



# **2024 Review & Looking Ahead: Highlights, Challenges & Goals**



# Agenda

**Annual Meeting, Saturday, January 11, 2025**

- Welcome & Introductions: Susan White, President
- Slate of Board & Officers: Janet Williams, Secretary
- Introduce Advisory Group Members: Janet Williams, Secretary
- 2025 Budget: Jim Gilbert, Treasurer
- 2024 Review & Looking Ahead- Highlights, Challenges & Goals: Ashley Megquier, FOSI Outreach Coordinator





# Slate of Board & Officers

Annual Meeting, Saturday, January 11, 2025

- **President:** Susan K. White, Hampden
- **Vice President:** Rolf Olsen, Searsport
- **Secretary:** Janet Williams, Searsport
- **Treasurer:** Jim Gilbert, Winterport

At-Large:

- Greg Biddinger, Belfast
- Steve Bulloch, Searsport
- Rob Burke, Newburgh
- Sandi Cirillo, Searsport
- David Italiaander, Searsport
- Jill Kulbe, Searsport
- Robert E. Ramsdell, *Emeritus*, Brunswick





# Advisory Group

Annual Meeting, Saturday, January 11, 2025

- Mayo Bulloch, Searsport
- Janine Carpenter, Searsport
- Cloe Chunn, Swanville
- Derek Dunbar, Searsport
- Josh Goldstein, Belfast
- Timothy Haugh, Brewer
- Stephene Kelley, Searsport
- Marjorie Knuuti, Searsport
- Bill Kulbe, Searsport
- Tom Mullin, Richmond
- Bay Nadeau, *Student Ambassador*, Searsport





# Proposed 2025 Budget

Income		Expense		
Fundraising-			General Operating Expenses-	\$900
Donations-Business	\$9,000			
Donations-Individual	\$12,000		Marketing Expenses-	\$510
Donations-Municipal	\$3,000			
Fundraising-Events	\$2,000		Postage-	\$225
Grants-			Printing Expenses-	\$1,500
Other Grant Income	\$5,000			
			Program Expenses-	\$31,055
Other Income-				
Interest Income -Banks	\$800		Trail/Island Maintenance-	\$600
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$31,800</b>		<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$34,790</b>
			<b>Net Income</b>	<b>-\$2,990</b>

Our proposed budget for 2025 shows a modest loss of just under \$3,000. It is our strategy to always budget conservatively.



# The Year in Review

## In 2024, FOSI...

- Had a productive but challenging year
- Contended with several winter storms that caused damage to our trails, eroded banks, and the Southern Shore trail had to be re-routed with a new set of stairs to the beach
- Continued to help raise awareness about the proposed offshore wind port project
- Sponsored a wide array of educational programs for all ages and collaborated with many community partners to offer meaningful events to the public
- Built and installed 20 permanent display boards along the Homestead Trail for a rotating series of interpretive displays and StoryWalks





# Educational Programs

- Our educational programs continued to flourish in 2024. We continued to vary the locations for our events, as well as our target age groups, to reach as wide an audience as possible.
- With the exception of one virtual program we cosponsored with the Belfast Free Library, we chose to focus on in-person programs. We hosted 15 events on Sears Island, two at the Belfast Free Library, and one at Carver Memorial Library. Other offerings were self-guided activities on the island or fundraising events held at local restaurants.
- For Science Squad, we followed a hybrid model, offering activity kits and in-person events. We installed three self-guided StoryWalks on the island between June and September.
- Over the course of 2024, we offered 25 public programs with over 1000 participants.





# In-Person Programs

- Our in-person programs geared toward adults included a signs of spring walk, an eco-book discussion group, a hiking tour of Sears Island's "greatest hits," a fall migratory birding program, and art and photography workshops. In addition, FOSI assisted with the Sierra Club Maine's Earth Day Cleanup on Sears Island.
- For families, we hosted an after-school program about the solar eclipse, a springtime mosses and ferns nature walk, fairy house building, and a Halloween scavenger hunt and "Spooky Animals Interpretive Trail." FOSI volunteers also assisted with the Kids Fun Run on Sears Island.





