



BELWIN

CAMPAIGN AND
ANNUAL REPORT
2025



BELWIN

MISSION:

Inspire 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.

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Dear Friends,

Belwin has been on a years-long journey to make our land more accessible. That means a lot of different things to us, but at the heart, it's making sure all people can experience the benefits of nature, especially those who have been marginalized or excluded from conservation spaces.



2025 was a year of partnership building and investment in infrastructure that supports deeper connections to nature. Looking back, we've done a lot! Most notably, we now have ample indoor space so more students and community members can explore Belwin's habitats. We thought through the entire experience of a student with special needs coming to Belwin – from unloading the bus to sampling macroinvertebrates in the pond – and built a new building and trails to remove barriers at each step. In addition, we expanded our education programs to a new school district and several other new partners.

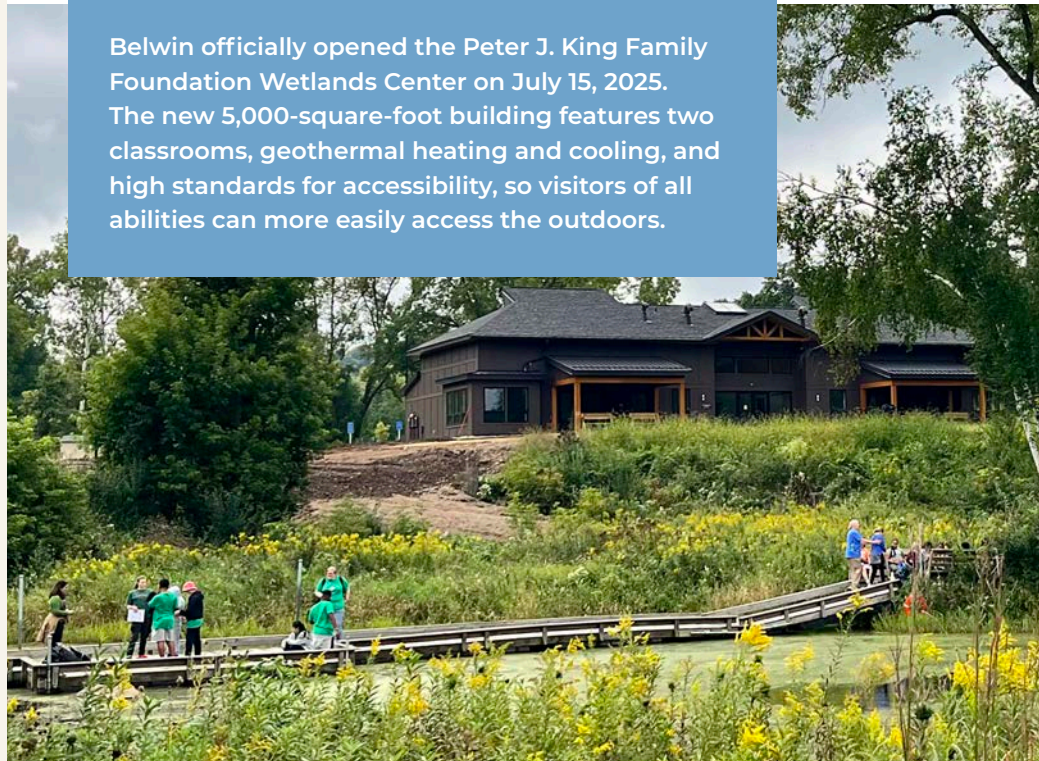
The momentum we've built is still going. While some projects funded by our Inspiring Through Nature Campaign are complete, others are just getting started. I can't wait for you to see the upcoming improvements. Thank you to all who have made this work possible.

With gratitude,

Katie Bloome, Executive Director

WETLANDS CENTER

Belwin officially opened the Peter J. King Family Foundation Wetlands Center on July 15, 2025. The new 5,000-square-foot building features two classrooms, geothermal heating and cooling, and high standards for accessibility, so visitors of all abilities can more easily access the outdoors.





