

2024

ANNUAL REPORT



ISLAND HERITAGE TRUST

420 Sunset Road, Deer Isle, Maine 04627
www.islandheritagetrust.org



Mark Island

A LIGHTHOUSE BEACON

2024 proved to be another successful year at Island Heritage Trust, though not without its challenges. The year began with disastrous winter storms causing extensive damage along the coast of Maine. Through this, IHT's work continues to be a beacon of light in any storm. Our land stewards work tirelessly to ensure that safe and accessible trails and shorelines remain open to the public, while our education programs provide support to the schools and the greater community alike. We aim to stay grounded and learn from this land, the ever-changing weather, and from one another.

2024 also saw some incredible moments of celebration! IHT was awarded a \$165,000, three-year anonymous grant to fund a new staff position, Land Steward, to help ensure we can properly care for our existing and future land responsibilities. This includes annual monitoring of preserves and conservation easements, trail maintenance, forest management, volunteer engagement, and more. With this addition, we were able to promote Alex Drenga to Conservation Director to continue to oversee and support land stewardship, while adding capacity to our new land conservation project efforts. As this letter is being written, the recent closing on the Fox Hollow property just made the news, and Alex's efforts in his new role were essential to this project's success.

IHT's logo depicts Mark Island Lighthouse, which was gifted to the Trust in 1998 after a period when the US Coast Guard was disposing of lighthouse ownership. The Coast Guard still maintains the foghorn and the light itself, while the building and the island are the responsibility of IHT. The winter storms of 2024 took out the foghorn, which the Coast Guard replaced, and our land stewards and devoted volunteers began assessing vegetation management to ensure continued 180-degree sightlines for the light. This work will resume this summer, and IHT will continue to be a lighthouse beacon, both literally and figuratively. Our mission guides our efforts.

We look forward to meeting you out in these woods and waters and are ever grateful for your support.

Catherine T. Washburn

CATHERINE WASHBURN
Board Chair

Julia Zell

JULIA ZELL
Executive Director



ACHIEVEMENTS

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2024

1. Welcome to Our New Land Steward

Joining Alex Drenga, now Conservation Director, IHT celebrated the arrival of our new Land Steward, Eli Forman, who joined us with a strong academic foundation in forest management and significant practical experience as a wildland firefighter. Drawn to the rugged coastline of Downeast Maine, Eli's decision to root here with his family reflects his deep connection with the Earth. His unique blend of knowledge and field experience are a tremendous asset as we expand our efforts in new and existing conservation projects.

inn on Mill Pond for delicious food, connection, and fun. Thanks to the incredible generosity of our attendees, the event raised a fantastic \$57,000! We extend our deepest gratitude for this dedicated support.

3. Sheep Grazing at Scott's Landing

In 2024, we entered an exciting partnership with Woven Tide, a female-founded company, to explore the benefits of sheep grazing on our preserved lands. Inspired by the 10,000-year history of human-animal land partnerships, we'll study how these natural grazers impact our coastal ecosystems and if this farmer-land trust collaboration is more impactful than working alone. With one successful summer of grazing at Scott's Landing, we look forward to another year of rediscovering regenerative practices and strengthening community ties.



2. A Beautiful Benefit at the Pilgrim's Inn

Our annual Benefit Brunch, a joyful tradition supporting the continued success of IHT, was held in August at the beautiful Pilgrim's Inn in Deer Isle Village. New and returning community members gathered at the historic