The Belfast Free Library Friends of Sears Island  
and Maine Coast Heritage Trust Present

# Mammals and More on the Move in March



Presented by Kirk Gentalen  
March 14, 6:30-7:30pm

Friends of Sears Island and The Belfast Free Library Present

# Get Ready for the Eclipse!

April 2nd, 3:30-4:30pm  
in the Abbott Room at the Belfast Free Library

Learn all about eclipses, build a solar projection box for safe viewing, and take home some free eclipse glasses!



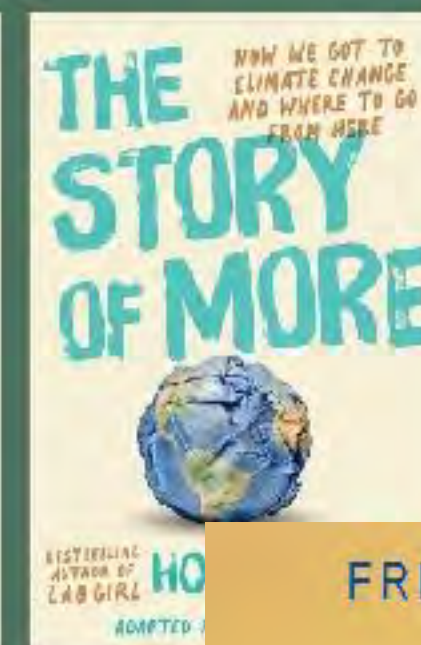
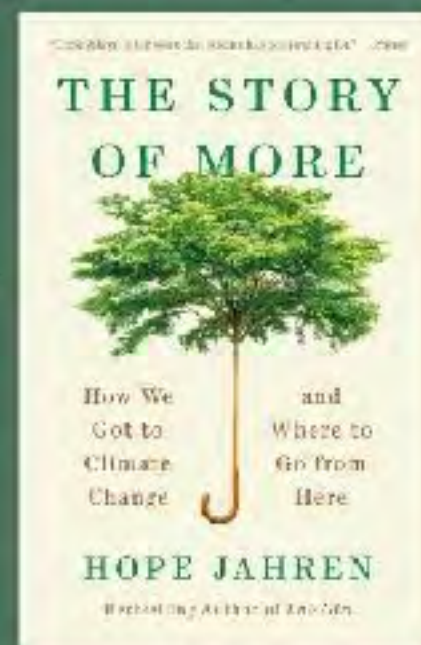
For ages 5-12 with an accompanying adult  
registration required, sign-up at outreach@friendsofsears

Join Friends of Sears Island and The Carver Memorial Library for an

# Eco Book Discussion

Book Selection: The Story of More by Hope Jahren

In honor of Earth Day, we are hosting an eco book discussion about climate change. Read the selected book over the month of April, and then come to our book discussion group on May 7th at 6:30pm at the Carver Memorial Library. A youth companion version is also available for young adults to participate as well!



To sign-up, email [staff@carverlibrary.org](mailto:staff@carverlibrary.org)

Friends of Sears Island Presents

# Signs of Spring Walk

with Karen Johnson Maine Master Naturalist



May 9, 10am-noon on Sears Island



# sears island's GREATEST HITS

- A GUIDED HIKE WITH CLOE CHUNN -  
JULY 2, 10AM-4PM

To register, email [outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org](mailto:outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org)

Friends of Sears Island Presents

# An Elfin Woods Walk for Kids

with Cloe Chunn, Maine Master Naturalist



## ✦ Metal Embossing in Nature ✦

An art workshop with Ashley Megquier and Sandi Cirillo

September 23, from 10AM- 12PM on Sears Island

Register at [outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org](mailto:outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org). \$10 materials fee per person

May 15,

Friends of Sears Island Presents

# wee forest folk

A Family Program on Sears Island

July 31, 2:00- 3:30pm  
with Ashley Megquier,  
FOST's Outreach Coordinator

A walk in the forest can inspire our imaginations. Come play with us and embrace a sense of wonder as we go on a scavenger hunt in the woods to find tiny gnome and fairy figurines, and then build a gnome home or fairy house in the forest out of natural materials. We will also read stories about fairies and gnomes! For ages 5-12 with an accompanying adult.