Accelerated Habitat Restoration

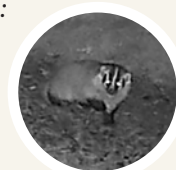
At the end of 2025, trail cameras captured snaps of a flat, furry animal moving through Belwin. Land staff were thrilled to confirm a resident badger. “I’ve been waiting to see a badger at Belwin since I started here in 2021,” says Cooper Crose, Belwin’s Natural Resources Director. “Badgers need large, healthy home ranges to survive. Seeing one here indicates that our restoration efforts are having an impact.”

Thanks to more than 50 years of conservation, Belwin’s 1,600 acres of protected land provide the uninterrupted, high-quality habitat many species need to survive. As human activity continues to shrink and fragment natural landscapes, places like Belwin are critical refuges for wildlife.

Through the Inspiring Through Nature campaign, **Belwin has protected an additional 135 acres since 2021 and accelerated targeted restoration efforts on 100 acres** of prairie, forest, and oak savanna, further strengthening habitat connectivity. By focusing on areas of importance to local wildlife, like Valley Creek, and expanding upon already restored parcels, we can mitigate habitat fragmentation – and create conditions where wildlife continue to thrive.

Large, uninterrupted habitat is essential for many creatures to thrive and reproduce. Thanks to the healthy land and water and plentiful native vegetation here, many animals call Belwin home, including:

- Badger
- Eastern meadowlark
- Henslow’s sparrow
- Western fox snake
- Blanding’s turtle
- Fisher



A badger caught on a Belwin trail camera in late 2025.

Better Facilities, More Connections

Public-use facilities like the renovated Savanna Center and the Peter J. King Family Foundation Wetlands Center are opening doors for partners and their communities, while improved accessibility features like ADA restrooms and paved trails help people of all abilities connect with nature:

Since 2021, **American Indian Family Center** (AIFC) has had a dedicated site at Belwin where community members of all ages gather for cultural events and traditional healing ceremonies. In 2025, improved parking and access to indoor spaces—including restrooms—at the new Wetlands Center have made gathering easier. “Our youth know our ceremonies are constant, and there for them,” says Pam Gokey, Manager of Youth Services at American Indian Family Center. “Participation has doubled since last year. Not only the ceremonies, but sitting on the land is healing for our people.”

Children with special needs from the **Saint Paul Public Schools special education program** have been coming to Belwin since the 1980’s. Now, for the first time, they are arriving at a building designed with their needs in mind. “Logistically, it’s so great,” said Andrea West, a deaf/hard of hearing teacher at Harding High School. “We have tube feeding, toileting, wheelchairs...we’ve never had a big space like this. It’s a dream come true.”

FamilyMeans of Stillwater partners with Belwin on naturalist-led programming for people with early onset dementia and their caregivers. The events make use of new accessible indoor and outdoor spaces at Belwin, and engage participants in simple, sensory actions like touching leaves or smelling flowers, which can spark memories and bring calm. One caregiver shared of her partner, “his short-term memory often fails him, but because his love of nature has been “forever,” these Belwin experiences link to family memories of canoeing, hiking, and nature walks.”

A New District-Wide Partnership

On a recent bus ride to Belwin, a few Lily Lake Elementary students saw something surprising. “What’s that?” one child asked, looking out the window. Eyes widened and noses pressed to the glass as a coyote trotted across a nearby field. Turning into the Education Site, the bus filled with chatter: “where are we?” and “look at that!” The excitement in the air signaled something beyond the familiar, even though most of the visitors were only minutes from home.

That sense of curiosity and discovery is on display every day at Belwin, and now even more children are living it, thanks to a partnership launched in September 2025 between Belwin and Stillwater Area Public Schools (SAPS).

Belwin and SAPS have long sought to partner on environmental education for the students of the district, but were held back by Belwin’s limited classroom space. A new educational facility is now making a broader partnership possible. This school year, an estimated total of 2,300 elementary students from SAPS—all second through fifth graders – will participate in standards-aligned science learning through this partnership.



“There is a palpable joy in their discovery, and I appreciate being part of a program that provides them with a safe outdoor space to be able to do that.”

