



A SEASON OF CHANGE



UNIQUE PLACES
TO SAVE
2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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A Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Supporters, Partners, and Friends of Unique Places to Save,

It is my great privilege and honor to share our 2024 Annual Report. This year's report showcases the amazing work our team has accomplished in the past year in service of our mission, which is to restore and conserve natural and working lands and aquatic resources.

In this report, you will learn how we expanded our Mitigation Program to now include projects in 10 states. You will see how our Restoration Program is making progress towards protecting not only vulnerable species and natural resources, like protecting Venus flytraps at Boiling Spring Wilderness, but also preserving local history and water quality benefits as we are doing on Gum Creek at Massey Chapel.

In addition to our programmatic work, we also achieved several internal goals that required our time and attention, but have resulted in a more robust organization. Our team came together to strengthen our messaging to you - we now tell our story through a new website, updated newsletters, regular blog posts (no AI bots here, folks!), and LinkedIn posts.

We also took inspiration from scouting to create a badge system for all of our projects, which removes the complexity and introduces a spirited way to showcase how projects "earn" their badges.

Finally, we had the bittersweet work of passing the torch in the roles of Executive Director, with Clark Harris returning to serve on our Board of Directors, and Conservation Specialist, with Natalie Davis pursuing a graduate degree in natural resources. Thank you, Clark and Natalie, for your many years of service and dedication.

Our work could not be done without the steadfast support of our donors, partners, supporters, friends, and family. Thank you all so much for your support of and belief in the mission. My hope is that upon reading this report you can see first-hand how your ideas, expectations, funding, networking, time, and effort helped us accomplish this body of work. These accomplishments are yours to celebrate as well.

If the flow of new projects and new relationships we're developing is any indication, our next year is going to be amazing. Thank you for being a part of this mission and supporting work that will have tangible, lasting impact for generations to come.

Sincerely,
Christine

Our mission is to restore and conserve natural and working lands and aquatic resources through conservation protections and sustainable natural resource restoration and management.

Simplifying Complexity



Connecting Our Mission to Areas of Impact

At the core of every project, Unique Places to Save serves to meet its mission of restoring and conserving high-quality land and aquatic resources.

The total impact we can have for each project while meeting our mission can be complex so we have created a tool to communicate and share the impact of our projects and organization.

Upon completion, each project earns a badge indicating the positive impacts it has achieved. The waterdrop icon keeps our organizational mission as the focal point of every project.

Every Unique Places to Save project has the potential to achieve each of these positive impacts.

Conserve - These projects include a legally-binding conservation agreement that protects land, aquatic, and natural resource conservation values in perpetuity.

Restore - These projects include activities that improve resilience through the recovery of native communities and ecological functions in aquatic and terrestrial systems that have been degraded, damaged, or destroyed.

Habitat - These projects protect high-priority habitat for at-risk, state, and/or federally-listed rare, threatened, or endangered species.

Working - These projects include the permanent protection of working lands that are often intertwined with other aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.

Access - These projects include public access or support environmental and conservation education and/or research.

Restoration Overview

The Restoration Program at Unique Places to Save encompasses the projects where our team serves as the lead from start to finish. These projects typically include securing competitive grant funding, orchestrating on-the-ground restoration work, outreach with the local community, and overseeing perpetual conservation of the site when work is complete.

While each project is tailored to its specific ecosystem, stakeholders, and overall goals, every Restoration Program project aligns with our mission. Our new badges help everyone quickly identify how each of our projects accomplishes this important work.

Our team has the experience and expertise to manage these complex projects and we also leverage our partnerships to increase the scale of our impact.



Point Farm in Charleston SC

Conservation Overview

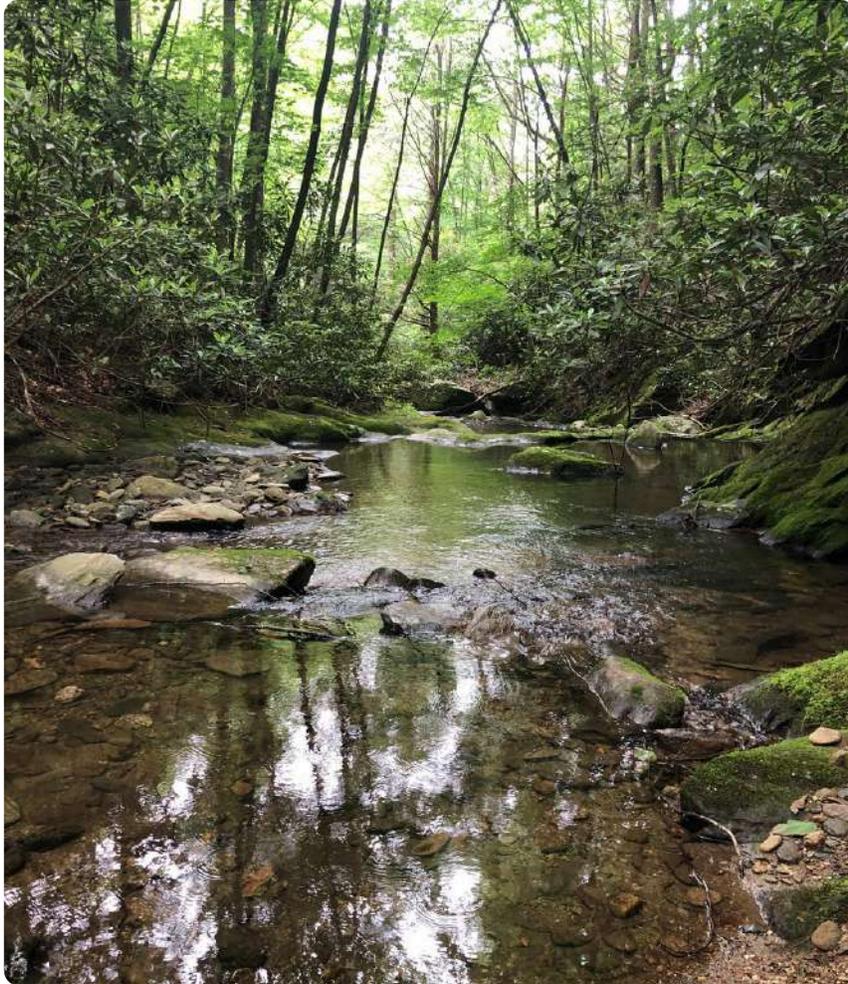
Unique Places to Save's Conservation Program is the heart of the organization and marks its beginnings as a public benefit entity. Our conservation efforts focus on the permanent protection of restored aquatic systems and productive working lands while creating lasting opportunities for public access. We emphasize positive outcomes that lead to enduring solutions.

