



# NORTH CASCADES INSTITUTE



## 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



# 2024

### DEAR FRIENDS, PARTNERS, AND SUPPORTERS

As we reflect on the past year, I'm filled with gratitude for the community that makes our work possible. In 2024, North Cascades Institute experienced a year of resilience, growth, and renewed momentum—our first full, uninterrupted year of programming since 2019. Thanks to the dedication of our supporters, staff, and partners, we connected thousands of youth, families, and adults to the natural world, deepening their sense of stewardship and belonging in the North Cascades and beyond.

We began the year focused on reopening the Learning Center after the Sourdough Fire forced its evacuation and closure. Since then, we've welcomed a vibrant mix of students, families, national park visitors, and

community groups back to programs like Mountain School for fifth graders, Youth Leadership Adventures for high school students, and Diablo Lake Boat Tours for travelers from across the country. Along the way, we launched new initiatives, navigated staffing challenges, strengthened partnerships, and adapted to a changing outdoor education landscape with creativity and determination.

A major highlight was the expansion of Youth Leadership Adventures (YLA), which engaged a record number of high school students in backcountry trips and related programming. Many of these students faced barriers to outdoor access, but thanks to the Saul Weisberg Catalyst Fund and our generous donor community, we introduced new program models to better support youth balancing work and family commitments.

Our Family Getaways continued to thrive, bringing together multiple generations for shared learning experiences in nature. We also launched our inaugural Affinity Weekend, offering participants from historically excluded communities the chance to connect with nature—and each other—on their own terms.

Through every challenge and opportunity, one thing remains clear: our work has never been more vital. At a time when environmental education and access to nature are increasingly at risk, we remain committed to our mission—to inspire environmental stewardship through transformative learning experiences. We will continue teaching about climate change, fostering connection, and building a more inclusive outdoor community, no matter what comes our way.

This report reflects what we've accomplished together. Whether you attended a program, donated, or helped spread the word, you've played a vital role in making 2024 extraordinary. Thank you for being part of our journey—we're excited for what lies ahead and honored to continue this work with you.

With deep gratitude,

Bec Detrich, Executive Director



# 2024 PROGRAM IMPACTS

## Youth Leadership Adventures

Youth Leadership Adventures (YLA) offers opportunities for diverse regional high school students to develop outdoor recreation and leadership skills, experience the benefits of time spent in nature, and engage in environmental stewardship.

At the heart of YLA are our backcountry trips. During multi-day backpacking and canoe-camping adventures in the North Cascades, students gain the skills, knowledge, and experience needed to feel confident and comfortable in the outdoors. Along the way, they build lasting friendships, practice collaborative leadership, and explore a range of pathways toward climate solutions.

In addition to backcountry trips, we partner with community organizations to offer programming that supports YLA's goals and core learning outcomes.

Thanks to \$35,000 from the Saul Weisberg Catalyst Fund in 2024, we expanded and adapted the program to better meet community needs by providing the following:

**Shorter Trip Options:** We offered three 5-day trips in addition to six 8-day trips, making participation more accessible for students with work or family commitments.

**Expanded Partnerships & Group Trips:** We offered four partial-group trips, allowing students from the same program or organization to participate together, sometimes with a peer mentor. These trips—in partnership with Rainier Beach High School, Triumph Teen Life Center, and Mount Vernon High School Migrant Student Program—helped us reach new participants, ease student anxiety, and improve accessibility for multilingual students.

**Swimming Lessons for Canoe-based Programs:** In collaboration with Skagit Valley YMCA, GEAR UP and Vamos Outdoors, we facilitated swimming lessons for Latine students at Burlington-Edison High School. Many of our programs involve canoeing, and we identified swimming as a barrier to participation.

67

STUDENT  
PARTICIPANTS  
ON BACKCOUNTRY  
TRIPS

116

STUDENT  
PARTICIPANTS  
IN RELATED  
PROGRAMMING



9

BACKCOUNTRY  
TRIPS

861

LEARNER  
DAYS

### Recruitment & Community Engagement:

- YLA staff partnered with Glacier Peak Institute to recruit YLA participants from the Darrington area and train their new AmeriCorps staff
- We facilitated student participation and led workshops at the YMCA Seattle Youth Environmental Service Corps' two annual events
- We helped plan curriculum, loaned outdoor gear, and taught lessons at Whatcom Intergenerational High School's three-day "Forest School" program
- We hosted a Youth Leadership Adventures Alum Day at Bayview State Park

**Youth for the Environment and People:** YEP! is an afterschool program for high schoolers to share ideas and passions, learn about climate change solutions, engage in local stewardship projects, and work together with other youth in choosing, planning, and implementing a group action project. Our cohort of Skagit County students learned about ecological forestry and participated in a climate activism project in the fall, which involved teaching elementary school students about environmental principles.

