

NORTH CASCADES INSTITUTE



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

“ Together, we are not only connecting people to extraordinary places. We are helping shape a future where more people know they belong in the natural world, and are inspired to care for it.

—Bec Detrich, Executive Director
North Cascades Institute



DEAR FRIENDS, PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

There are places that stay with you.

For thousands of people each year, the North Cascades and the Environmental Learning Center on Diablo Lake are places that change how they see the world and their place within it.

The future of environmental stewardship isn't something we're waiting for—it's already here, taking shape in the lives of the people we serve.

We see it in the students who step onto the trail for the first time, discovering confidence and curiosity in the forests and waters of this region. We see it in the quiet moments on Diablo Lake, when students encounter the natural world up close and in new ways, shaping rivers in the sand and seeing how a landscape comes to life. We see it in the teens who take on new challenges in the backcountry, learning how to navigate alpine trails, support one another, and return home with a stronger sense of confidence, leadership, and belonging. And we see it in the adults and families who return home with a renewed understanding of their connection to the natural world.

In 2025, North Cascades Institute built on this momentum, engaging 8,478 participants across all programs, including 1,805 youth. At the Environmental Learning Center and across the region, these learners took part in programs grounded in science, art, and hands-on experience. Mountain School connected fifth grade students to the ecosystems and stories of the North Cascades, with a continued focus on expanding access and growing scholarship support to meet increasing financial needs. Youth Leadership Adventures expanded opportunities for teens through immersive backcountry trips that build skills, confidence, and a strong sense of belonging. We also deepened partnerships with local organizations, strengthening how cultural knowledge and regional history are reflected in our programs. Adult, family, and community offerings, from field courses and

retreats to seasonal gatherings, continued to grow, creating space for people of all ages to learn, reflect, and reconnect.

What stands out is not just how many people we reach, but **how deeply these experiences resonate.** For many participants, this is a first time sleeping under the stars, paddling across a lake, or seeing themselves as someone who belongs in the outdoors and has a role in caring for it. These moments matter. They shape how people understand the natural world and their role within it.

“For thousands of people each year, the North Cascades and the Environmental Learning Center on Diablo Lake are places that change how they see the world and their place within it.”

Demand and need for these experiences continues to grow, even as access to nature and environmental education remains inequitable, public lands face growing pressures, and federal support for environmental education and science continues to erode. **We are focused on expanding opportunity, strengthening partnerships, and ensuring that more people can experience the North Cascades in meaningful and lasting ways.**

This report reflects what we have accomplished together. Whether you participated in a program, supported our work, or helped share our story, you are part of this growing community.

Together, we are not only connecting people to extraordinary places. We are helping shape a future where more people know they belong in the natural world, and are inspired to care for it.

With gratitude,



Bec Detrich, Executive Director

2025 BY THE NUMBERS

8,478
PARTICIPANTS

11,706
LEARNER DAYS

84%
INVESTED IN
PROGRAMS

15
SCHOOL
DISTRICTS
SERVED

9
YOUTH
LEADERSHIP
TRIPS



PROGRAM IMPACTS

LEARNING ACROSS THE NORTH CASCADES | In 2025, North Cascades Institute delivered environmental education programs throughout the North Cascades region —on public lands, in local communities, and online. Together, these programs generated **11,706 Learner Days** and served **8,478 participants**, connecting people of all ages to the landscapes, ecosystems, and communities of the Pacific Northwest.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Youth Leadership Adventures (YLA) empowers teens to build confidence, leadership skills, and a deeper connection to the natural world through multi-day backpacking and canoe journeys in the North Cascades.

In 2025, the program generated **910 Learner Days**, serving **76 expedition participants** across **9 back-country trips** exploring Ross and Baker Lakes by canoe and hiking a new backpacking route up to Anderson and Watson Lakes. We reached an additional 136 students through complementary programming. **Tuition was subsidized for 100% of participants**, with 86% receiving additional scholarship support. Participant demographics included 56% of students participating in an outdoor program for the first time and 54% of backcountry participants identifying as students of color.

“After this summer, I feel like I can do anything! The leadership skills and confidence gained are something I will never forget.

—Youth Leadership Adventures participant

76
EXPEDITION
PARTICIPANTS

910
LEARNER DAYS

56%
FIRST TIME
PARTICIPATING
IN AN OUTDOOR
PROGRAM

YOUTH LEADERSHIP BEYOND SUMMER TRIPS

YLA staff connect diverse youth with outdoor experiences not just on summer trips, but year-round. Youth for the Environment and People! (YEP!) is a climate solutions program for high school students, offered in partnership with **RE Sources**. Participants explore real-world responses to climate change through hands-on field days and design their own climate action projects.