Our conservation work to date has impacted nearly 7,000 acres of land in 10 states, focusing on efforts that permanently conserve land and water systems, increasing the resiliency and productivity of our community's landscapes. This annual report introduces the projects we completed in 2024. We are proud to have conserved these lands, and as perpetual stewards of many projects, we know our stewardship work will keep us busy for years to come.

We hope you enjoy learning about the positive impacts we create through our Conservation Program. We look forward to more conservation work in 2025 and beyond!



Our Progress in 2024



Projects Completed

9

Acres Conserved

323

Linear Feet of
Streams Protected

68,600+

Acres of Wetlands
Conserved

74

As the title of our annual report suggests, 2024 was a year of change. We transitioned to new leadership, hired new staff, and refocused our mission to be more impactful. As we are implementing all of these positive changes, we completed multiple projects that continue to represent the purpose and mission of Unique Places to Save: to restore and conserve natural and working lands and aquatic resources through conservation protections and sustainable natural resource restoration and management.

In 2024, we completed nine projects that protected over 68,600 feet of stream and conserved more than 320 acres. We continue to restore and protect high-quality aquatic ecosystems and adjacent working lands, which together provide a future that respects ecosystem diversity and encourages economic sustainability.

Spruill Farm Home Place



Spruill Home Place Farm, originally purchased by the Spruill Family in 1914, offers a wide array of conservation benefits to all the communities, people, ecosystems, birds, plants, and critters that rely on it. The Farm has cultivated crops including, but not limited to: peanuts, corn, cotton, soybeans, wheat, and tobacco.

Today, the land continues to grow vegetables while sustainable practices are implemented to conserve and maintain soil and water quality, and avoid erosion, soil contamination, and water pollution. In addition to its crops, Spruill Home Place Farm is also home to a 100-year-old Scuppernong grape vine, over 50 fig trees with 23 varieties, and an abundance of diverse wildlife.

As much as the Spruill Home Place Farm supports the local community with its crops, it also supports hundreds of different wildlife species. The project features forested areas, cypress gum swamp wetlands, and over 1,500 linear feet of waterfront access on the southern shore of the largest freshwater sound in the world—the Albemarle Sound. The property boasts multiple bottomland forest species, including Sweetgum, Water Oak, and River Birch. At Spruill Home Place Farm, you could see Bald Eagles, Red Wolves, Black Bears, River Otters, Red Foxes, Barred Owls, Eastern Cottontails, and federally-listed species like the Shortnose Sturgeon and the Red-cockaded Woodpecker.

The Spruill Home Place Farm is a great example of how conservation can benefit working lands, and all those that rely on them. In December of 2023, Unique Places to Save worked with Jack Spruill and representatives from the Peanut Factory, Inc., Julia Townsend and Lincoln Adams, to protect 75 acres of productive farmland, 45 acres of forest and forested wetlands, and 1,500 linear feet of shoreline along the Albemarle Sound—totaling 120 acres of diverse ecosystems preserved in perpetuity. This unique project serves as an advocate for conservation, and illustrates that achieving harmony between agriculture and nature is not only attainable, but mutually-beneficial. Because of the Spruill family’s commitment to their land, the legacy of the Spruill Home Place Farm and the rich diversity of wildlife it supports will be saved—forever.

120

Total Number of Protected Acres

75

Acres of Working Farmland

45

Acres of Forest & Forested Wetland

1,600

Shoreline Feet on Albemarle Sound

Featured Projects

The following four pages include summaries of other properties we were able to conserve in 2024



Hatch's Hill

Located in Wayne County NC

The Hatch's Hill property has been in the Hatch family since 1892. The current owners, Rex and Faye Hatch, even into their late eighties, still maintain a rich farming tradition. The land is used for a range of crops and livestock, including goats, chickens, and more. Family is treasured by the Hatches, and since 1892, this piece of land has been at the center of their gatherings and get-togethers.

The easement covers 56 acres in Wayne County North Carolina, and is situated on active family-owned farmland. The site features key ecological elements, including wetlands and streams, which are being restored through a partnership with [Wildlands Engineering](#).

The primary objective of the conservation easement is to rehabilitate eroded streams while ensuring the preservation of this vital ecological site for future generations.

This initiative encompasses the restoration of numerous waterways, including Lee Branch and four tributaries, ultimately aiming to restore 13,927 linear feet of streams and establish significant wetlands.



65.9
Total Acres

[View Project](#)

