



# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN COASTAL CONSERVATION

Dear Friends and Supporters,

In 2023, Friends of the Dunes celebrated our 41st year of conserving coastal environments through community-supported education and stewardship programs. Your support has enabled us to continue our important work of stewarding coastal environments and connecting people with nature through relevant, inclusive, and meaningful opportunities to explore, learn about, and protect Humboldt's coastal environments.

Our dedication to connecting people with our local coastal environments has been unwavering. Through our education programs, we have had the privilege of engaging thousands of individuals and fostering a deep appreciation for Humboldt's diverse and dynamic coastal environments. We have expanded our reach by engaging "Nature Newbies" and Spanish-speaking community members through the Explorando Juntos program. These efforts, made possible by funding from an Explore the Coast grant, have allowed us to extend our impact and connect with an even more diverse community.

In our 8th year of the Humboldt Coastal Resilience Project, we collaborated with the project team to make great strides in sharing the results of this research which shows that restored foredunes are more resilient to erosion caused by heavy storms and sea level rise than unrestored foredunes. We worked closely with project partners to disseminate valuable insights about restoration and dune resilience with the community, land managers, decision-makers, and coastal practitioners to help guide future conservation efforts in our region. These research results helped to secure funding for the largest ecosystem restoration project in our organization's history. In partnership with the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge and Redwood Community Action Agency, we have played a key role in securing a combined total of \$14 million in grant funding for restoration projects at the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center and Wadulh Unit of the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Together, we have made significant strides in conserving and enhancing the resilience of these vital coastal ecosystems.

We have continued to successfully manage the 357-acre Samoa Dunes and Wetlands Conservation Area while working with the Wiyot Tribe to move forward on a land return project and the long-term management of this property. Since taking ownership of this property, we have consistently worked to preserve and protect this precious conservation land while introducing community members to the network of trails and diverse habitats through free guided walks.

As we reflect on the accomplishments of 2023, I am reminded of the immense power that comes from working together towards a common goal. None of this would have been possible without the support of our dedicated donors, board members, staff, volunteers, and community members. Your unwavering passion and commitment to our mission is truly inspiring. Thank you for your continued support and for joining us on this incredible journey of conservation and stewardship.

With gratitude and dedication to our shared mission,

**Suzie Fortner**  
Executive Director



# COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Connecting people with nature is a core part of our work, and in 2023 we offered a diverse array of programs for community members of all ages to connect with our local coastal environments. Thanks to an Explore the Coast grant from the State Coastal Conservancy, we were able to continue our programs that are designed to serve community members who typically face barriers to accessing the coast. In 2023, we:



- Coordinated **15 free guided walks** with **150 participants**.
- Offered **10 Nature Newbies** workshops with **98 participants**.
- Organized **3 Family Nature Events** with **187 participants**: Spring Equinox Celebration, Summer Solstice Celebration, and the Spooky Dunes Tour.
- Offered **9 Explorando Juntos (Exploring Together) outings** with a total of **112 people attending**. These family-friendly programs in Spanish are designed for our Spanish-speaking community members.
- Hosted **2 California Naturalist Courses**. Our first graduating cohort consisted of **23 California Conservation Corps members**. Our second cohort graduated **22 members of the public**.

## SCHOOL EDUCATION

In 2023, Friends of the Dunes offered 3 environmental education programs for school groups: Bay to Dunes, Kids Ocean Day, and Coastal Stewards. In total these programs served 1,527 students ranging from kindergarten through 12th grade. Bay to Dunes served 888 students from 23 schools, and Kids Ocean Day had 614 students from 18 schools. The Coastal Stewards program for grades 6-12 was offered by request only. We had one class from Eureka High with 25 students. Overall, 39 volunteers contributed a total of 895 hours to ensure that these programs could happen. Funding from grants, individual donors, business partners, and fundraisers allowed Friends of the Dunes to waive \$3,140 in field trip fees, and award \$14,135 in bus scholarships.

Thanks to a Whale Tail grant from the California Coastal Commission, we also provided 4 weeks of summer camp. In total, there were 20 participants: the Dune Detectives camp, for ages 5-8, served 15 children, and the Coastal Connections camp, for ages 9-12, served 5 children. 1 teen “naturalist-in-training” contributed 50 hours of volunteer time. 3 participants received full scholarships to attend.

