

FEBRUARY 2025

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

BLUE HERON HEADWATERS CONSERVANCY



**THE FUTURE
UNFOLDS FROM THE
SEEDS WE PLANT
TODAY**

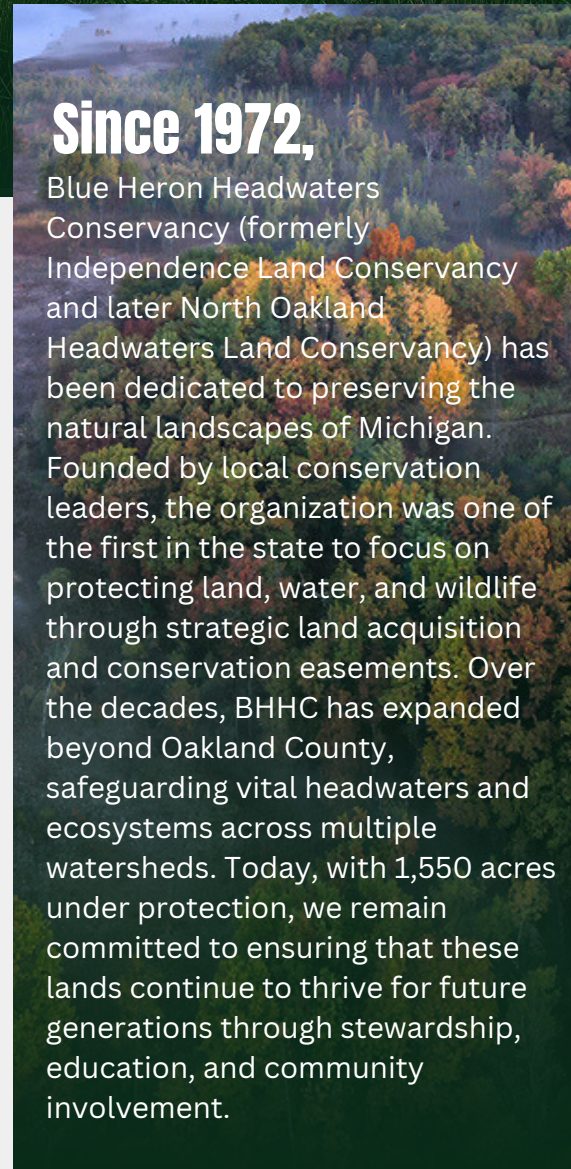
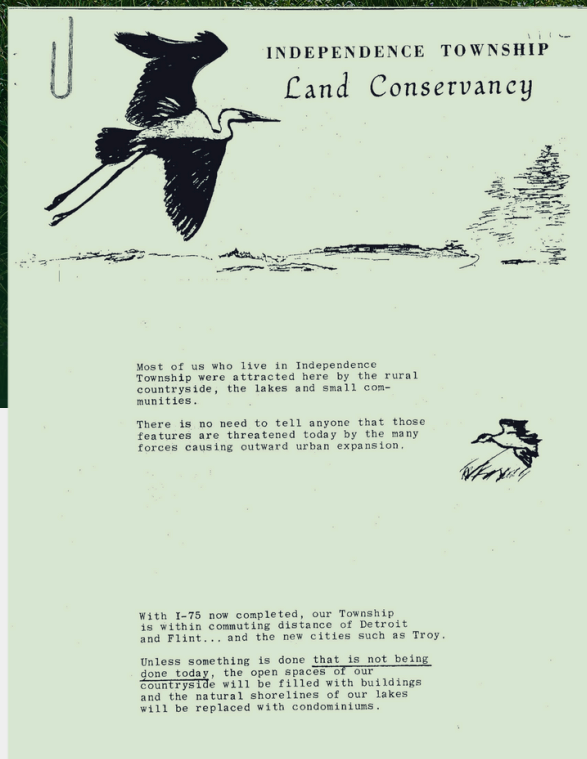
— MOVE FORWARD WITH INTENTION.



blueheronheadwaters.org

Mission & Vision

**HONORING THE PAST,
PROTECTING THE FUTURE.**



OUR MISSION

Our mission is to protect the land, water, and wildlife in the headwaters region of the Clinton, Shiawassee, Huron, and Flint rivers through preservation, stewardship, and education.