Bootstrap

Located in Gaston County NC

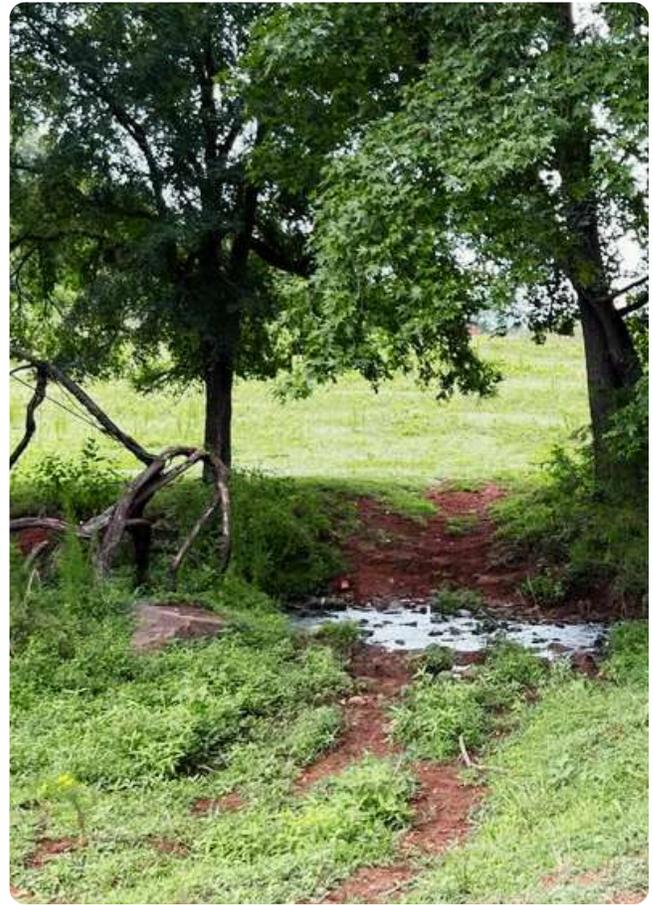
The Bootstrap project focuses on enhancing wetland and stream function through restoration efforts along Black Bear Creek and its tributaries with Wildlands Engineering. The project aims for re-vegetation of riparian buffers, contributing to significant ecological improvement.

Unique Places to Save will ensure ongoing protection of these restoration initiatives. The conservation project encompasses the protection of over 8,200 linear feet of restored streams and nearly 2.5 acres of wetlands.



40.6
Total Acres

[View Project](#)



Proctor Dairy

Located in Catawba County NC

This mitigation easement enhances ecological integrity and water quality in the Lower Catawba River Basin. The project focuses on establishing a functional riparian corridor via restoration of the stream channels and riparian buffers with Wildlands Engineering.

This initiative improves conditions for aquatic organisms and reinstates critical connections between riparian and aquatic ecosystems. By restoring natural hydrology and mitigating historical drainage impacts, this contributes to long-term watershed sustainability.



22.9
Total Acres

[View Project](#)

High Hood

Located in Cumberland County TN

The easement is dedicated to restoring streams and wetlands that will improve the water quality and mitigate watershed stressors within the Daddys Creek subwatershed.

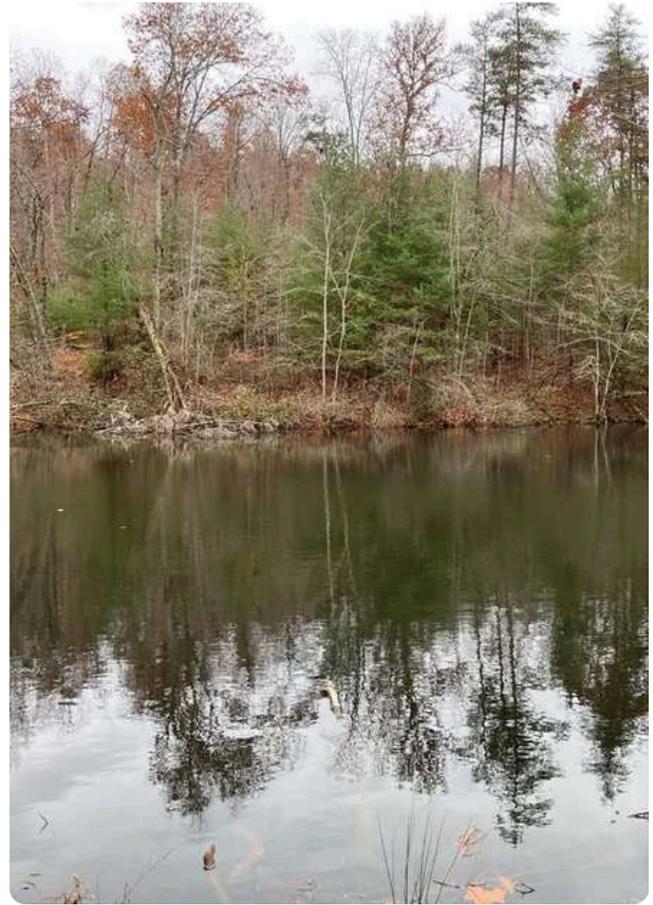
Collaborating with [Naturion](#), the initiative strives to create a self-sustaining aquatic system that enhances ecosystem functionality.

The conservation easement is adjacent to agricultural areas, supporting farming activities that are key to the local economy.



31.1
Total Acres

[View Project](#)



Smiley

Located in Knox County TN

The Smiley Property easement conserves 18 acres and 4,458 feet of restored stream channel, enhancing habitat and water quality while coexisting with active cattle farming and a Wetland Preserve Easement with [Naturion](#).

Serving as the long-term steward, this is our fifth project in Tennessee, reflecting our commitment to the state's natural heritage. This project reconnects a stream to its floodplain, stabilizes banks, enhances riparian buffers, and improves habitat for aquatic and wildlife species for lasting ecological benefits.



15.6
Total Acres

[View Project](#)

Brooks Swamp

Located in Wayne County NC

This easement enhances water quality and ecological health within the Neuse River Basin. By reforesting 9.2 acres of riparian cropland, the project reduces nutrient runoff and conserves restored aquatic habitats.

This easement protects a hardwood riparian corridor with RestorEcology, improving Brooks Swamp and Thoroughfare Swamp.



11.1
Total Acres

[View Project](#)



Beaver Tail

Located in Lincoln County NC

This easement includes a restored tributary to Howard's Creek and associated wetlands. The project enhances water quality, reduces sediment and runoff & improves habitat for various species.

In partnership with RES, it features stream and wetland restoration, enhancement, and preservation; providing significant ecological benefits to the Howard's Creek watershed.



34.4
Total Acres

[View Project](#)

Without love of the land, conservation lacks meaning or purpose, for only in a deep and inherent feeling for the land can there be dedication in preserving it. *-Sigurd F. Olson-*

Upcoming Projects

The following three pages include a few of our current projects we expect to complete soon!