*“We are always working on how to keep our environment clean and safe, and the reasons it is important for everyone and [every] thing that lives in it...My students love this field trip, it is hard to say which part they like best. They like looking for tracks, love being at the ocean, and especially getting to use the binoculars at the bay.”*

*- Joyce Church, Bridgeville School*



Ambrosini Elementary School 4th graders during a Bay to Dunes field trip.



# LAND STEWARDSHIP & RESTORATION WORK

In 2023, Friends of the Dunes embarked on an extensive and ambitious project to complete the restoration of the entire foredune at the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center. Since taking on the management of this coastal property in 2007, we have been steadily but slowly removing invasive plants with the support of our dedicated volunteers. In 2023, through a collaborative project with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, we were awarded approximately **\$2 million** for the restoration of the foredune habitat at the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center and the Waduhl Unit of the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. This funding has enabled us to hire a full-time Restoration Manager and for the first time in many years, we have been able to hire work crews to significantly speed up the progress of our restoration efforts. Work crews from Redwood Community Action Agency contributed **6,857 hours of labor** to the removal of European beachgrass (*Ammophila arenaria*) from our Nature Center property in 2023.

In addition to work accomplished by hired crews, Friends of the Dunes trained, mobilized, and empowered a total of **269 individual volunteer participants** to contribute **1,018 hours of service** accomplishing coastal dune habitat restoration. We hosted **22 Dune Ecosystem Restoration Team (DERT) workdays** that contributed **754 volunteer hours**. These DERT Workdays take place at the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center and the Bureau of Land Management's Ma-le'l Dunes South. Additionally, four highly trained and dedicated Volunteer Restoration Technicians contributed **160 volunteer hours** towards our foredune restoration.

In 2023, Friends of the Dunes' restoration programs successfully treated **6.03 acres** at the Bureau of Land Management's Ma-le'l Dunes South and **10.31 acres** at the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center. These restoration programs focused on the removal of non-native invasive plants to restore native biodiversity and improve coastal dune resilience.

At the Samoa Dunes and Wetlands Conservation Area, we worked with our partners at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to remove approximately **2,931 pounds of trash in 2023**, raising our total amount of trash removed to **10,409 pounds** since taking ownership of the land.



Friends of the Dunes Restoration Technician monitors plant species at the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center property.

**In 2023,  
Restoration  
Volunteers  
contributed a  
total of 1,932  
hours equating  
to \$61,437.60!**

According to Independent Sector and the Do Good Institute, the value of a volunteer hour in the United States is estimated to be \$31.80 in 2023





# HUMBOLDT COASTAL NATURE CENTER



Photo by Volunteer Susan Halpin

The Humboldt Coastal Nature Center (HCNC) serves as the gateway to Humboldt Bay's stunning coastal dunes and **welcomed nearly 3,000 visitors in 2023**. Nestled amidst the breathtaking natural beauty of the region, the HCNC provides visitors with an educational experience that highlights the unique ecosystem and natural history of the coastal dunes. **Thank you to our dedicated Nature Center volunteers** greeting guests from around the world as they explore the diverse flora and fauna found in this delicate habitat. From guided nature walks to informative classes, the HCNC offers a range of opportunities for visitors to learn about and appreciate the importance of preserving this precious coastal ecosystem. Whether you are a nature enthusiast, a wildlife lover, or simply seeking a serene escape, the HCNC is the perfect starting point for exploring the enchanting dunes. The HCNC trails and dunes habitats were open every day in 2023, as a haven for individuals seeking solace, delight, and inspiration in nature.

Thank  
you

**In 2023, Nature Center  
Volunteers contributed  
a total of 751.5 hours  
equating to \$23,897.70!**

According to Independent Sector and the Do Good Institute, the value of a volunteer hour in the United States is estimated to be \$31.80 in 2023

## FISCALLY SPONSORED PROJECTS

Friends of the Dunes continues to support a variety of ambitious allied projects on the North Coast as a fiscal sponsor. These fiscally sponsored projects include:

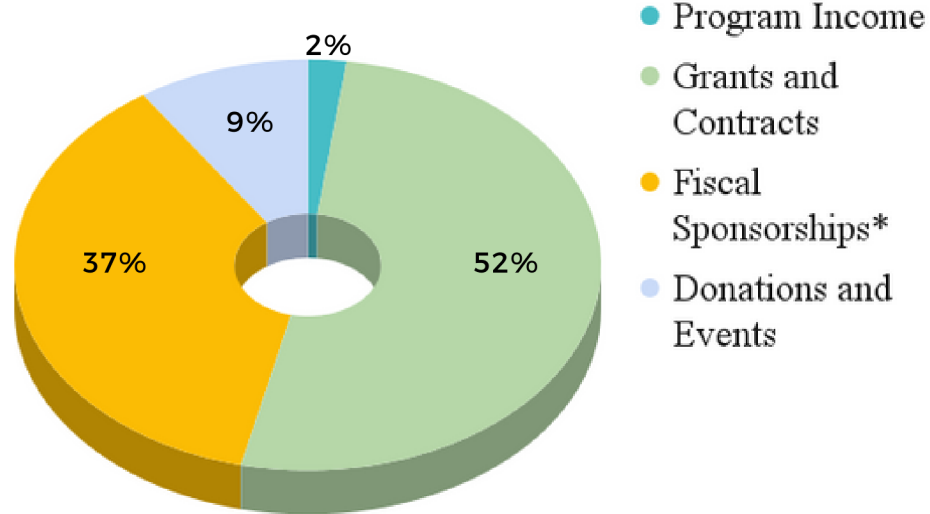
- **The Humboldt Coastal Resilience Project** is a dune geomorphology study that began in 2015 to analyze the potential impacts of sea level rise and climate change to Humboldt's coastal dune systems and examine the role of restoration in creating resilience for dune ecosystems. In 2023, we worked with our project partners to share project results with the community and local agencies involved in coastal land management, restoration, and development. Partners on this project include the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge, UC Santa Barbara, California State Coastal Conservancy, Northern Hydrology and Engineering, and GHD.
- **Tolowa Dunes Stewards** is a community-based organization located in Del Norte County that is dedicated to coastal conservation, education, and restoration in the extensive Tolowa Dunes, located north of Crescent City. Their current grant work supported by Friends of the Dunes includes an extensive restoration project at Lake Earl Wildlife Area, monitoring of endangered species including the western snowy plover, and educational programs in collaboration with the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation.
- **Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Wadulh Unit Restoration:** Friends of the Dunes has continued our longstanding collaborative partnership with the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge by acting as the fiscal sponsor of several grants funding dune ecosystem restoration at Wadulh Unit. The Wadulh Unit is the newest addition to the refuge consisting of 160 acres of degraded dune habitat north of Lanphere Dunes. The grants sponsored by Friends of the Dunes are funding restoration work in both the foredune and backdune habitats. Wadulh, pronounced Wa-DUSH, is the word for dunes in Soulatluk, the Wiyot language.



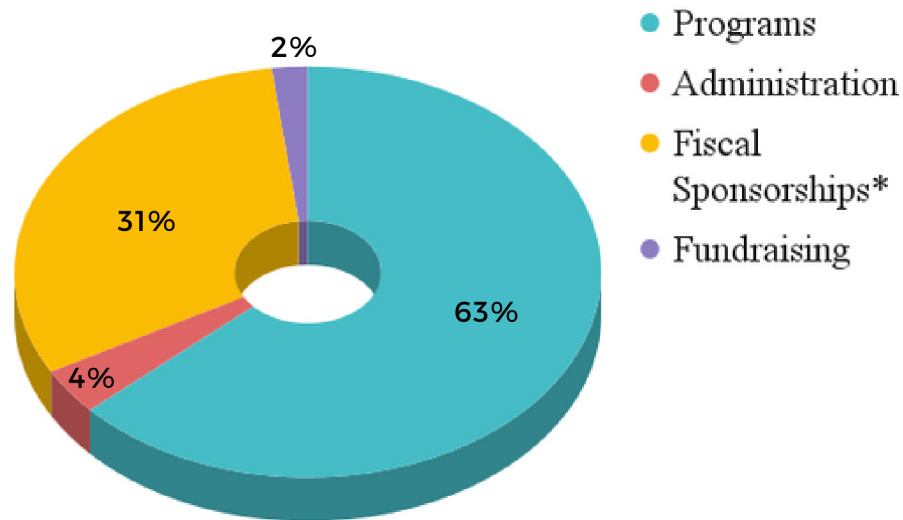
# 2023 FINANCIALS: PROGRAMS & OPERATIONS

Friends of the Dunes is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization (Tax-ID #68-0373871) dedicated to conserving the natural diversity of coastal environments in northern California through community supported education and stewardship programs. These numbers reflect our fiscal year January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023.