OUR VISION

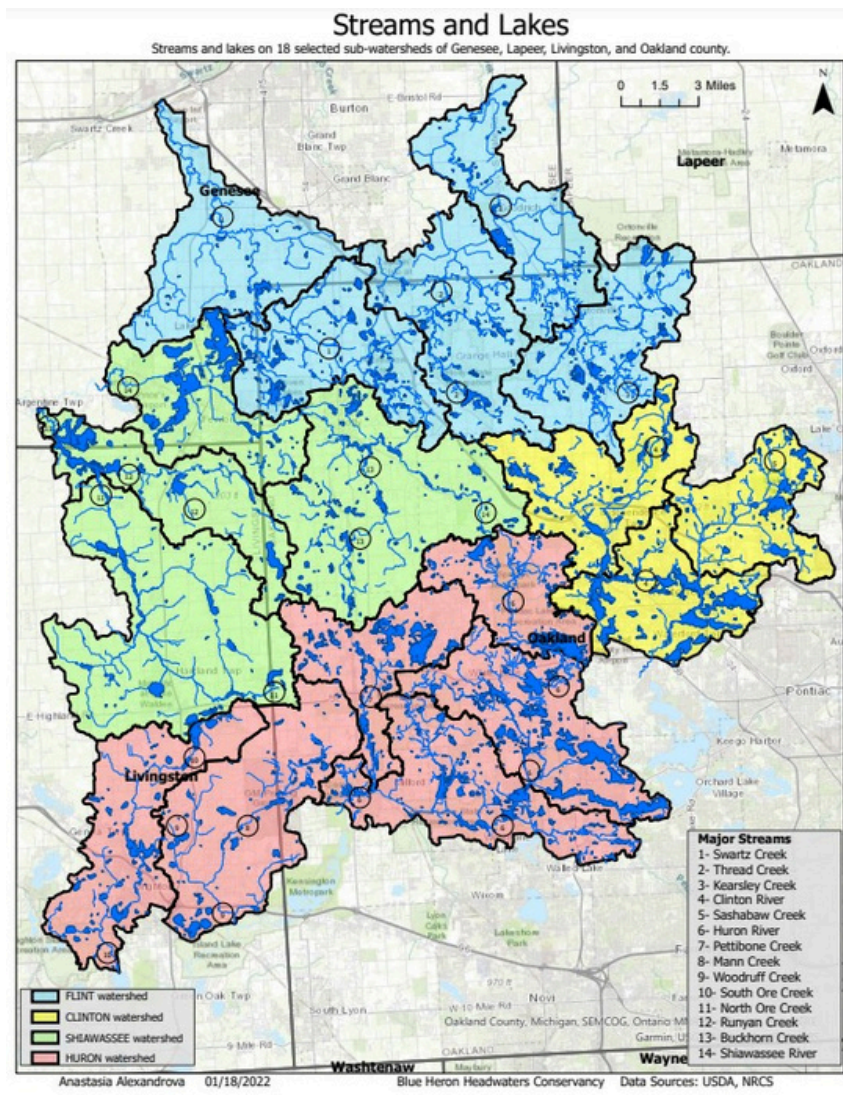
Our vision is to support biodiversity and the quality of life for our communities and the future generations of Oakland County and beyond.

Our Service Area

HEADWATERS AT THE CORE: ENSURING CLEAN WATER AND THRIVING ECOSYSTEMS

BHHC protects the vital lands and waters at the source of Michigan's great rivers—the Clinton, Flint, Huron, and Shiawassee. These headwaters shape the health of entire ecosystems, providing clean water, diverse habitats, and natural spaces for communities to enjoy. By conserving forests, wetlands, and open spaces across our expanding service area, we safeguard wildlife corridors, strengthen climate resilience, and ensure future generations inherit a landscape rich in natural beauty and ecological integrity. Protecting the headwaters means protecting everything downstream, making our work essential for the well-being of both nature and people.

PROTECTING NATURE TODAY, PRESERVING IT FOREVER.





Land Preservation

Land preservation is about more than just protecting open spaces—it's about safeguarding the natural heritage that sustains our communities and wildlife. By preserving land, we ensure that future generations can enjoy healthy ecosystems, diverse wildlife, and clean air and water. At Blue Heron Headwaters Conservancy, we focus on protecting critical habitats, restoring native plants, and maintaining the balance of nature. Through conservation easements and property acquisitions, we are working to protect the land that sustains us all, ensuring its beauty and vitality for generations to come. Just as seeds grow into towering trees, land acquisition and conservation investments take time but yield lasting rewards. In 2024, our efforts laid the foundation for the future, with multiple projects approaching completion and setting the stage for long-term impact.

