

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023



**BELWIN**



# DEAR FRIENDS

Minnesota just had the warmest winter on record. We all noticed it – lamenting the lack of snow for skiing, enjoying a hike on an unseasonably warm day... and also worrying about how climate change is affecting our trees, prairies, and wildlife.

We've got some enormous environmental problems. At times they seem insurmountable, and perhaps some of them are. But some are moveable. The work you make possible at Belwin creates critical habitat for wildlife. It improves the quality of our streams and rivers. It also reaches beyond our borders, creating deep connections to nature that lead to action in your own backyards and communities.

We don't know yet how warm winters will affect our natural areas. What we do know is that the work we are doing at Belwin will make habitats more resilient. We also know that we need our friends, parents, kids, and whole community engaged and invested in caring for our natural world. Thanks to our supporters, this year we've deepened partnerships, increased access, and enhanced habitat. Thank you for making it all possible.



With gratitude,

*Katie Bloome*

Executive Director





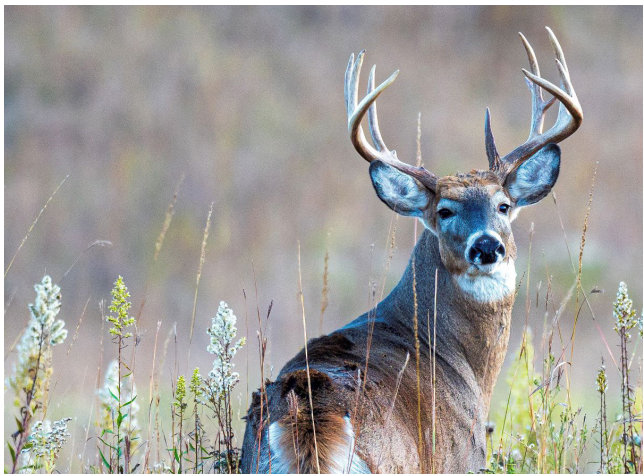
# MISSION

**Inspiring connection and engagement with the natural world.** At Belwin, we spark passion for wild places. Through immersive community programs, partnerships, and environmental education, we inspire and engage people in the care of natural areas. Through land protection and habitat restoration, we revive threatened ecosystems so wildlife can thrive for generations to come.



## The Land We Are On

The land on which Belwin Conservancy exists is the ancestral home of the Wahpekute Dakota people, original stewards of this region. We recognize that despite government efforts to exterminate and diminish the Dakota, their connection to this land and water and their history and lifeways perseveres today. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging.



*Bottom photo: Tom Hansen*



# Restoring Healthy Habitat.

At Belwin, we want to ensure that our wild spaces are protected, nurtured, and sustained for future generations.

That's why, as Belwin protects land, it also works to restore it back to healthy ecosystems. 2023 saw the completion of a three-year restoration of almost fifty hilly acres of oak savanna, prairie, and woodlands just north of downtown Afton. By planting native species and removing invasives, like buckthorn and honeysuckle, we transitioned this area into a safe haven so species of special concern, such as the hooded warbler, can have a place to nest. In fact, now that it's been restored, we've been spotting plants seen in few other places at Belwin, such as hepatica, anemone, and even rattlesnake plantain!



## 2023 BY THE NUMBERS

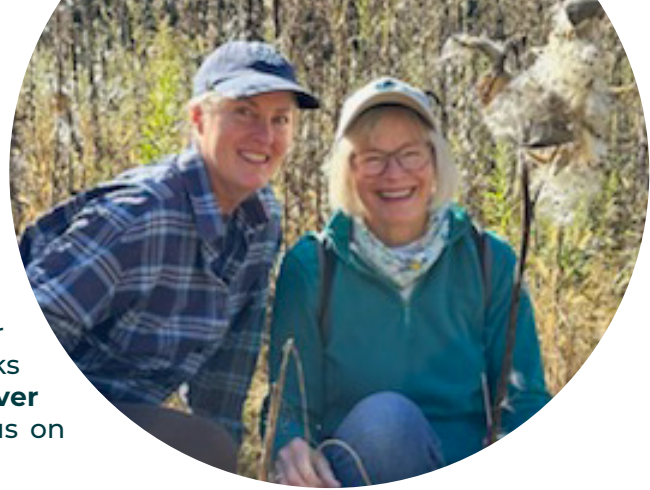
**1,200 native trees**, such as red-osier dogwood and sandbar willow, planted across Belwin

**40 acres of woody invasives**, such as buckthorn and black locust, removed

**4,485 pounds** gained by the 2023 bison herd on a steady diet of Belwin big bluestem, Indian grass, and switchgrass

## THANKS TO OUR TEAM

We couldn't nurture connections to nature without our growing staff and volunteer corps. In 2023, three new year-round staff joined Belwin (welcome Amanda, Gina, and Alissa!) while six seasonal land technicians joined us for the busy summer and fall months. And big thanks to our amazing volunteer force for putting in **over 1,900 collective hours** in 2023 (wow!) to help us on the land and at events.