## TOTAL INCOME: \$1,202,148



## TOTAL EXPENSES: \$1,141,993



*\*Includes Humboldt Coastal Resilience project, Tolowa Dunes Stewards, & Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge Waduh Unit Restoration*





# THANK YOU 2023 BUSINESS PARTNERS!

Support us by supporting our Business Partners



Our Business Partnerships are a valuable way businesses can support our mission and help us continue to provide free stewardship and education programs to the public. For more information or to join as a Business Partner, scan QR Code to the right.

SCAN  
ME





# LEAVE A LEGACY: PLANNED GIVING

Planned giving is a powerful testament to the enduring impact of our values and the legacy we leave behind. At Friends of the Dunes, it is a way for individuals to make a lasting impact on our conservation, education and restoration efforts. By including Friends of the Dunes in your estate plans, you are ensuring that the beauty and biodiversity of coastal dune ecosystems will be protected for generations to come. There are several planned giving options available. If you would like more information on how to make a planned gift to Friends of the Dunes, please contact Development Director, Ashley Osia at [ashley@friendsofthedunes.org](mailto:ashley@friendsofthedunes.org) or 707-444-1397 x 105 for additional information.



## Language for Your Will or Living Trust

Here are some examples of bequest language that will direct your gift to your intended recipient:

### A Specific Gift

“I give, devise and bequeath to Friends of the Dunes, PO Box 186, Arcata, CA 95518, Tax ID # 68-0373871

The sum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.” or \_\_\_\_\_ % of my estate.” or  
Shares of stock in \_\_\_\_\_ Company.”

or

My real property, parcel number #

\_\_\_\_\_,  
located at

\_\_\_\_\_.”

### A Residual Gift\*

“I give, devise and bequeath to Friends of the Dunes, PO Box 186, Arcata, CA 95518, Tax ID # 68-0373871. [all or a percentage] of the residue of my estate.”

*\* Residue is defined as that which remains after debts and expenses of administration, legacies and all other devices have been satisfied.*

### A Contingent Gift

“In the event that [name of beneficiary] does not survive, I give, devise and bequeath the deceased beneficiary’s gift to Friends of the Dunes, PO Box 186, Arcata, CA 95518, Tax ID # 68-0373871

### Additional information for your attorney:

Legal Name: Humboldt Area Foundation

Address: 363 Indianola Rd., Bayside, CA 95524

Tax ID#: 23-7310660

Contact: Director of Donor Services & Planned Giving

Telephone: (707) 443-2993

**Tax Status:** Humboldt Area Foundation is a tax-exempt not-for-profit organization as described in sections 170(b)(1) (A)(vi) and 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Gifts and bequests are deductible for income, gift and estate tax purposes.



# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

We couldn't do it without you!



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## BECOME A SUSTAINING DONOR

Become a sustaining donor and make a difference in the preservation of coastal dune ecosystems. By supporting our education and stewardship programs, you can actively engage in coastal conservation and help us create a lasting impact. As a sustaining donor, you have the flexibility to choose an amount to be automatically charged to your credit card every month. You can also adjust the amount and frequency of your donation at any time. Plus, as a sustaining donor, you will automatically become a member of our organization. Your contributions are tax-deductible, as we are a 501(c)(3) charitable organization (EIN 68-0373871). Join us in protecting these valuable natural habitats and fostering a sustainable future for our community. More information at [friendsofthedunes.org/monthlydonation](https://friendsofthedunes.org/monthlydonation).

MORE INFO

To become a sustaining donor or to learn more, scan the QR code below!

SCAN ME!



## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

As a non-profit organization, we are dependent and forever thankful for the volunteers and members who help us continue to conserve the coast and educate the community. You make our conservation legacy possible.

### Dune Ecosystem Restoration Team (DERT)

Add gloves, shovels, and brush axes to human hands, and you have the strongest dune restoration tool around. You can make a difference in the ecosystem, one invasive plant removal at a time. Within months of initially removing invasive plants, volunteers witness native plants re-sprouting on their own. No experience is necessary. We will have snacks and tools to share. **No need to reserve a spot**, meet us at the specified locations a few minutes before 10 am. Training, camaraderie, and beautiful scenery are provided.

### DERT meets two times a month:

- Every second Saturday of the month from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Every third Sunday of the month from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Visit [friendsofthedunes.org/calendar](https://friendsofthedunes.org/calendar) for dates and locations.