● **1550 ACRES PROTECTED**

40 CONSERVATION EASEMENTS
1,101.68 ACRES

20 PROPERTIES IN FEE
411.75 ACRES



● **ACQUISITION PIPELINE**

6 PROPERTIES IN FEE
74.5 ACRES

4 CONSERVATION EASEMENTS
100 ACRES



Next Years Goals

- Complete acquisitions of 2 properties in the pipeline. Acquisition is a laborious and long process, often taking years to complete
- Increasing our acquisition fund to speed timelines of acquisitions and take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves
- Increase communication and outreach to community to show the benefits of perpetual land preservation, through conservation easements, donation, and sales.

Potential Acquisition Highlight

The work of the Land Acquisition Committee and other BHHC staff/board resulted in significant progress on acquisition of a conservation easement on ~ 62 acres in Rose Township adjacent to an existing easement on Camp Wathena. The conservation easement language was finalized and BHHC awaits final approval of this agreement from voting members of the ownership group. This agreement will hopefully receive Board approval in the first half of 2025.



Land conservation is vital to preserving our community's natural beauty and resources. By protecting our local ecosystems, we ensure a healthier future for everyone. Working together—through support, advocacy, and action—we can make a lasting impact. Many people, united in purpose, have the power to create big change and safeguard our environment for generations to come.



Stewardship & Education



Stewardship

Invasive species are a constant threat in our service area. Stewardship volunteers and staff removed invasives across various properties, spending multiple workdays with volunteers removing garlic mustard from Voorheis-Beardsley and Bridge Valley, Japanese barberry from Hall Hill and the Swartz preserve, purple loosestrife from the Springfield Preserve and Eaton Wet Meadow, teasel from Voorheis-Beardsley, buckthorn from Sashabaw Creek, and phragmites from Bridge Valley and others.



Your Dedication

We hosted 22 volunteer workdays, with community members participating in planting events, invasive species removal, and trash cleanups. These efforts not only improved the land but also fostered a deeper connection between the local community and the natural spaces around them.

Stewarding the Land

Caring for 60 properties spanning 1,550 acres is a year-round commitment. Conservation isn't just about owning land—it requires ongoing stewardship through every season. In spring, we restore habitats, remove invasives, and plant natives to support biodiversity. Summer is for monitoring, trail maintenance, and community engagement. Fall brings inspections, refining maintenance plans, and seed collection for future growth. Even in winter, our work continues with planning, organizing volunteers, and preparing for the seasons ahead. Protecting these lands means adapting to nature's rhythms, ensuring each acre remains a thriving habitat for generations to come.

● Growing Awareness

Families learn about the benefits of planting native and supporting conservation efforts, and make their own native milkweed seed balls to take home at BHC's table and display at the Earth Day Fair & Climate Rally, plus six other community events throughout the year.



● Connecting with Nature: Seasonal Walks on BHC Preserves

Groups of hikers were led through spring and fall nature walks on BHC's public preserves and trails, observing and discussing plants, wildlife, natural features of the land, and signs of the seasons.



Educational Outreach

Creating lasting connections between people and the environment.

Close to 300 students in the Clarkston School District completed Academic Service Learning (ASL) projects with BHC in April, May and June.



17%
increase
in Nature News
subscribers

Our social media platforms and online newsletter provides conservation updates, opportunities to donate and volunteer, and stunning nature photography to followers.



Together, we cultivate a legacy of conservation

“I want to make a positive difference in our local environment, and I want to volunteer for an organization that has a proven track record of positive results. I enjoy working with the great staff and fellow volunteers. Whether we’re planting seeds or waist deep in mud I enjoy every single minute!”

- Jim Carlton

SPOTLIGHT: VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

The Tom Bullen Award was created by Blue Heron Headwaters Conservancy in 1996 to recognize a volunteer who has gone above and beyond to drive our mission forward, and to celebrate the important conservation work accomplished by volunteers. The award was named after Tom Bullen, a past volunteer who started with the conservancy at its inception in 1972. Tom was a lawyer and contributed legal advice and leadership for the conservancy’s earliest land acquisitions in the 70s and 80s. He participated in town meetings to advocate for open space in Clarkston. He dedicated his time and expertise to developing the conservancy in its early stages. We continue to show gratitude and honor the past, present, and future of volunteerism with this award.

It is an honor to present the 2025 Tom Bullen Award to Jim Carlton.