Staff and students attended the YESC Environmental Symposium to connect with environmental professionals and participate in workshops. They also partnered with **Vamos Outdoors Project**, **Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group**, and **The Salish Sea School** on a bilingual salmon education program—*Recorrido por el Río, or River Journey*.

In collaboration with **Vamos Outdoors Project** and **Glacier Peak Institute**, they supported an overnight leadership trip on Diablo Lake, sharing strategies for engaging youth outdoors. They also partnered with **Whatcom Intergenerational High School's** Forest School, helping nearly 70 students gain experience in camping and hiking.





MOUNTAIN SCHOOL

Celebrating its 35th anniversary in 2025, Mountain School introduced students to the natural and cultural history of the North Cascades through immersive, hands-on learning during 3-day, 2-night stays at the Learning Center.

“*Mountain School was the best three days of my life.*”

—Mountain School student

In 2025, the program generated **4,779 Learner Days**, serving **1,593 students, teachers, and chaperones** from **15 school districts** across four counties. Students came from rural, suburban, and urban communities, with 51% qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. Tuition was subsidized for 100% of students, ensuring broad access to this transformative outdoor learning experience.

SUPPORTING PUBLIC LAND STEWARDS

Mountain School students created colorful banners expressing their appreciation for public lands. In 2025, a year marked by significant challenges for federal agencies—including budget constraints, staffing pressures, and uncertainty—these messages of gratitude carried particular weight. The banners were shared with staff at North Cascades National Park and Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, offering a visible reminder that their work is valued and that the next generation is paying attention. These gestures recognized the vital role these partners play in caring for these treasured landscapes.



STATE BUDGET CUTS IMPACT MOUNTAIN SCHOOL

Established by the Washington State Legislature in 2021, the Outdoor Learning Grants program provided critical subsidies that enabled schools to send fifth- and sixth-grade students to outdoor learning programs. The program was eliminated in 2025 as part of statewide budget adjustments. As a result, several school partners were unable to participate in Fall Mountain School, reducing the number of students served. In response, the Institute is working with partners and supporters to expand access so more students can experience learning outdoors.

1,593
STUDENTS,
TEACHERS &
CHAPERONES

4,779
LEARNER
DAYS

100%
RECEIVED
SUBSIDIZED
TUITION

MOUNTAIN SCHOOL ON THE ROAD

This spring, Mountain School ventured beyond the trails of the North Cascades and into the halls of **Seattle Children's Hospital**, bringing nature-based learning to young people unable to visit the mountains themselves. Led by Mountain School staff, the visit transformed hospital playrooms into pop-up discovery zones filled with wildlife pelts, natural artifacts, and hands-on activities. Patients and families connected with natural textures, stories, and science in ways that invited curiosity, comfort, and joy—even amid the challenges of medical care.

Moments like these remind us that the heart of Mountain School isn't tied to any one place. It's rooted in connection, care, and the belief that **every young person deserves access to the healing power of nature wherever they may be.**



CONFERENCES & RETREATS

The Environmental Learning Center also serves as a gathering place for organizations seeking connection, learning, and reflection in a unique natural setting.

In 2025, conference and retreat programs generated **1,740 Learner Days**, serving **497 participants** from **17 organizations** across **22 programs**. Partners included National Geographic Lindblad Expeditions, the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, Remote Medical Training, the Appalachian Mountain Club,

Sammamish Youth Day Program, GEAR UP East Valley, and the Sierra Club, among others. The **Weekend for All** retreat created space for participants from diverse backgrounds to connect with nature, serving 56 participants and generating 168 Learner Days.

1,740
LEARNER DAYS

497
PARTICIPANTS

17
ORGANIZATIONS



ADULT, FAMILY & LIFELONG LEARNING

Learning at North Cascades Institute continues well beyond youth programs, offering opportunities for adults and families to engage with the region's landscapes through science, art, and outdoor exploration.

In 2025, Adult and Family Education programs—including Family Getaways, Field Seminars, Base Camp Learning & Lodging, Skagit Tours, and Online Classes—generated **6,790 Learner Days** and served **6,176 participants**.

6,790
LEARNER
DAYS

“ *Our family spent a day in the field learning about amphibians and conservation. We saw frogs, salamanders, and giant water bugs, and even got up close with the Oregon Spotted Frog—learning how one person can help protect a vulnerable species.* ”

6,176
PARTICIPANTS

—Field Excursion participant

19 STATES
REACHED
THROUGH ONLINE
LEARNING

Programs took place across the North Cascades ecosystem and extended beyond the region through online learning, reaching participants from 19 U.S. states and British Columbia.