**Concrete High School:** The Institute's YLA staff worked with an Environmental Science class over the fall quarter to design a composting system for the school. Students learned about composting, gathered data on the school's needs, developed prototypes, and presented their projects to a local elementary school class.

These initiatives are helping us make Youth Leadership Adventures more inclusive, accessible, and impactful. We look forward to building on this success in the coming year! Learn more in the 2024 YLA report at [nccascades.org/reports](https://nccascades.org/reports).

## Mountain School

Mountain School is an immersive environmental education program that has served regional fifth graders since 1990. Through hands-on, interdisciplinary activities, students connect with the natural and cultural history of our region, strengthen their relationships with classmates and the environment, and discover their place in the world—as someone intricately connected within the web of life.

For the 2024 Mountain School season, the Institute streamlined behind-the-scenes structures and logistics to enhance the student experience. We also implemented several refinements to the program's curriculum and developed new place-based lesson plans, including a new fire ecology lesson and stream erosion lesson. These topics provide timely and relevant content from our campus on Diablo Lake, which has experienced recent fire and weather events. Learn more in the 2024-25 Mountain School Report (coming to [ncascades.org/reports](https://ncascades.org/reports) this summer).



Victoria Aguilar

2,026  
STUDENT  
PARTICIPANTS

6,078  
LEARNER  
DAYS

## Adult and Family Programs

From the North Cascades to the Skagit and Methow Valleys and Salish Sea, our programs connect people to the natural and cultural history of the region through small-group experiences led by passionate instructors. In 2024, nearly 300 participants joined us for **Field Excursions**, exploring topics like mushrooms, photography, birds, and watercolor in outdoor settings. Another 706 learners tuned in to **Online Classes**, gaining insight into wolves, climate change, wildfire, and more from the convenience of home. Our popular **Family Getaways**—summer weekends that promote intergenerational learning—welcomed 276 participants, while **Base Camp** hosted 1,248 individuals for “Learning & Lodging” experiences at our campus. And one of our most popular offerings, **Diablo Lake Boat Tours**, introduced nearly 4,000 locals and visitors to the wonders of the region aboard the *Alice Ross IV*.

Altogether, this diverse collection of programs served **2,524 people** across **3,116 learner days**—a testament to the power of place-based education and the community that makes it all possible.

## Bookstores

We operate five retail stores in and around North Cascades National Park, as well as at Heather Meadows in the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and online at [ncascades.org/shop](https://ncascades.org/shop). In 2024, we continued to see visitation and sales records as public lands' popularity increased. This partnership reaches large, broad audiences to foster a deeper connection with nature via educational resources while helping fund our programs.

## Conferences and Retreats

Custom educational programs at the Environmental Learning Center inspire reflection and connection to the natural world as well as to each other. We welcome events, conferences, retreats, workshops, reunions, trainings, and other gatherings. In 2024, we hosted 14 programs including:

- A national **physics conference**, marking their sixth visit to our campus
- **Braided Seeds' Black Youth Rest Retreat**, which focused on outdoor exploration, ancestral connections, and deepening relationships with the land
- The **Kulshan Creek Neighborhood Program**, which serves youth ages 5-18 from several diverse Mount Vernon communities to introduce young people to our region's special places and increase their knowledge of the natural world

We also hosted our inaugural **Affinity Weekend**—a meaningful and successful gathering with members and participants from Outdoor Asian, Latino Outdoors, and Outdoor Afro. The weekend offered opportunities for birding, hiking, and simply being present in nature. Attendees could engage as much or as little as they wished, enjoying the comfort of a shared space with others who look like them.



# 2024 UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The audited 2024 Financial Statements will be posted at [ncascades.org/reports](https://ncascades.org/reports) when ready.