Jim contributes to a wide range of conservation activities and has accomplished many important projects as a Blue Heron volunteer. He is often found outside working on various stewardship projects, such as locating, recording, and replacing boundary markers; chainsawing branches and logs and clearing brush; removing invasive



plants and planting native species; installing and updating signage; and extensive surveying and map making of protected properties.

Jim’s skillfulness doesn’t stop there—He can also be found inside assisting with office projects and finding creative solutions for office needs. Jim was present



practically every step of the way during Blue Heron’s move to a new office suite in 2023. He helped the staff move heavy equipment, assemble new furniture, and build shelving for storage. He was an integral part of the successful move.

Jim has played a significant role in eradicating invasive plant species and promoting native plant species. He has created hundreds of native seed balls and helps disperse them on our preserves. He keeps things running smoothly at the spring and fall plant sales, where he actively engages with attendees and is ready to take on any and every task. He has helped the conservancy reach milestones with education and outreach efforts by leading groups of hikers on nature walks and serving as a Blue Heron ambassador at bustling community events.

Jim brings an invaluable energy, work ethic, skill set, and sense of humor to the team. Blue Heron is lucky to have volunteers like him. **Thank you Jim, and congratulations!**

- **The Tom Bullen Award, established in 1996, celebrates outstanding volunteer contributions to conservation.**



- **A Valued Team Member: With his energy, skills, and humor, Jim embodies the spirit of volunteerism –congratulations, and thank you!**



BLUE HERON'S

Community & Volunteers

➔ **4173**
the number of volunteer
hours in 2024

VOLUNTEERS

The dedication of our volunteers helps turn conservation goals into reality, one project at a time. Their 4173 volunteer hours—whether restoring habitats, monitoring preserves, or supporting outreach events—ensure that our lands remain healthy, protected, and accessible for future generations. Together, we create a lasting impact, fostering a community that cares for nature and safeguards its future.

COMMUNITY

“We save nature & You can too” is our consistent message. Through workshops, kids' programs, internships and presentations, we enable people of all ages to join the movement. We partner with local libraries, the park district, other non-profits and Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops.



BHHC guided scouts in conservation projects, including turtle nest protection

9 ADULT PROGRAMS

7 COMMUNITY OUTREACH VISITS

6 ASL PROJECTS

4 KIDS PROGRAMS

2 NATURE WALKS

2 NATIVE PLANT SALES



Katelyn Vallier helps a customer at BHHC's fall native plant sale, offering 100+ native species.



Partners

Collaborating for a Greener Future



Working Together for Wild Spaces

BHHC's partnership with area park systems has been instrumental in expanding conservation efforts and community engagement. Through collaborative stewardship days, we've worked together to remove invasive species, restore native habitats, and maintain trails on protected lands. Their support has also helped us offer educational programs, guiding residents in understanding the importance of land conservation and ecological restoration. By joining forces, we're ensuring that natural spaces remain vibrant and accessible for both wildlife and future generations.



Eagle Project

This summer, Cohl Beaudoin of Troop #192 enhanced BHHC's Butterfly Preserve by creating natural reptile habitats. His project provides safe spaces for native snakes, turtles, and other herps, supporting their vital role in the ecosystem.

Through carefully placed rock piles, brush shelters, and sunning areas, Cohl's project provides much-needed refuge for native reptiles, helping them thrive in their natural environment. These habitats offer protection from predators, safe nesting areas, and ideal conditions for basking, which is essential for regulating body temperature. His work not only benefits local wildlife but also encourages visitors to appreciate and understand the critical role these species play in maintaining a balanced ecosystem.