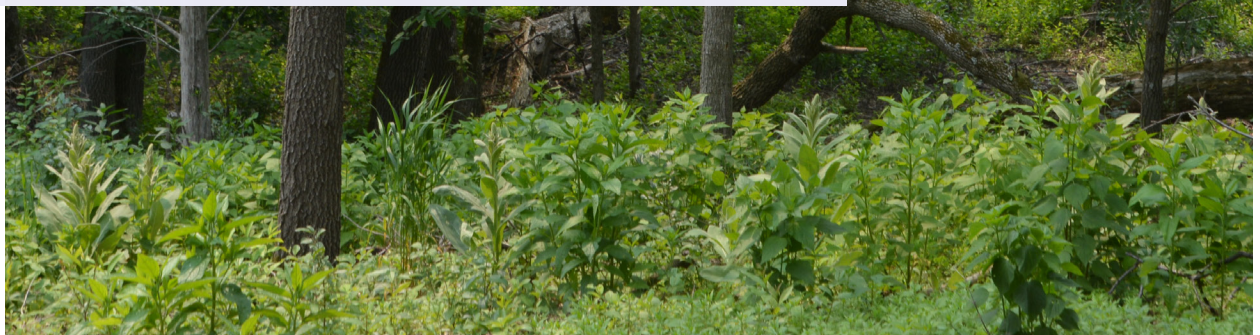
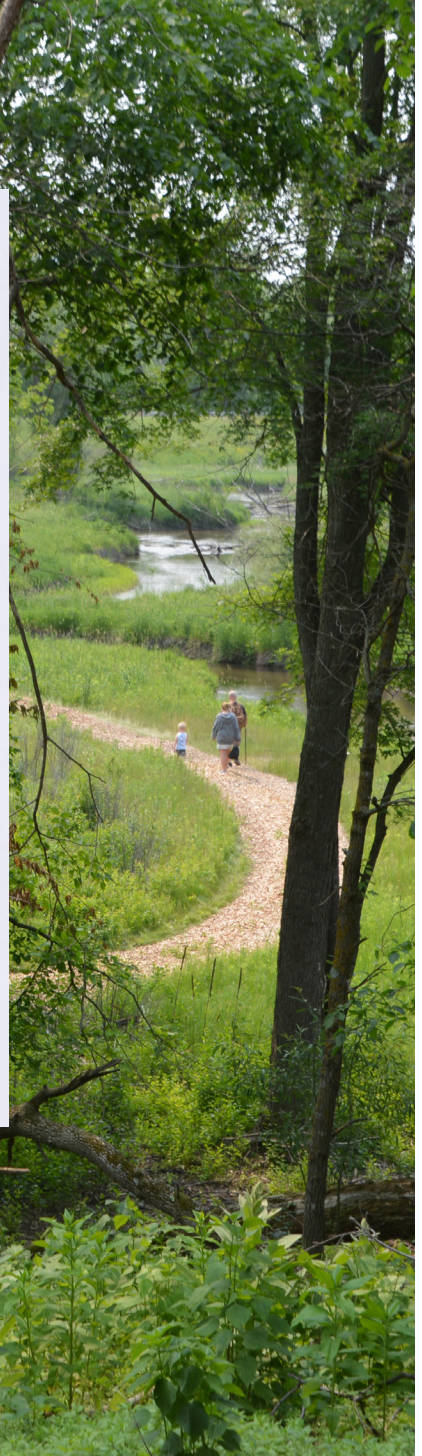


## Opening more land to the public.

At Belwin, we value native habitats for their ecological impact and the power they have to connect us to this place and each other.

In partnership with Washington County and the City of Afton, Belwin opened a new hiking area to the community in 2023. Since its grand opening in June, Oxbow Trails has given over 2,000 visitors the opportunity to see an ongoing restoration site up close. With native plants returning, Oxbow Trails offers an experience that differs from other Belwin sites. Rather than the rolling prairie found at Stagecoach Prairie, these trails offer a path through floodplain forests, ridged overlooks, and alongside Valley Creek — all while being just a few minutes away from downtown Afton.

