
- Ducks Unlimited
- DuPage County American Rescue Plan Act
- DuPage Foundation
- Ecolab
- Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelley Foundation
- Grand Victoria Foundation
- Grand Victoria Riverboat Fund
- Hamill Family Foundation
- Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation
- Illinois Department of Natural Resources
- Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
- Kendall County American Rescue Plan Act
- Nayar Family Foundation
- Nicor
- Owens and Minor
- Schmidgall Family Foundation
- The Nature Conservancy
- Timken Foundation
- We WILL Grow (Will County)



WHY THE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION IS IN MY WILL

There are so many places to donate: Education. Food security. Refugee housing... **Friends often ask why The Conservation Foundation is a beneficiary of my estate when I die**, especially considering the many other places where my gift could actually “help people.”

Let me show you my reply.

Sit quietly for a second and breathe. Feel the air moving in and out of your body?

Take another breath or two

Continue to sit quietly for another few seconds. Feel your feet on the ground. Feel your heartbeat.

Finally, while still sitting quietly, think about the people that mean the most to you in this world.

With their pictures in your mind, open your eyes....



You have just experienced why The Conservation Foundation is my beneficiary. Without air to breathe, solid ground to walk on, water to drink, we would cease to exist. Without nutrition to nurture our brains, we could have no memories of loved ones, no neurons to support our ability to create solutions to any of life’s many challenges.

Without the environment: land, fresh air, clean water, places to farm, we would not have the air to breathe, or the ground to walk on, or even good food to support our brain development.

Above any organization that I am aware of, The Conservation Foundation protects virtually every aspect of human life through its support of the health of our land and rivers. If we don’t prioritize restoring and saving our land and rivers, eventually there will be no point to any other charitable cause because humanity will cease to exist. Maybe not right away, of course. But future generations will become increasingly challenged, until there is no life left.

World-wide, only 3% of all charitable contributions are left to environmental causes. Think of the good work The Conservation Foundation could do for the life of your children, and your children’s children, if you gifted a portion of your estate to their focused work of preserving life through saving land and rivers.

Working together, we can leave a collective legacy that just might get that environmental donation number up to 4% or even 5%!

*By: Shannon Burns
Perennial Circle Member*



Shannon Burns, Perennial Circle Member

The Conservation Foundation’s Perennial Circle is a group of donors who have chosen to make a profound impact on the future of The Conservation Foundation through a planned gift. Gifts of life insurance, annuities or remembering The Conservation Foundation in your will enable you to achieve your financial and estate goals and leave a legacy of land for future generations. These gifts often come with some beneficial tax incentives as well. We have also partnered with FreeWill as a no-cost helpful online will and trust planning tool.

Learn more on our website, or contact Abby Beck at abeck@theconservationfoundation.org or 630-428-4500, Ext. 135.



THE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION
We save land. We save rivers.

10 S 404 Knoch Knolls Road
Naperville, Illinois 60565
p 630 428-4500 f 630 428-4599
www.theconservationfoundation.org

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2024 Earth Day

BENEFIT DINNER

a watershed moment

FOR **LOCAL NATURE**

Thursday, April 25th, 2024, 5pm to 9pm

Bobak's Signature Events, Woodridge

Evening Includes:

- ~Nature-Inspired Silent Auction
- ~Hors d'oeuvres, Libations & Exquisite 3-Course Dinner
- ~Inspirational Video & Short Program
- ~Wall of Wine
- ~Opportunity to Support Our Mission

Sponsorships and Silent Auction donations are gratefully sought.