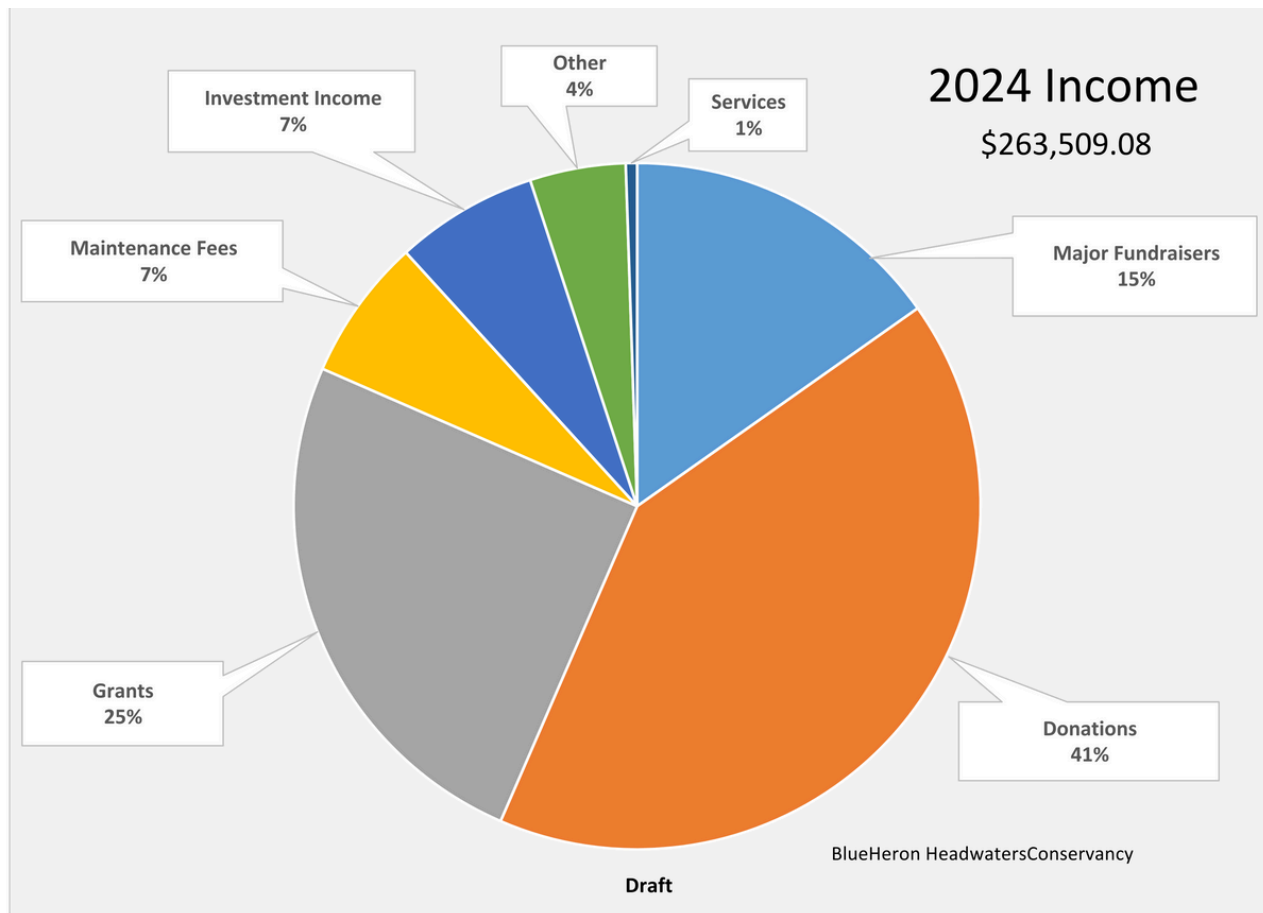
Partnerships That Protect

Boy Scout Troop 192
Campbell-Richmond Post 63 of the American Legion
City of the Village of Clarkston
Clarkston Farm & Garden Club
Clarkston High School
Clarkston Independence District Library
Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan
Growing Pontiac
Headwaters Trails
Holly Township
Independence Elementary
Independence Township Parks, Rec & Seniors
Land Trust Alliance, Midwest Section
Michiganense Natives
Milford Garden Club
Monarch Watch
MSU Conservation Stewards
National Wild Turkey Federation
Oakland Bird Alliance
Oakland Conservation District
Oakland County Planning & Economic Development
Oakland County CISMA
Road Commission of Oakland County
Stellantis
Shiawassee River Water Trail Coalition
Springfield Twp Parks & Rec
Sierra Club, Southeast Michigan Group
The Community Impact Team
The Gateway
US Fish and Wildlife Service
Village of Ortonville
WildType Nursery

Financial Report

BLUE HERON HEADWATERS CONSERVANCY

Sustaining our mission requires growth, financial health, and transparency. As we expand our conservation efforts, we remain committed to responsible stewardship of both land and resources. Every dollar entrusted to us is used with care, ensuring long-term impact and trust within our community. Together, we build a stronger, more resilient future for nature.