With this newest hiking area, Belwin now has nearly 11 miles of free and open hiking trails available to explore.



# Thriving Partnerships.

For over fifty years, Belwin has worked closely with partner organizations, knowing that we can do more together than we could ever do alone. Our oldest and newest partnerships were fabulous examples of that in 2023.

Each year over 10,000 students from Saint Paul visit Belwin for outdoor learning, including 1,500 students with special needs. This year, the teachers adapted to new curriculum standards that encourage students to focus more on observing real-life phenomena. Belwin Outdoor Science has always prioritized hands-on education, and these new statewide standards recognize the value of the kind of learning taking place at Belwin.

2023 also saw the blossoming of our newest partnership with the Minnesota African American Heritage Museum and Gallery (MAAHMG), who selected Whitney Terrill and Tomas Alvarez as Belwin's 2023 artists in residence. "We are seeking to change the narrative that Black people 'don't do the outdoors,'" states Tina Burnside, co-founder and curator of MAAHMG. "We believe nature belongs to everyone."



Image by Community Blueprint

## EXPANDING EVENTS

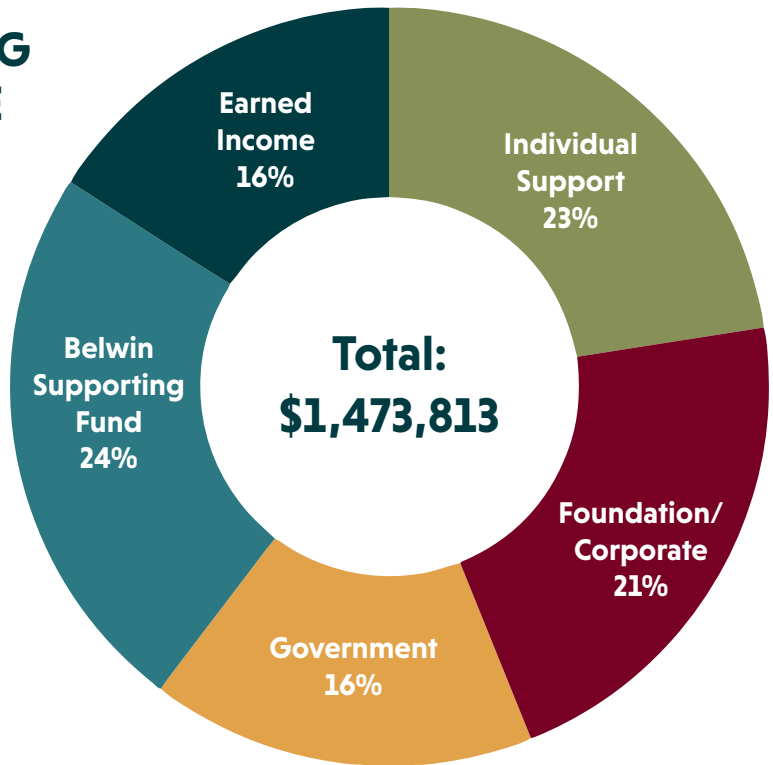
If you attended a Belwin event in 2023, you were in good company. Record audiences experienced Music in the Trees (right), and despite a snowless December, hundreds ushered in the return of the light at the Solstice Bonfire. Partners brought new faces to Belwin too, including hikes for young families through Stillwater Area Public Schools and forest management workshops with Washington Conservation District. All told, over 3,200 people attended Belwin for events in 2023. That's a lot of connections to nature!