Max Borge
Belwin Environmental Education Manager



Photo by American Indian Family Center



Photo by Saint Paul Public Schools



Photo by Limitless Cycling

INSPIRING THROUGH nature

A Campaign for Belwin

EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE
\$3,800,000

CONSERVATION
\$2,615,588

PUBLIC ACCESS
\$835,000

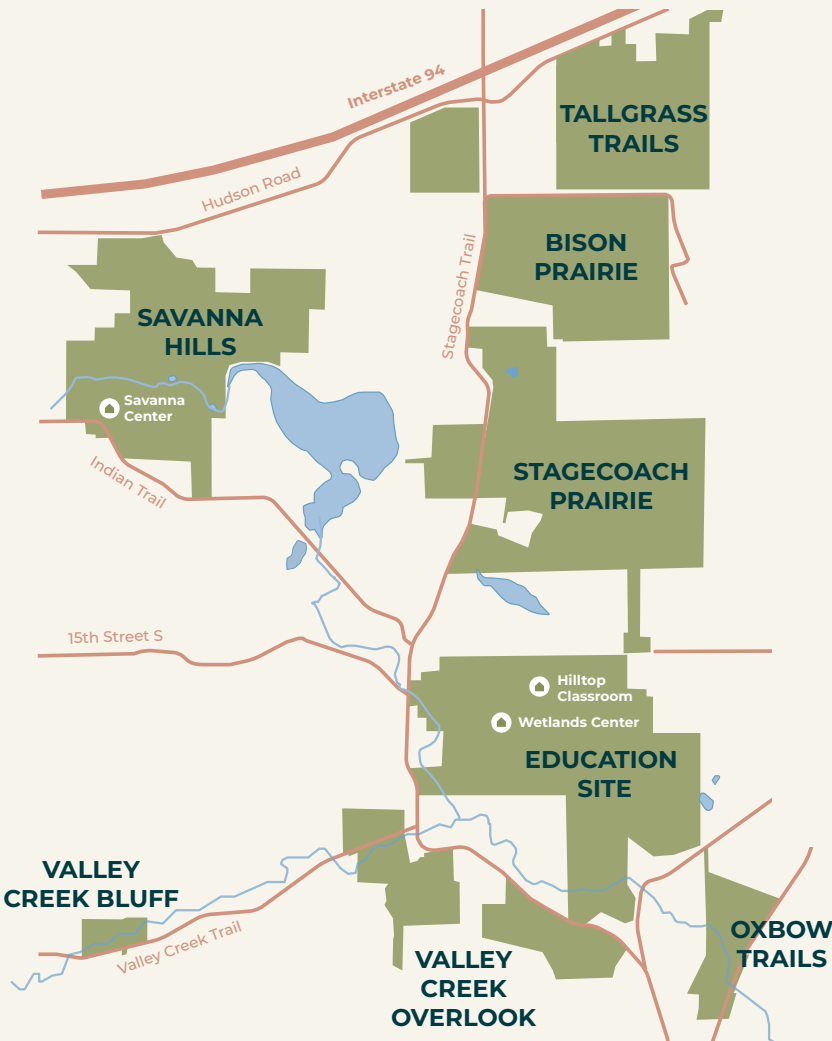
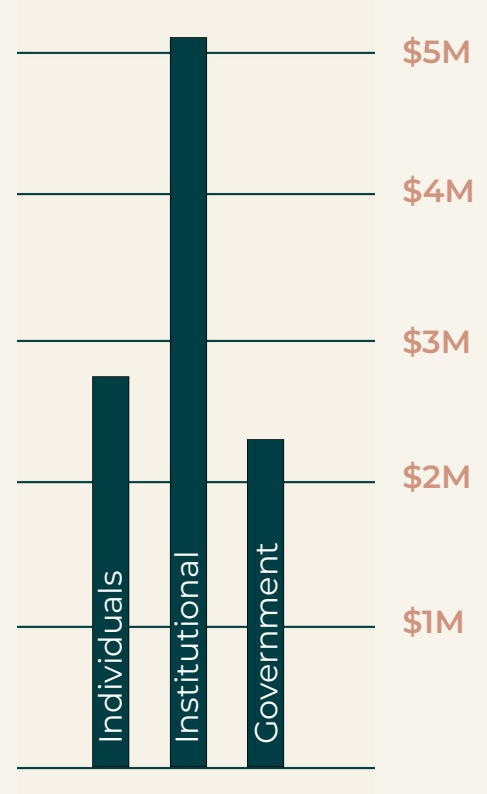
ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY
\$2,990,000



based on actual costs and construction estimates

FUNDING SOURCES

a full list of funders is available at belwin.org/campaign



COMPLETE

- Opened new Peter J. King Family Foundation Wetlands Center
- Phase 1 renovations to Savanna Center
- Protected 135 additional acres at Valley Creek Bluff and Oxbow Trails
- Opened Oxbow Trails to the public
- Grew Belwin's endowment, ensuring future org stability