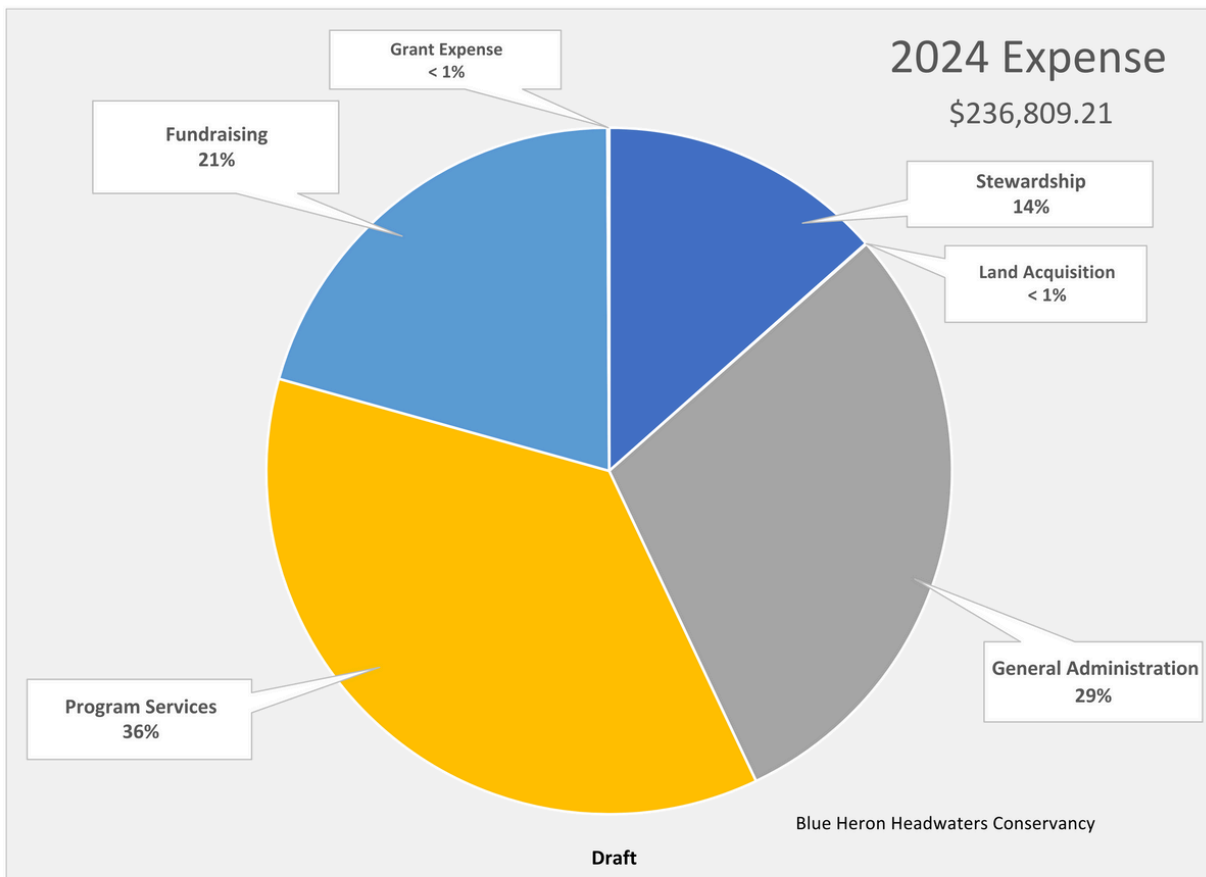


These financial diagrams do not include in-kind donations, particularly 4173 volunteer hours valued at \$139,753.77 (Current national value of each volunteer hour is \$33.49)

Investing in Nature

BLUE HERON HEADWATERS CONSERVANCY

Investing in the future of Blue Heron Headwaters Conservancy means safeguarding the lands and waters that define our region for generations to come. Every acre we protect, every stream we restore, and every partnership we foster strengthens the resilience of our natural landscapes. This past year, your support has helped us maintain our current properties, build towards more acquisitions, and create an organizational foundation for our future growth. Looking ahead, we are deepening our commitment to land protection, stewardship, and community engagement. Looking towards the future we will expand our team’s capacity, strengthen partnerships with local landowners and conservation allies allowing us to accelerate our impact in the coming years. None of this is possible without the generosity of our dedicated supporters—who recognize that the protection of natural lands is an investment in clean water, thriving wildlife, and the well-being of future generations.





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PROTECTING NATURE, TOGETHER THANK YOU FOR BEING A PART OF OUR MISSION!

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