Boiling Spring Wilderness

Located in Brunswick County NC

In early 2025, Unique Places to Save will be placing a state-held conservation easement on approximately 1,040 acres of land in Brunswick County, North Carolina. Featuring the headwaters of Orton Creek, riparian buffers, wetlands, Carolina bays, pocosin, savanna, and other habitats, the Boiling Spring Wilderness is part of a globally-ranked natural heritage and wildlife habitat area. The project is home to many federally listed and rare species and natural communities such as the endangered Red-cockaded woodpecker, the vulnerable Venus flytrap, and the historically-important longleaf pine ecosystem.

The project area is contiguous with the ~7,926-acre Boiling Spring Lakes Plant Conservation Preserve parcels to the northwest and the ~973-acre Orton Plantation conservation tract to the northeast, making this project a significant contribution towards landscape-scale conservation in the area. Conservation of this site will also benefit a nearby military installation by preventing further development within the buffer area of 2019 Joint Land Use Study.



1,040
Total Acres

[View Project](#)

Ramseur

Located in Randolph County NC

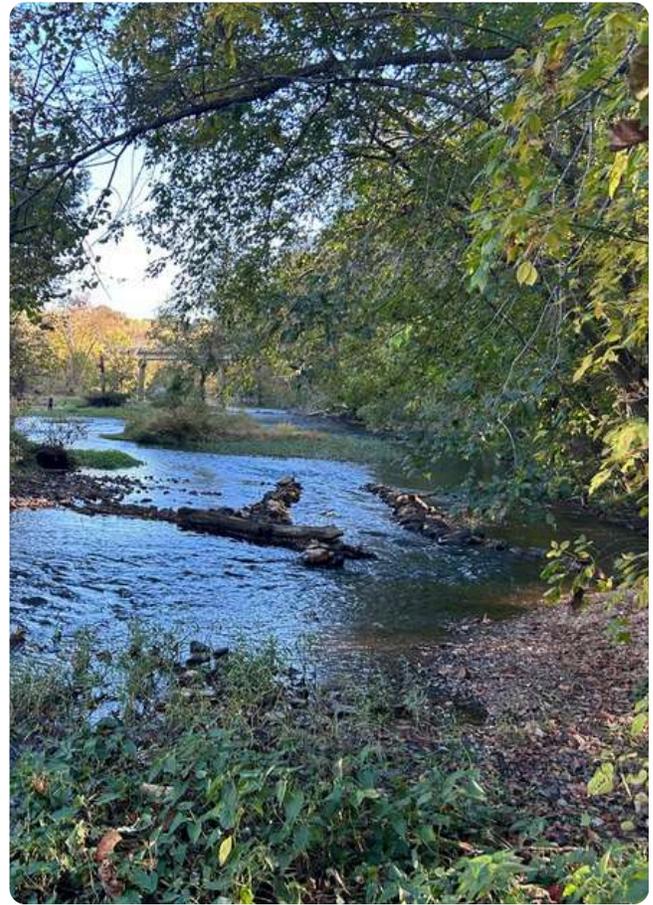
We are partnering with a team led by American Rivers to support removal of Ramseur Dam to acquire 27 acres to support extending of the Deep River State Trail & conserve high quality habitats. About 16 acres were acquired and the conservation agreement was developed. In 2025, the project will be completed with the acquisition of 11 more acres, transfer of area to the Town of Ramseur, and installation of park features.

We are partnering with RES for the removal of Ramseur Dam to restore riverine habitat and improve access to the Deep River.



27
Total Acres

[View Project](#)



Alligator Creek

Located in Brunswick County NC

The Alligator Creek Restoration and Conservation Project was restructured to focus on conservation. For this project, we worked with New Hanover Soil & Water Conservation District to conserve an additional 14 acres of wetlands adjacent to the Eagles Island Dedicated Nature Preserve, extending protected lands in a highly-developed area near Wilmington, NC.

This project protects important aquatic habitat within a North Carolina Natural Heritage Area in the lower Cape Fear River Estuary.



14
Total Acres

[View Project](#)

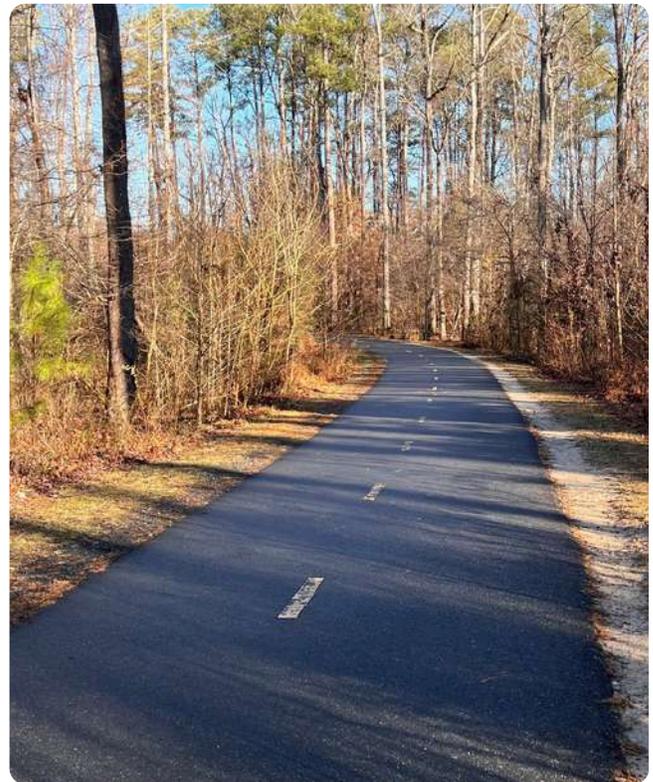
Massey Chapel Nature Park

Located in Durham County NC

The Massey Chapel Nature Park project represents a significant collaboration among Unique Places to Save, the Carlton family, local landowners, the City of Durham, the North Carolina Land and Water Fund, and various stakeholders to conserve an important segment of the American Tobacco Trail. This land, originally purchased by Harvey Carlton in 1878, who was emancipated from slavery, holds deep historical significance as it has been passed down through generations of the Carlton family. The initiative aims to protect this invaluable community resource by enhancing public access and recreation while promoting environmental conservation.