IN PROGRESS

- Restoration on 100 acres at Valley Creek Bluff, Oxbow Trails, and Education Site

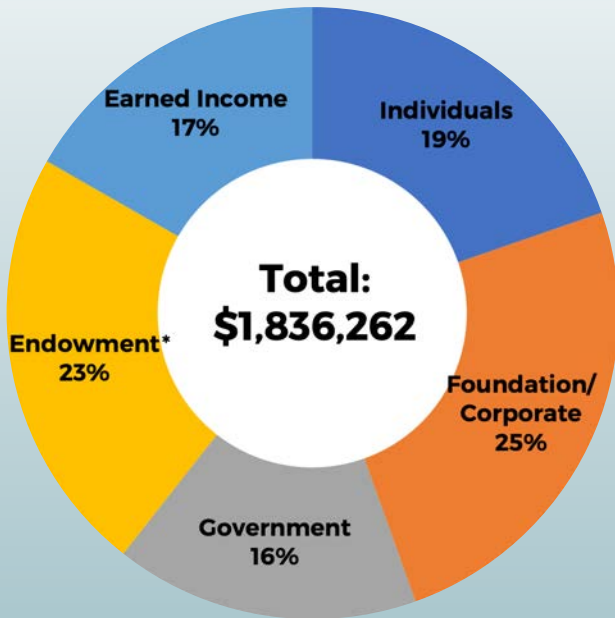
PLANNED FOR 2026/27

- New kiosks, monuments, and wayfinding signs across all entrances
- New entrance and parking configuration at Savanna Center
- Paved public trails at Tallgrass Trails

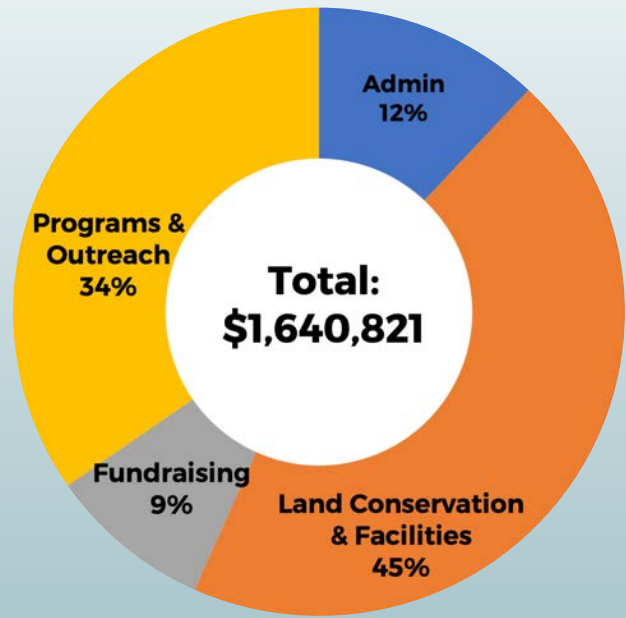


Annual 2025 Financials

OPERATING REVENUE



OPERATING EXPENSES



**Includes Belwin formal Endowment and Belwin Supporting Fund.*

These numbers are unaudited. Complete audited financials will be available later this year at belwin.org/about/reports

These figures do not include capital campaign financials. See facing page for campaign details.

Celebrating our donors and funders

Belwin Conservancy is grateful for all the donors and institutions who made gifts and grants in 2025. These funds supported our operations, programs, capital campaign, and the stewardship and protection of native habitat. You have our heartfelt thanks.

Funding for conservation and partnerships at Belwin was provided by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). Additionally, restoration projects in 2025 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.





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We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of these lists. Please contact Angie Eckel at 651-435-0687 with concerns.