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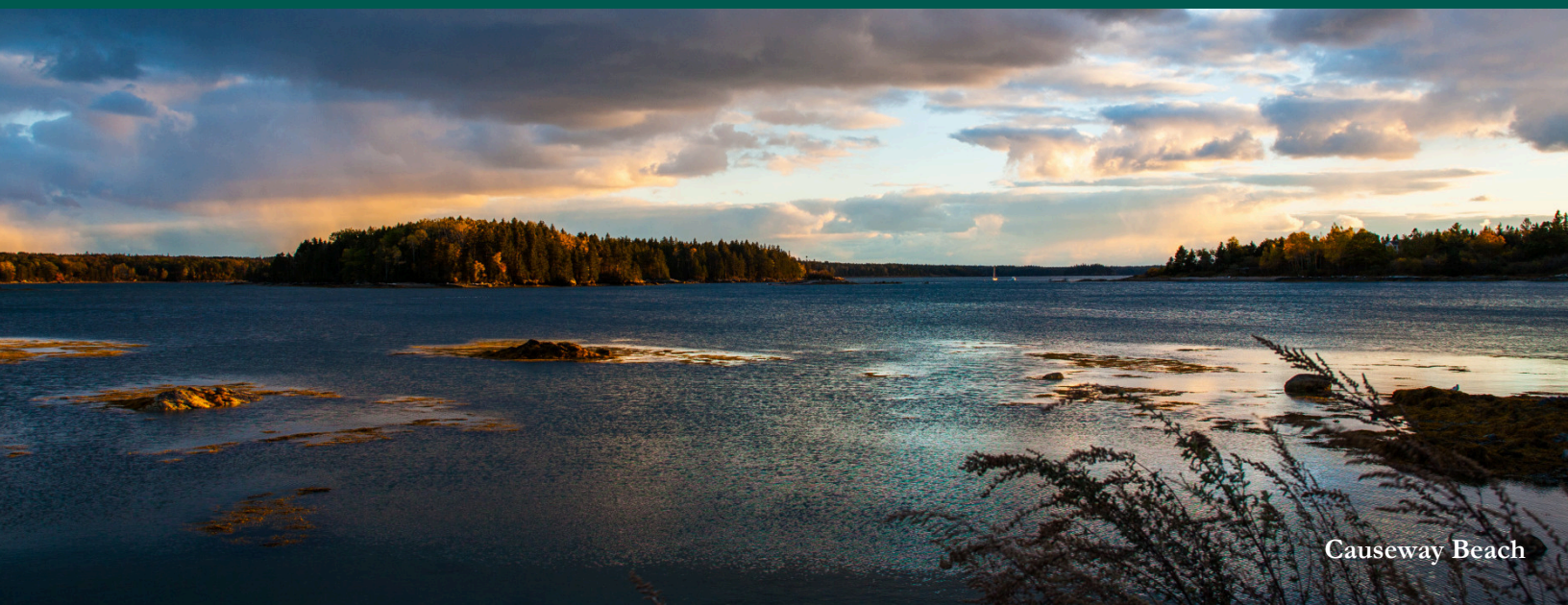
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The names listed in this report reflect gifts & pledges from the 2024 fiscal year, which ended October 31, 2024. Every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of this list.

If you find an error, please let us know, and accept our sincere apologies.

OUR MISSION

Island Heritage Trust (IHT) contributes to the well-being of the island community by conserving its distinctive landscapes and natural resources, maintaining public access to valued trails, shoreline, and islands, and by providing educational programming for all ages.



Causeway Beach

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION



Lily Pond Park

Island Heritage Trust's Environmental Education program is devoted to preparing the next generation of stewards through lifelong, self-directed learning and place-based education.

Stewardship Class for local Middle School students has opened new avenues for helping with projects around the school. As these stewards care for the nature trail, remove invasive species, build trails, and plant native species, they are cultivating more than just gardens; they're growing a legacy of care, transforming school grounds into vibrant ecosystems.

Beyond the school grounds, IHT's Environmental Educator, Martha Bell, led students across various grade levels to engage in diverse and impactful field experiences:

- First graders explored the fascinating world of birds, learning about nesting habits and the critical issue of declining bird populations.
- Second grade delved into the importance of wetlands, focusing on the value of protecting vernal pools.
- Fourth grade journeyed to Acadia's Isle au Haut, where they practiced and internalized the principles of 'leave no trace,' ensuring minimal impact on the environment.
- Fifth graders tackled the vital task of maintaining migratory fish passage, actively assisting alewives in their upstream journey.
- Sixth-grade students contributed to ecological restoration by removing invasive bittersweet at Scott's Landing Preserve, clearing space for native species to thrive.
- Seventh grade focused on coastal resilience, planting beach grass to protect the shore from sea level rise and erosion caused by severe winter storms.
- Eighth graders worked on enhancing the Lily Pond ecosystem by planting native trees and establishing a buffer zone after removing invasive Norway maples, and further contributing by planting oak trees.
- And for students who chose to devote additional time to caring for the island, the High School Eco Club has worked with IHT's Conservation Director, Alex Drenga, to help assess storm damage and potential remedies at Sand Beach, Causeway Beach, and Reach Beach.

These students inspire the work we do, and thanks to the support of contributors like you, Island Heritage Trust gets to help them learn, grow, and plant their own seeds of change.