To register, email [outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org](mailto:outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org)

FRIENDS OF SEARS ISLAND PRESENTS



# Fall Migratory Birding on Sears Island

with Seth Benz

September 29, 7:30-9:30am

FMI: [friendsofsearsisland.org](http://friendsofsearsisland.org)

# TRAILS AND TREATS

OCTOBER 18-31

A self-guided Halloween nature scavenger hunt and "spooky" animal trail on Sears Island. Pick up a treat bag at the library afterwards!

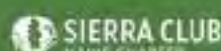
A printed scavenger hunt will be available to families visiting the island at the kiosk just beyond the island gate. Try to find all of the items on the list! The display signs along the Homestead Trail will also have interesting facts and jokes about the "spooky" animals associated with Halloween. After completing the scavenger hunt, families are invited to stop by the Carver Library before the end of the month for a free treat bag (non-food goodies).



FMI: [FRIENDSOFSEARSISLAND.ORG](http://FRIENDSOFSEARSISLAND.ORG)



Earth Day:  
Sears Island Cleanup & Hike!  
April 20th from 10am - 1pm!



# Autumn Nature Walk & Photography Workshop

with Sandra Mitchell  
October 24, 10am-12pm



















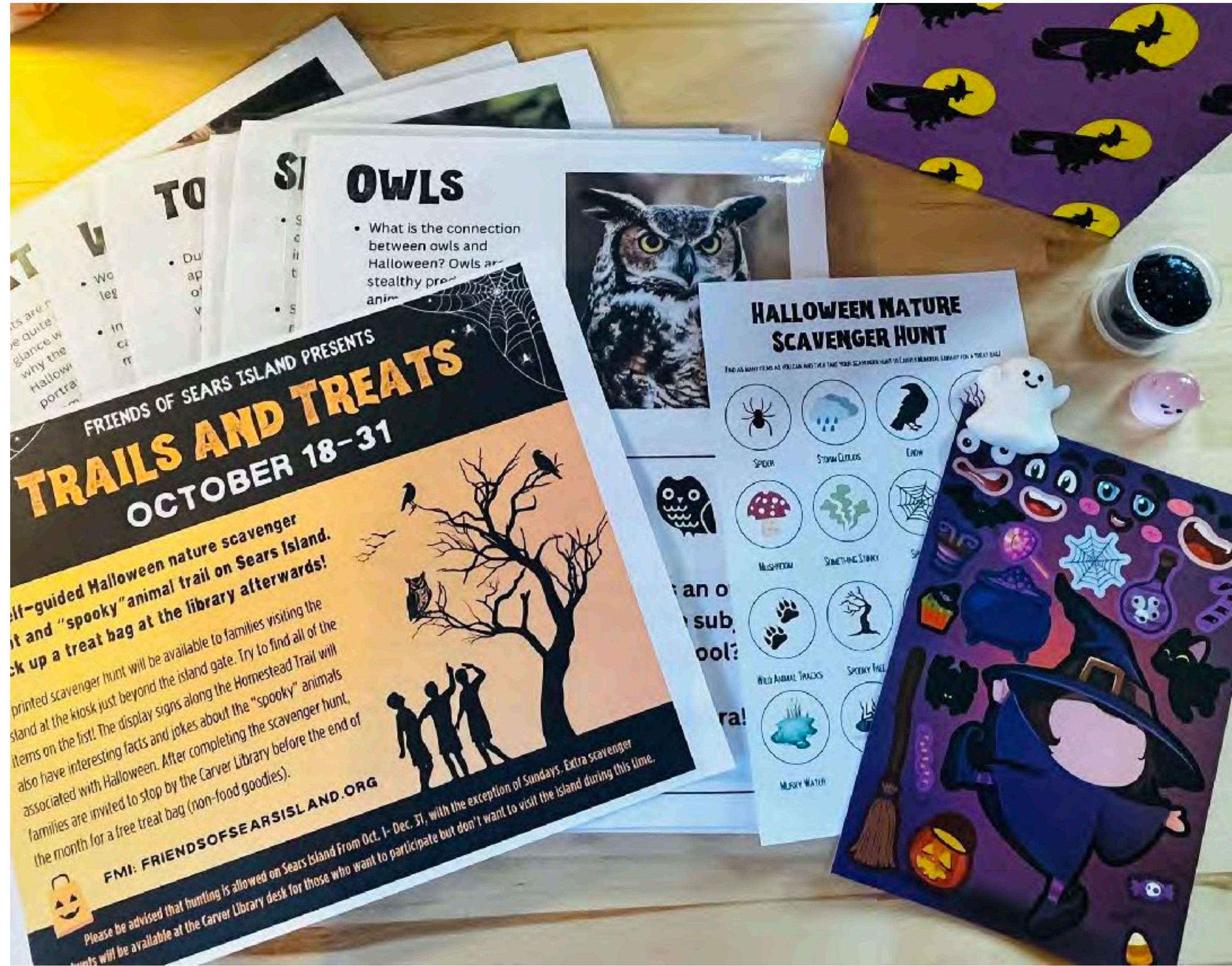






# Activity Kit Program

- We created 160 activity kits for families, focused on four different themes, including “Wild Weather,” “Tiny Worlds,” “Wee Forest Folk,” and “Patterns in Nature.” We also offered a self-guided Halloween scavenger hunt and spooky animal interpretive trail with prize bags for participants at Carver Library.
- These continued to be very popular and a great way for families to pick up nature-based educational materials to learn together at home at their leisure.





FRIENDS OF SEARS ISLAND PRESENTS:

# Wild Weather

A Science Squad Grab-and-Go Activity Kit for Kids

Maine winters traditionally bring some pretty extreme weather events, but global warming is also contributing to unpredictable storms and temperature shifts. With the materials, instructions, and handouts included in this kit, kids will learn about many different types of weather and what causes it! Make a cloud identifier, create your own tornado and working water cycle model, build a spectroscope to view rainbows, and keep a moon journal to track the phases of the moon and better understand its relationship to tides and flooding.



For kids ages 5-12. To request a free kit, email [outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org](mailto:outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org)

FRIENDS OF SEARS ISLAND PRESENTS:

# Tiny Worlds

A Science Squad Grab-and-Go Activity Kit for Kids  
made possible with support from First National Bank



We can learn and see so much when we take the time to examine things up close. Right now tiny leaves and buds and creatures are emerging in the natural world. This activity kit will include a magnifying glass and small journal to explore outdoors and sketch the miniature happenings all around you, as well as materials to bring some of the outdoors inside and create your own tiny world in a terrarium!



For kids ages 5-12. To request a free kit, email [outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org](mailto:outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org). Kits will be ready for pick up at Carver Library from May 15-31.

Friends of Sears Island Presents

# wee forest folk

Summer Activity Kit for Kids



Our summer activity kit will include a fairy or gnome figurine, and a "field guide" to wee forest folk to provide inspiration for building gnome homes and fairy houses in the woods. Materials to build a small raft and a fairy door for your figurine will also be included, as well as prompts for creative writing and sketching about your tiny forest friends! For ages 5-12. Activity kits can be picked up at Carver Memorial Library July 31- August 16.



To register, email [outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org](mailto:outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org)

FRIENDS OF SEARS ISLAND PRESENTS:

# Patterns in Nature

A Science Squad Grab-and-Go Activity Kit for Kids



This month's kit contains a pattern scavenger hunt, materials to make a suncatcher inspired by designs in nature, and a mandala decoration! Educational handouts about math in nature will be included as well, covering symmetry, Fibonacci numbers, and fractals. For kids ages 5-12. Kits can be picked up at the Carver Memorial Library September 25- October 4.



To request a free kit, email [outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org](mailto:outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org)



# StoryWalks

- We offered three StoryWalks on Sears Island in partnership with Carver Memorial Library in 2024, from June to September.





# Check out our Solar System Walk on Sears Island!

From June 5- June 30

The solar system walk will begin on the paved road on Sears Island just beyond the kiosk, and continue for roughly a half mile. As families walk along the path, they will find signs about the planets and other parts of our solar system, spaced in approximate proportion to real distances. This project is a collaboration between Friends of Sears Island and Carver Memorial Library.