Spanning 20 acres, the we envision the Massey Chapel Nature Park will serve as a unique venue, offering visitors an opportunity to engage with the rich history of the Carlton family and the surrounding area while protecting water quality and other natural benefits. Notably, this area lies within a floodplain and will protect over 1,380 linear feet of Gum Creek riparian buffer. The park will not only enhance water quality and biodiversity but also help protect Gum Creek and other tributaries of Jordan Lake, a critical water source for approximately one million residents.

In 2024, a grant agreement with the North Carolina Land and Water Fund was executed and will provide funding to record a state-held conservation easement on the property that will protect the natural resource values of the site in perpetuity. Once the conservation easement is recorded in 2025, park planning will be further refined and progress towards implementation of park features.



20
Total Acres

[View Project](#)

We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect. *-Aldo Leopold-*

Our Current Impact

6,998

Total Acres in Conservation

10 States Represented

2,947 Restored Wetland Acres

122.7 Restored Stream Miles

104 Projects Completed

\$3.5M

Stewardship Funds

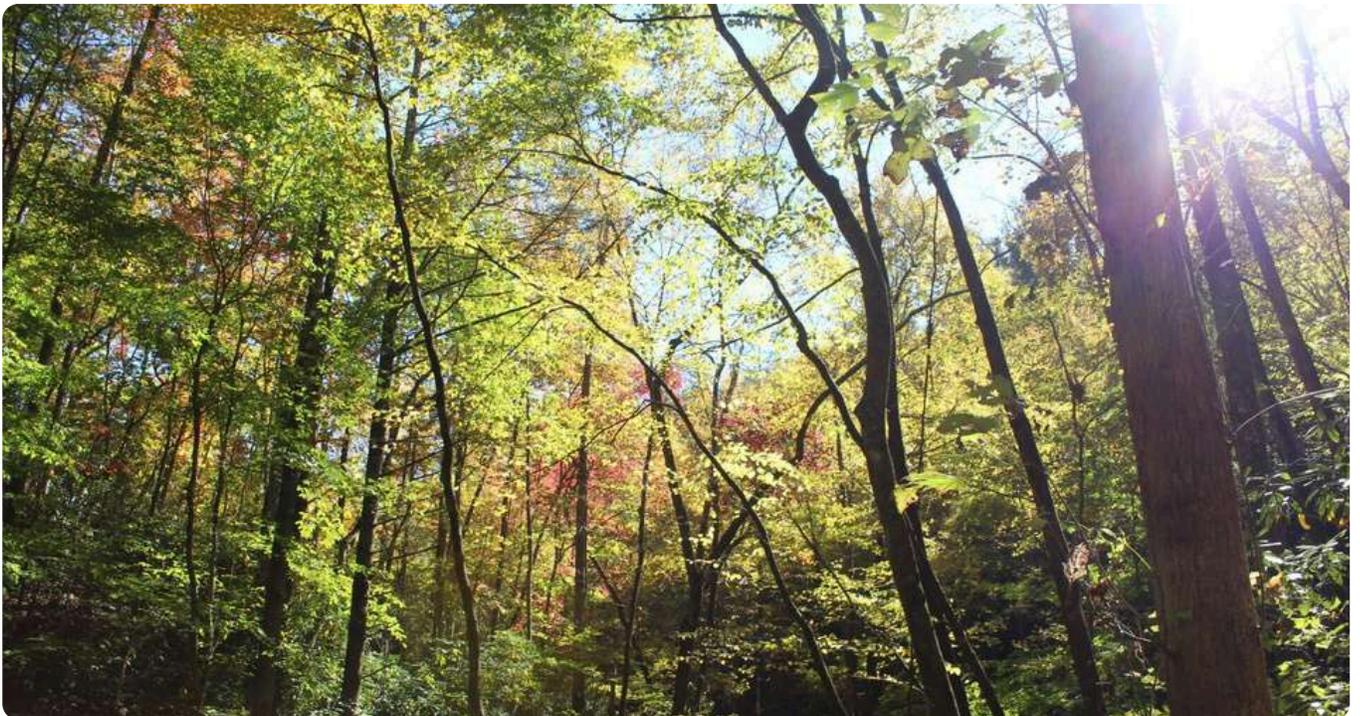


UNIQUE PLACES
TO SAVE

Our Unique Values

In the summer of 2024, our team came together to define the goals and principles that underscore our organization and motivate our work.

These goals and principles are non-negotiable and we work to integrate them into every project we undertake and every effort our organization makes. They are the foundation from which we will reach our goals and the impetus to realize our mission every day.



We are committed to growing and adapting our organization within the framework of the following core principles and goals.



RESTORE & CONSERVE LAND AND WATER

HOW WE MEET THIS GOAL

At the heart of the Unique Places to Save mission is to restore and conserve high-quality land and aquatic resources.

We directly restore and conserve natural and working lands and aquatic resources through conservation protections and sustainable land, aquatic, and natural resource restoration and management.

WHERE WE APPLY THIS GOAL

- Restoration
- Conservation
- Habitat Improvement
- Public Access
- Working Lands



UNIQUE PLACES
TO SAVE



LEAD THROUGH INNOVATION AND SCIENCE

HOW WE MEET THIS GOAL

As we continue to work in our industry, we search for ways to improve our effectiveness. A key factor in being able to innovate is to utilize the best available science and decision-making processes to analyze what are thought to be established ideas, concepts, and processes from an independent perspective.

By doing this, we can provide an objective critique of information and processes resulting in potential increases in efficiency and effectiveness.

WHERE WE APPLY THIS GOAL

- Expertise
- Consistency
- Efficiency
- Curiosity
- Innovation





OPERATE WITH PERMANENCE & SUSTAINABILITY

HOW WE MEET THIS GOAL

Our work includes perpetual responsibilities to our constituents, supporters and partners. Therefore, it is our goal to create an organizational structure that emphasizes the permanence and health of our finances, operations, and reputation.

This requires us to implement sustainable and adaptable strategies for long-term organizational success.

WHERE WE APPLY THIS GOAL

- Financial
- Operations
- Reputation
- Stewardship
- Resilience



**UNIQUE PLACES
TO SAVE**

Our Guiding Current

Science is the foundation of our decisions and actions.