EXPANDING CAPACITY AND CARE

STEWARDSHIP & LAND

As Island Heritage Trust's responsibilities grew in tandem with the Deer Isle-Stonington community, it became evident that additional support was needed for land stewardship in the coming years. The acquisition of Carrying Place Preserve and the implementation of new strategies prompted IHT to expand its conservation and stewardship program.

Thanks to your support, a new Land Steward position was created, and Eli Forman joined our team! Eli Forman brings professional forestry and wildfire experience to the team, with an MS in Forestry from UMaine Orono in 2023.

This increased capacity within our conservation and stewardship team is crucial as land managers must proactively address changes in the natural world, particularly given our expanding responsibilities on the island. Encouraging natural resilience on the island is key as we consider the legacy of these beautiful places for our children and grandchildren.

With the enhanced expertise of our team, ongoing partnerships with researchers from UMaine, and increasing foundation and public support, 2024 was dedicated to planning future initiatives. Our shorelines and forests clearly indicate the challenges ahead. IHT will initially utilize this increased capacity to fortify Reach Beach at Gray's Cove and implement assisted migration by cultivating plants adapted for an uncertain future. UMaine's Forest Ecosystem Physiology group will continue its research, with IHT support, into the impact of today's climate on spruce forests along Maine's coast.

30+

STEWARDSHIP
VOLUNTEERS

2,500+

VOLUNTEER
HOURS

\$85k+

VALUE OF
IN-KIND TIME

We continue to hold
gratitude for the
dedication of our
volunteers, who
contributed over 40
Trail Tuesdays
throughout the year,
making our work
possible!



Settlement Quarry



Lily Pond Park



PRESERVES



PRESERVES OPEN FOR USE:

1. Bowcat Overlook
2. Carrying Place
3. Causeway Beach
4. Church Land
5. Crystal Cove
6. Lily Pond Park
7. Lisa Tolman Wotton Nature Preserve
8. Pine Hill
9. Reach Beach at Gray's Cove
10. Scott's Landing
11. Settlement Quarry
12. Shore Acres



CO-MANAGED PRESERVES:

13. Barred Island
The Nature Conservancy
14. Crockett Cove Woods
The Nature Conservancy
15. Holt Mill Pond
Town of Stonington
16. Edgar M. Tennis Preserve
Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands



OFF-SHORE ISLANDS:

17. Bradbury Island
18. Carney Island
19. Mark Island
20. Millet Island
21. Polypod Island
22. Round Island
23. Sheep Island
24. Whig Island
25. Wreck Island



Carrying Place

In 2023, geologist, volunteer, and long-time friend, Ann Hooke, donated **CARRYING PLACE PRESERVE** to Island Heritage Trust. She wanted the public to be able to experience over 30 acres of protected woodland forest, salt marsh, and tidal flats. The trails opened to the public in 2024, featuring Bray's Mountain, one of the highest points of elevation on Deer Isle, and views of Greenlaw and Long Coves.

BY THE NUMBERS:

27

PRESERVES
OWNED BY IHT

4

CO-MANAGED
PRESERVES

22

OFF-SHORE ISLANDS
CONSERVED BY IHT

38

CONSERVATION
EASEMENTS

22

MILES OF PROTECTED
SHOREFRONT

1,500

ACRES OF
PROTECTED LAND

2024 FINANCIALS

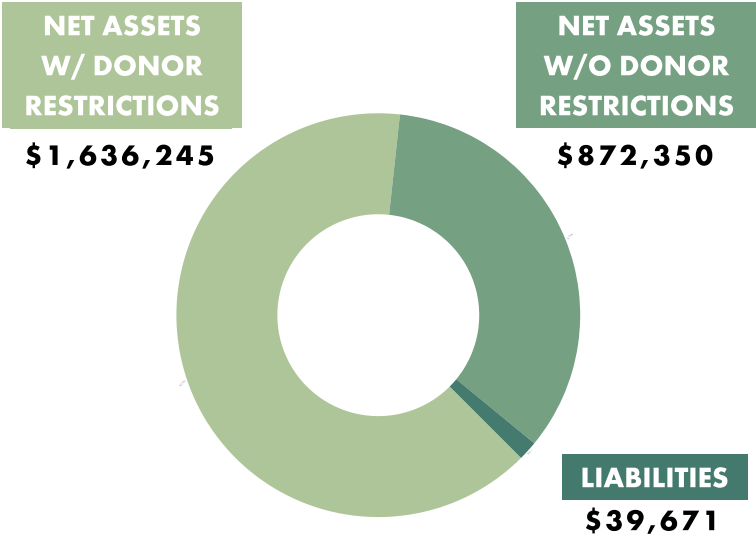
Our total revenue in FY 2024 was \$1,157M, or 43% up over last year. This reflects a number of very generous donations and grants that built on the previous year's fundraising efforts for our ongoing land conservation, planned expenses, and other special projects. Our basic operating revenues were \$546K.