## Statement of Financial Position

### ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents	\$446,890
Short-term investments	\$149,118
Receivables, net	\$81,356
Inventory and other	\$341,211
Long-term investments	\$7,538,630
Property and equipment, net	\$677,369
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$9,234,574</b>

### LIABILITIES

Accounts payable	\$40,634
Accrued expenses	\$205,997
Deferred revenue and other	\$59,517
Lease Liability	\$101,111
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$407,259</b>

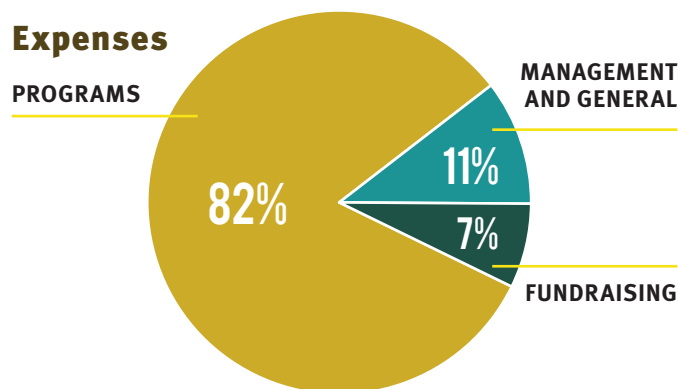
### NET ASSETS

Operating Reserve	\$2,460,000
Unrestricted & temporarily restricted funds	\$2,580,629
<b>Designated Funds:</b>	
Conservation Education Fund	\$1,803,690
Nugent Family Fund	\$690,181
Youth Leadership Fund (Ginny Darvill)	\$170,000
Darby Foundation Scholarship Fund	\$80,000
North Cascades Conservation Council Founders Fund	\$40,000
Andrew Goodwill Murphy Memorial Fund	\$58,894
John Miles Scholarship Fund	\$43,547
Weisberg Family Fund	\$64,021
Gary Peterson Memorial Fund	\$26,268
Jean Gorton Memorial Fund	\$22,058
Cook & Sullivan Fund	\$31,500
Brian Scheuch Memorial Fund	\$30,305
Campbell-Dalton Fund	\$86,653
Mac & Linda MacGregor Fund	\$55,000
Bates Family Fund	\$12,500
Schweickart Family Scholarship Fund	\$30,000
Saul Weisberg Catalyst Fund	\$542,069
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$8,827,315</b>

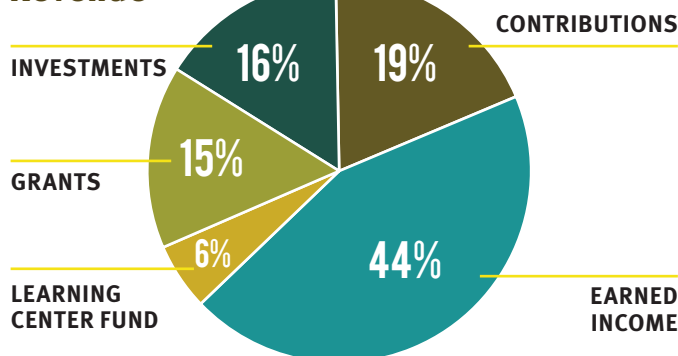
**Total Liabilities and Net Assets** **\$9,234,574**

## Expenses

### PROGRAMS



## Revenue



## Statement of Activities

### SUPPORT AND REVENUES

Contracts, tuition and fees, net	\$1,273,765
Investment income	\$727,465
Contributions	\$783,408
Government grants	\$307,410
In-kind contributions	\$87,480
Learning Center Fund - Seattle Foundation	\$260,000
Foundation grants	\$401,336
Rental Income	\$68,413
Bookstores (retail/outreach), net	\$688,587
<b>Total Support and Revenues</b>	<b>\$4,597,864</b>

### EXPENSES

Programs	\$3,465,000
Management and general	\$444,552
Fundraising	\$299,493
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$4,209,045</b>

**Change in Net Assets** **\$388,819**



North Cascades Institute has received **FOUR-STAR ratings** from *Charity Navigator* **22 YEARS IN A ROW**

To learn how you can make a difference with your gift, visit [ncascades.org/support](https://ncascades.org/support)

# 2024 PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

**Many thanks to the nearly 800 households and organizations** who contributed to North Cascades Institute last year. Your support allowed more people to connect with nature, build community, and become lifelong environmental stewards. Thank you so much!

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Washington Trails Association  
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