Where we work and how we work is first and foremost informed by science. Each natural community has different needs and approaches, which all fall within a greater landscape that interacts with human needs and uses.

Innovation inspires, drives, and motivates our work on solutions within and beyond the organization.

Solving complex issues with comprehensive solutions fuels our success and amplifies our impact. This motivation drives us to excel and fosters collaboration and leadership, helping us address outdated thinking and changing regulations. Together, we aim to achieve more sustainable positive impacts, inspire one another, fulfill our organizational mission, and share the benefits of our work with others.

Restoration of aquatic and terrestrial resources is a viable approach towards regaining natural functions of degraded ecosystems.

The stress that human land use has placed on our planet is undeniable. By restoring land, rivers, wetlands, and other critical natural resources, we help boost biodiversity and ecological resilience today, while working towards the greater goal of ensuring a healthy balance between our communities and our environment.

Conservation of working lands and ecosystems supports current and future communities.

Protecting high quality aquatic systems along with working lands and other land areas is critical for healthy and sustainable communities. Perpetual conservation ensures our natural and working land resource base is available for future generations.

Collaboration is critical to ensure lasting conservation.

Working in isolation is typically counterproductive. Just as the land and water we restore and conserve have a place within a larger landscape, our organization and our work must also fit within a larger framework of stakeholders, partners, and the public. Only through an understanding of where our goals and priorities align can we achieve a more sustainable impact.

Confidence to lead in the face of difficulty and uncertainty creates success.

Our world is ever-changing and becoming more complex and difficult to navigate. We embrace these uncertainties and adapt to meet the world's challenges. We do not turn away from difficulties, but instead treat them as complexities that need solutions and we see ourselves as part of those solutions.

Permanence of our organization is necessary to achieve our goals.

It is imperative that we operate in a manner that is financially and environmentally sustainable in the long term. Ensuring the longevity and efficacy of our organization requires careful planning, resource management, and partnerships that provide ongoing support and adaptation to changing conditions.

Principles and goals become meaningful only when we put them in action. Our team is united in our commitment to these standards as we work to restore and conserve land and water. We are proud of our accomplishments and are focused on building upon that success.

Our projects have direct positive impact on millions of lives and we are dedicated to expanding this influence with every project.

Expert Content

In 2024, our team started a long-term commitment to share our work and knowledge through posts that not only speak to our mission, but also provide perspectives on our industry and related issues of the day

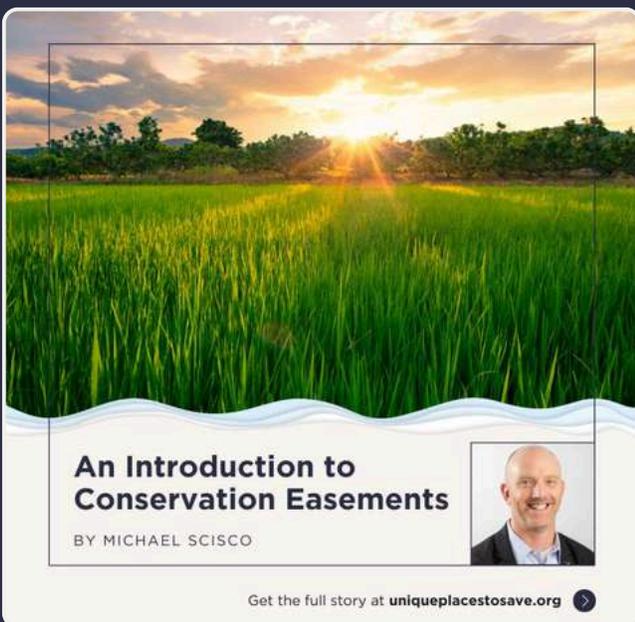
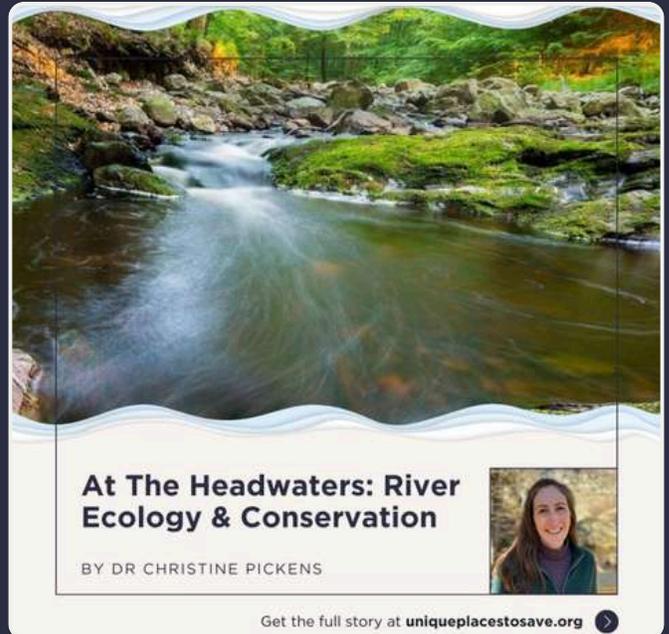
Christine Pickens

Ecology & Restoration in Practice

As an accomplished ecologist, Dr. Pickens' blog posts focus on raising awareness and educating others about the scientific foundations that underscore our restoration and conservation work.

Her blog posts have explored river ecology, wetland conservation, and the impact of human activities on these vital ecosystems. They also illustrate the positive impact that healthy rivers and wetlands have on local communities.

[Read Christine's Posts](#)



Michael Scisco

Practical & Progressive Applications

Michael has been creating informative content on land and resource conservation. His blog posts have focused on topics such as conservation easements, working lands conservation, and mitigation banking.

By explaining conservation strategies and concepts in a clear and concise manner, Michael has empowered landowners to make informed decisions about land protection.