Image by Nancy Klingler

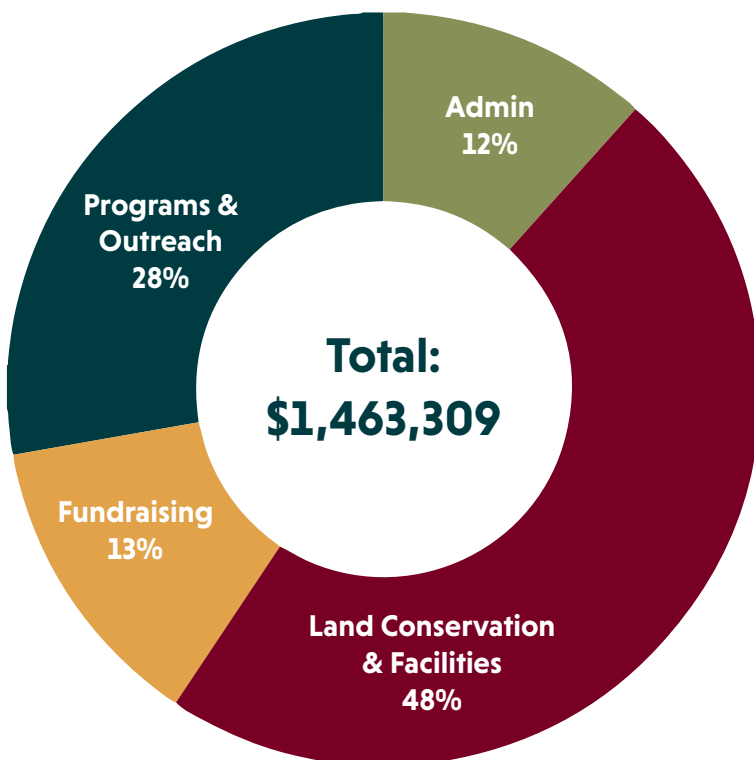


# 2023 FINANCIALS

## OPERATING REVENUE



## OPERATING EXPENSES



*Numbers are unaudited.  
Complete audited financials  
will be available later this year  
at [belwin.org/about/reports](http://belwin.org/about/reports)*



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John Satorius





# Individual Support

Belwin Conservancy recognizes the following donors who made gifts in 2023. These gifts support operations, programs, special fund-a-need campaigns, and the stewardship of Belwin's protected lands. You have our heartfelt thanks. *We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of this list. Please contact Angie Eckel at 651-435-0687 with concerns.*

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**Donors made Powder Patrol a success**

Thanks to the many donors who contributed to our Powder Patrol campaign in 2023, we were able to purchase a winter trail grooming system. Though the weather didn't leave room for much grooming this winter, we're looking forward to fun in the snow next year!

# Corporations, Foundations & Organizations

## **\$100,000+**

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Fred C. & Katherine B. Andersen Foundation  
Outdoor Heritage Fund\*  
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Steve Smillie Edina Realty  
Ted & Lorraine Glasrud Family Foundation

## **\$5,000 to \$9,999**

Anonymous  
Hubbard Broadcasting Foundation  
James Ford Bell Foundation

## **\$1,000 to \$4,999**

Art & Martha Kaemmer Fund of HRK  
Foundation  
River Market Community Co-op  
St. Croix Valley Foundation  
The Fredrikson & Byron Foundation

## **Up to \$999**

Amazon Smile  
Bell Bank Mortgage  
Brave North Technology  
Bryan Rock Products, Inc.  
Federated Garden Clubs of Minnesota  
GlobalFoundries  
Mantyla Well Drilling, Inc  
Mightycause Corp  
Minnesota Hunting Spaniel Association  
Out Back Nursery and Landscaping  
PTC Foundation  
Royal Credit Union  
St. Croix Valley Bird Club

## **Employee Matching Gifts**

3M Foundation  
Abbott Laboratories  
Fluor  
Securian Financial Foundation  
Spotify  
Toro Giving Program  
Wells Fargo

## **In-Kind**

Cub Foods  
Ideal Printers  
Lake Monster Brewing  
Morsels  
NorthStar Bison  
Pioneer Press

\* multi-year



## Gifts were made in memory of the following individuals in 2023:

Bill Achterling  
Jerry Colburn  
Sue Reed Crouse  
Torry Davidson  
Jean Dirkx  
Carol Ellingson  
Bruce Engelbart  
Annette Evans  
Rodd Frye  
Blackie & Amy Hancock  
Lucy Hartwell  
Barbara Heitzeg  
Ilse Holderried  
Lois Holmes  
Mike Hopkins  
Kathryn D. Johnson  
Sherwood Johnston  
Ken Knutsen

Hope Lea  
Michael Lenzmeier  
Martin Lewis  
Randall "Bed" Nelson  
John Palmen  
Kurt Peters  
Francis Rheinberger  
Carl Rudnitski  
Liam Schroeder  
William Richmond Skeath  
Christopher Stamboldjiev  
Martin Stern  
Paul Stevenson  
Al Strom  
Julie Hobbs Thiel  
Lew Tousignant  
Don Turner

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Large-scale restoration projects in 2023 were made possible by funding from the Outdoor Heritage Fund to restore, protect, and enhance Minnesota's wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife.

Land protection in 2023 was made possible in part by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and Washington County Land and Water Legacy Program.

Funding for the Anishinabe Academy partnership was provided by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR).

Arts, Culture and Ecology programming at Belwin was made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