RETAIL & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Through eight retail locations in and around North Cascades National Park and Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, the Institute connects visitors with educational resources that deepen their understanding of the region.

In 2025, retail operations engaged approximately 180,000 visitors and generated sales supporting both Institute programs and North Cascades National Park. We also began merchandise sales at the **Glacier Ranger Station** in October.

17,000
T-SHIRTS SOLD





STRATEGIC PLAN: LOOKING AHEAD

As North Cascades Institute looks to the future, we created and approved a new three-year Strategic Plan in 2025 that sets a clear path to strengthen our impact in a rapidly changing world.

Across the region, shifting demographics—including increasing diversity, an aging population, and declining student enrollment—are reshaping how and whom we serve. At the same time, advances in technology, from digital learning to AI, are transforming education. Climate impacts, housing constraints, workforce shifts, and funding uncertainty present both challenges and opportunities for our work. In response, our plan focuses on three core areas:

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

We are advancing a more adaptive, multi-year approach to financial planning. By addressing key risks, strengthening reserves, and aligning resources with priorities, we are building long-term stability.

MISSION & IMPACT

We are refining our mission, vision, and values to bring greater clarity and focus. By defining priority audiences and key outcomes—and strengthening how we evaluate and make decisions—we will direct our efforts where they matter most.

WELCOMING & BELONGING

We are deepening our commitment to welcoming and belonging across the organization. By building a shared vision and embedding these values into our programs and culture, we aim to ensure all people feel a sense of connection and inclusion in our work.

Together, these focus areas position North Cascades Institute to move forward with clarity, resilience, and purpose—**grounded in our mission and ready for what’s ahead.**

STAFF GIVES BACK

At the Institute, service is not an abstract value—it’s something we practice. Through our Service Day program, staff are encouraged to volunteer with organizations that strengthen communities, expand access to the outdoors, and support people and wildlife across our region. In 2025, Institute staff put that commitment into action in diverse and meaningful ways, including volunteering for Skagit Land Trust, Bellingham Food Bank, Anacortes Pride Parade, Shifting Gears, Washington Outdoor School Coalition, 4-H, Padilla Bay Stewards and others.

215
STAFF
VOLUNTEER
HOURS



2025 UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The audited 2025 Financial Statements will be posted at ncascades.org/reports when ready.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Assets

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Cash and cash equivalents | \$333,717 |
| Short-term investments | \$104,995 |
| Receivables, net | \$68,140 |
| Inventory and other | \$343,127 |
| Long-term investments | \$8,299,040 |
| Property and equipment, net | \$652,708 |
| | \$9,801,727 |

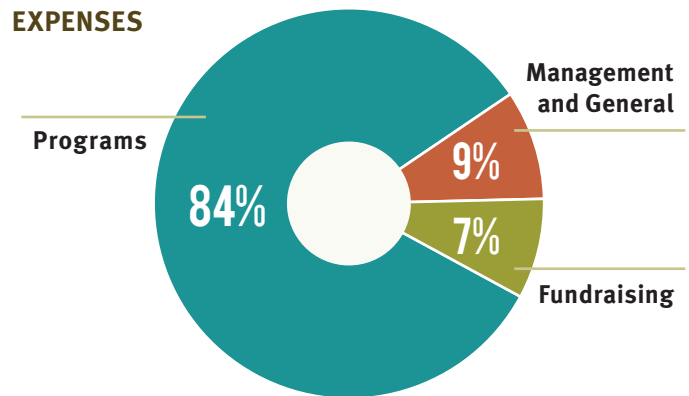
Liabilities

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Accounts payable | \$22,602 |
| Accrued expenses | \$249,664 |
| Deferred revenue and other | \$42,280 |
| Lease Liability | \$41,156 |
| | \$355,702 |