[Read Michael's Posts](#)

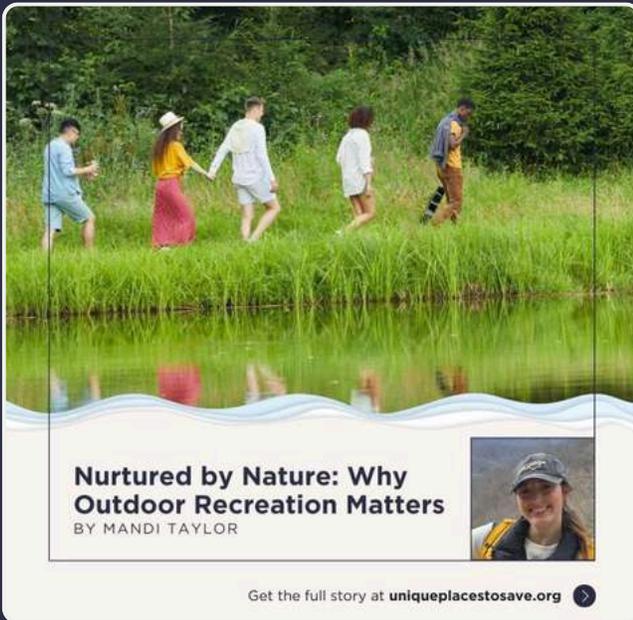
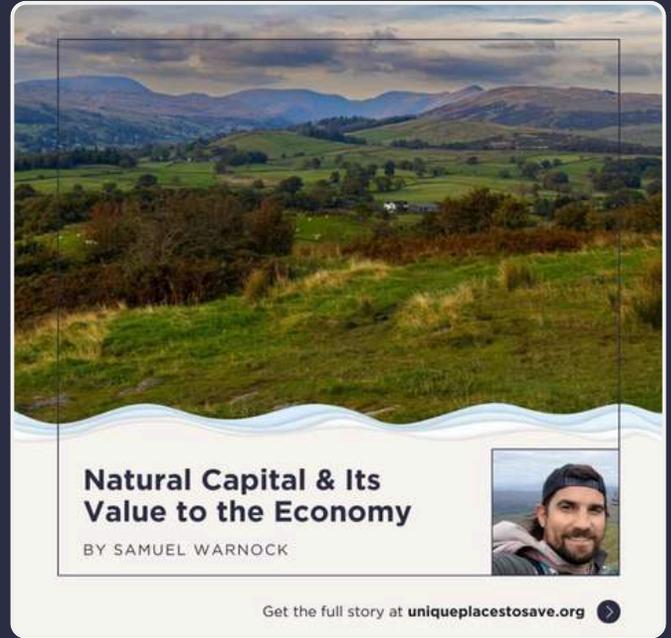
Sam Warnock

Financial & Capital Sustainability

Sam's focus on the economic value of nature has explored topics such as ecosystem services, natural capital, and sustainable real estate development.

By highlighting the financial benefits of conservation, Sam advocates for policies and practices that promote both economic prosperity and environmental sustainability. He emphasizes the role of restoration and conservation in protecting natural capital and the long-term benefits for communities.

[Read Sam's Posts](#)



Mandi Taylor

Shared Benefits & Public Impact

Mandi Taylor, a recent addition to the Unique Places to Save team, is focused on connecting the impact of our work and the daily lives of people in the surrounding communities.

By highlighting common benefits that come from our efforts, Mandi is making conservation more relatable and accessible for everyone. In 2025, she will continue to emphasize the direct impacts of our work on the communities we work within.

[Read Mandi's Posts](#)

These blog posts are available on our website and monthly newsletter and are always posted on our LinkedIn page



Meet The Team



Christine Pickens
Executive Director



Sam Warnock
Aquatic Resources Manager



Mandi Taylor
Conservation Specialist



Michael Scisco
Conservation Consultant



Nathan Phillips
Communication Consultant



Natalie Davis
Former Conservation Specialist

During her time at Unique Places to Save, Natalie gained valuable experience in land conservation, field work, and grant writing, which helped her grow both personally and professionally. She is now headed to NCSU Grad School.

Her time at the organization allowed her to travel, build relationships, and take on challenging responsibilities. She is grateful for the opportunities and support she received with us and we are all excited to see what the future holds for the organization.