Our basic operating expenses were \$517K, creating a small day-to-day operating surplus. Our full expenses were \$631K, which included an IHT contribution towards MCHT's purchase of Conary Point and other development expenses outside of day-to-day operations. Of the \$631K full expenses, over 68% was dedicated to education programming, stewardship activities, and new initiatives that directly support our mission, an increase of 5% from the last two years. This also reflects on staff productivity with very effective administrative expense management.

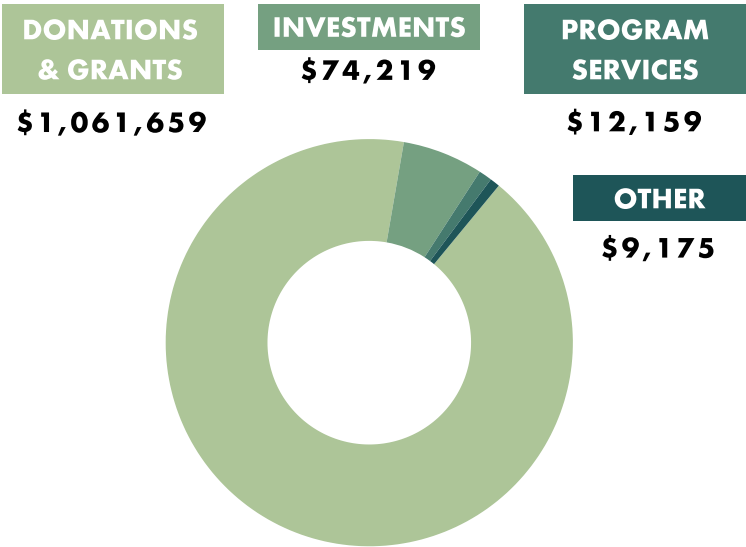
Net assets grew significantly due to incoming donations and grants, which are to be used in future years for specific projects. In addition, we benefited from market gains due to a favorable investing climate.

We have several significant projects in the pipeline for this current year and for future years; this includes the Heritage House renovation, ongoing land acquisition projects, and building the stewardship funds for the Preserves and Islands to ensure we can maintain them all effectively. We also need to ensure we can continue to financially support our Land Trust accreditation and certification, especially as we grow the organization. We are very grateful to all the members and donors for their generous support of our mission.

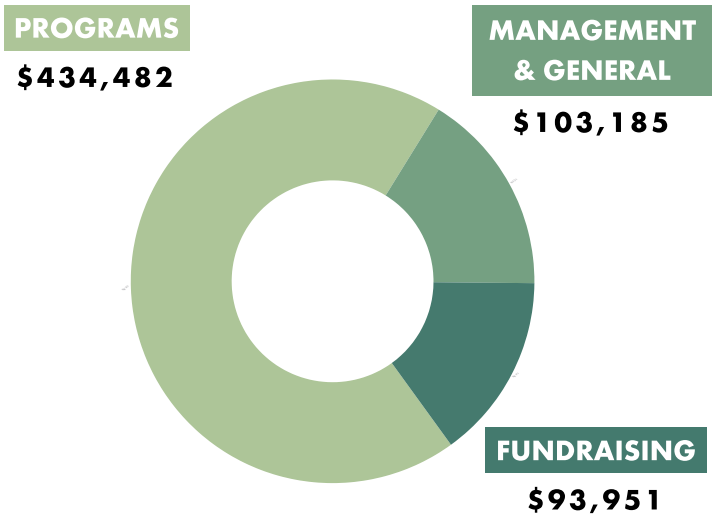
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS: \$2,548,266



TOTAL REVENUE: \$1,157,212



TOTAL EXPENSES: \$631,618





STAFF

Julia Zell, Executive Director

Martha Bell, Environmental Educator

Alex Drenga, Conservation Director

Eli Forman, Land Steward

Jacob McCarty, Development Director

Terry Real, Summer Stewardship Assistant

Noël Ruth, Outreach Manager

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Shore Acres

Front Cover: Crockett Cove Woods +
+ Photographs by Matt Litman