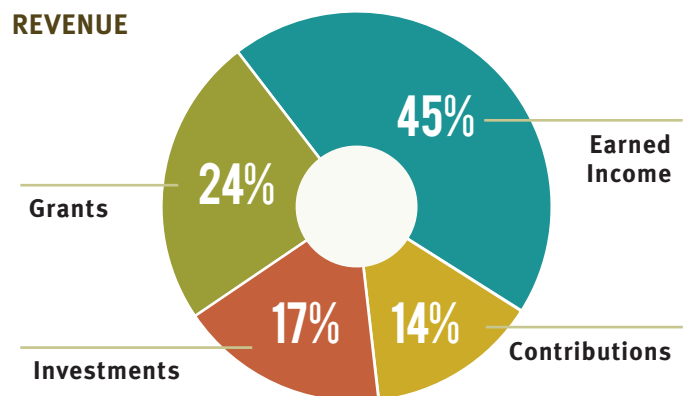
Net Assets

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| Operating Reserve | \$2,565,000 |
| Unrestricted & temporarily restricted funds | \$2,848,906 |
| Designated Funds: | |
| Conservation Education Fund | \$1,920,815 |
| Nugent Family Fund | \$727,661 |
| Youth Leadership Fund (Ginny Darvill) | \$170,000 |
| Darby Foundation Scholarship Fund | \$80,000 |
| N. C. Conservation Council Founders Fund | \$40,000 |
| Andrew Goodwill Murphy Memorial Fund | \$63,110 |
| John Miles Scholarship Fund | \$44,829 |
| Weisberg Family Fund | \$69,021 |
| Gary Peterson Memorial Fund | \$26,268 |
| Jean Gorton Memorial Fund | \$22,058 |
| Cook & Sullivan Fund | \$32,500 |
| Brian Scheuch Memorial Fund | \$30,905 |
| Campbell-Dalton Fund | \$116,653 |
| Mac & Linda MacGregor Fund | \$55,000 |
| Bates Family Fund | \$12,500 |
| Schweickart Family Scholarship Fund | \$40,000 |
| Saul Weisberg Catalyst Fund | \$580,799 |
| | \$9,446,025 |
| Total Liabilities and Net Assets | \$9,801,727 |

EXPENSES



REVENUE



STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Support and Revenues

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| Contracts, tuition and fees, net | \$1,303,038 |
| Investment income | \$908,036 |
| Contributions | \$652,484 |
| Government grants | \$739,260 |
| In-kind contributions | \$89,826 |
| Learning Center Fund - Seattle Foundation | \$70,716 |
| Foundation grants | \$454,182 |
| Rental and other income | \$71,561 |
| Bookstores (retail/outreach), net | \$951,091 |
| | \$5,240,194 |

Expenses

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Programs | \$3,859,267 |
| Management and general | \$437,469 |
| Fundraising | \$324,748 |
| | \$4,621,484 |

Change in Net Assets **\$618,710**

Charity Navigator



FOUR-STAR

North Cascades Institute has received **FOUR-STAR ratings** from *Charity Navigator* **23 YEARS IN A ROW**

To learn how you can make a difference with your gift, visit ncascades.org/support or call Sarah Meyer at **(360) 854-2596**



2025 PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

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

A

Anonymous (92)

Lisa Ackerman

❖ Juan Aguilera and Stacy Randolph

❖ Jeremiah and Cayla Alexander

Luther Allen

Tyler Allen

Jeff Ames

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CORPORATIONS & GRANT FUNDERS

◆ *Organizations who matched gifts made by their employees*

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 - Allison Foundation
 - ◆ Apple
 - Association of Nature Center Administrators
 - Backcountry Essentials
 - Beardsley Family Foundation
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- Larry Hall and Anne Niggemeyer

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- Lagu Foundation
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- McEachern Foundation
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- ◆ Microsoft
- ◆ Morgan Stanley
- MTE Fund
- National Forest Foundation

- ◆ Nordstrom
- Norman Archibald Charitable Foundation
- North Drinkware
- ◆ Portland General Electric
- Quest for Truth Foundation
- Ross Lake Resort
- Rotary Club of La Conner
- Salal Chapter of the Washington Native Plant Society
- ◆ Salesforce
- Seeking Health
- The Sharing Foundation
- Skagit Community Foundation: The Fisher Family Donor Advised Fund, The George B. & Ruth Elizabeth Ferguson Donor Advised Fund, and The ERAC Donor Advised Fund

- Sweet As Waffles
- Swinomish Indian Tribal Community
- Trip Scholars LLC
- Tulalip Tribes Charitable Contributions
- Village Books & Paper Dreams
- Wander Brewing
- Washington's National Park Fund
- Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office
- Whatcom Community Foundation
- Whatcom Community Foundation Funds: Chuck & Dee Robinson Community Fund, Phyllis & Charles Self Endowment Fund, and Sibyl Sanford Fund

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Rotha Miles
Drew Murphy
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Elmer Pedigo
James L. Reed
Brian Scheuch
Joy Tally
Maggie Weisberg

The Institute lost several cherished longtime supporters last year, including **Maggie Weisberg**, the mother of our co-founder, Saul. As a Headwaters Club Lifetime Member, Legacy Circle Member, and contributor to the Weisberg Family Endowed Fund, we thank Maggie for her lasting impact.



William Hall and Candice Bassell
Karl Halupka
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