Meet The Board



Spencer Tuttle

Senior Director of Corporate Finance, Curia Global



Lee Kane

President, Trinity Design & Build



Clark Harris

Entrepreneur, LoLo



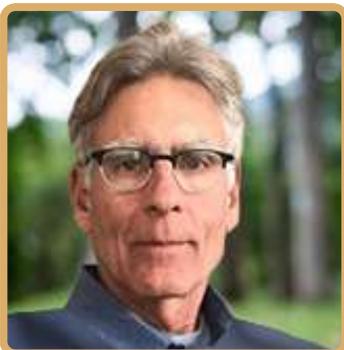
Joanna Baker

Founder, Resonant Realty



Lee Lance

CEO, Ecobot



Mason Williams

Former Board Member

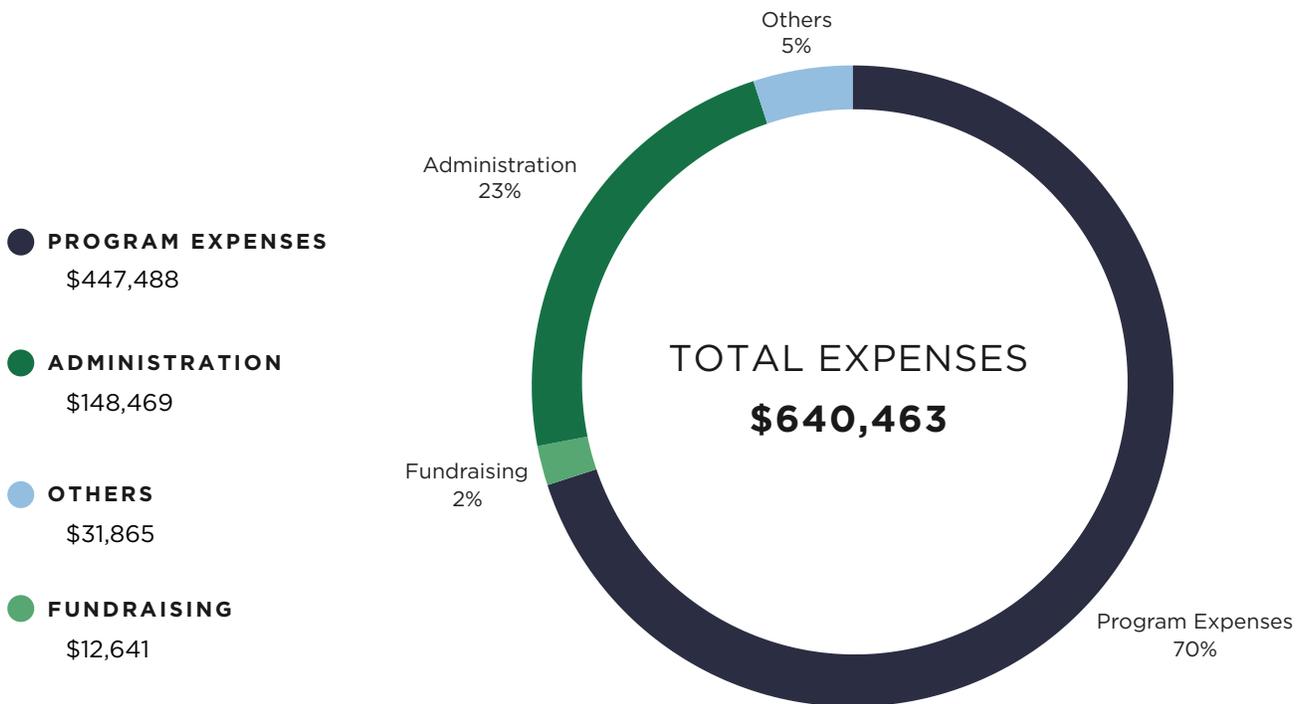
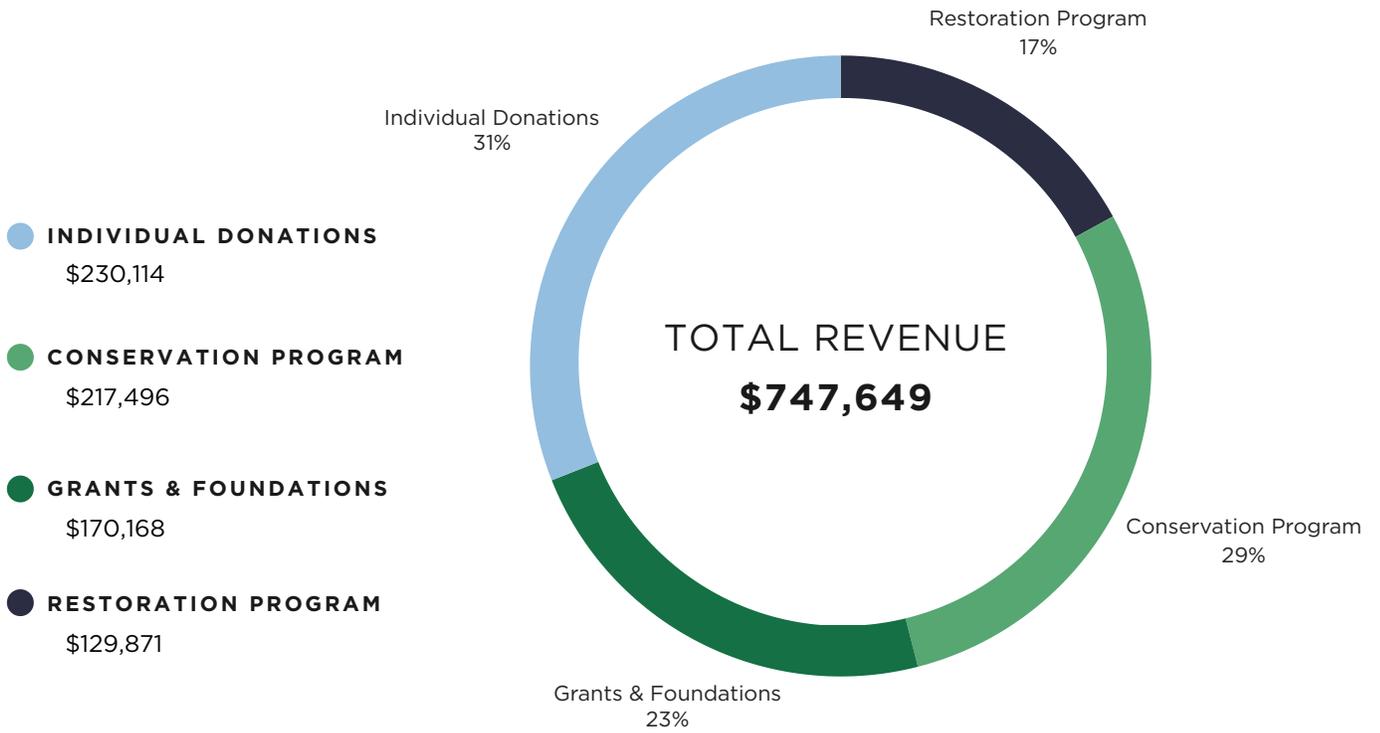
Mason Williams served on the Unique Places to Save Board of Directors from 2017 to 2024. Williams brought a depth of knowledge and expertise to the Board in the areas of real estate, community service, and leadership.

He also connected the organization to other organizations doing work in alignment with our mission. His dedication to protecting land and water goes beyond his service to Unique Places to Save; he is an avid sailor and has even implemented a local coastal restoration project.

Our 2024 Partners



2024 Financial Report



Stewardship Funds

\$3,501,219

Amount of Funds for Stewardship and Legal Defense of Conservation Easements



SUPPORT OUR WORK IN 2025 AND BEYOND

JOIN US FOR OUR BEST YEAR YET

The past year kicked off with a new branding, visioning, and outreach efforts which challenged us to become a stronger, more resilient organization. We are now more capable than ever to navigate future uncertainty and changes in our ecosystem while working to meet our mission and expand our reach,

Join us as we face new challenges and opportunities in the coming years. We need your support to create even greater impact!

Make a Financial
Donation

Follow Us on
LinkedIn

Refer Us to Future
Partners



CONTACT

US TO LEARN MORE



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