FRIENDSOFSEARSISLAND.ORG  
CARVERLIBRARY.ORG

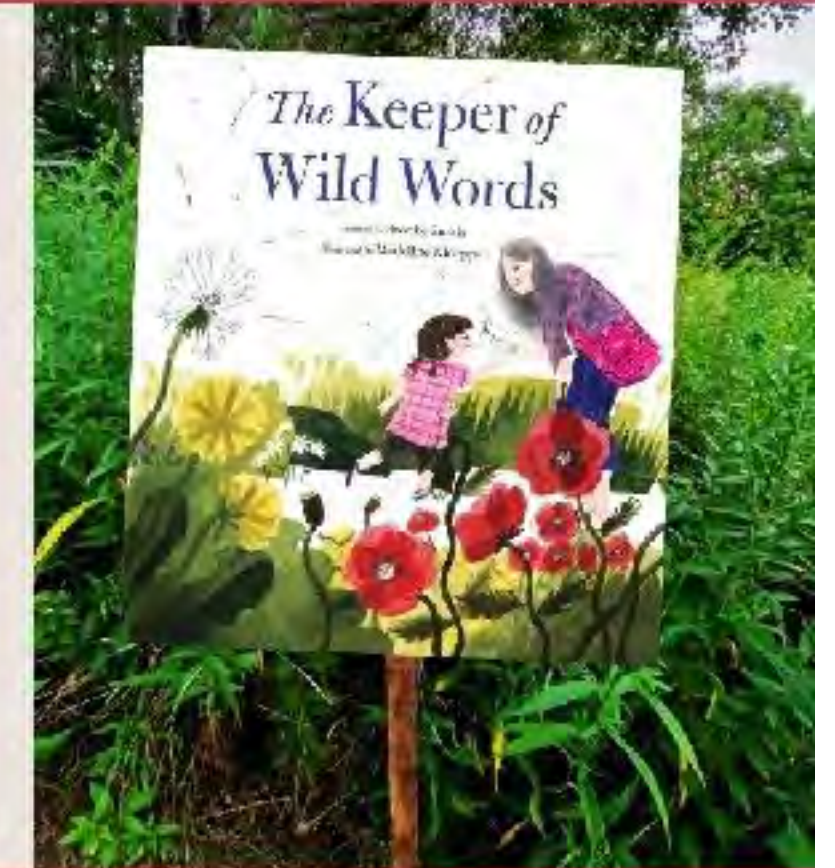


## Check out our StoryWalk® on Sears Island!

From July 1 - 31, you can read a book while you hike on the Homestead Trail! Our featured story is The Keeper of Wild Words, by Brooke Smith and illustrated by Madeline Kloepper. Follow along on a scavenger hunt to discover beautiful things in nature and the special words we use to describe them. Along the hike, you'll also become a keeper of wild words!

*This project is a collaboration between Friends of Sears Island and the Carver Memorial Library*

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CARVERLIBRARY.ORG



## Check out our StoryWalk® on Sears Island!

From August 1 - 31, you can read a book while you hike on the Homestead Trail! Our featured story is Forest Bath Right Down This Path, by Lisa Robinson and illustrated by Khoa Le. In this book, a child encourages her father to put away his cell phone and take notice of all the natural wonders along their hike. This book was inspired by a the nearby Barred Island Preserve in Deer Isle!

*This project is a collaboration between Friends of Sears Island and the Carver Memorial Library*

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CARVERLIBRARY.ORG





# Solstice Celebrations

- Our solstice celebrations are always well attended, and some of our best memories are made being together on the island at these celebrations, even in rough weather!
- On the day of the summer solstice this year, it was extremely hot, and there were downpours, strong winds, thunder, and lightning several times during the evening. Due to the unpredictable weather, we had a small but spirited celebration with those that decided to brave the elements. About 100 people attended.
- Our winter solstice celebration was very successful, despite the bitterly cold temperatures and high winds. Over 200 people came out on the shortest day of the year to brave the frigid weather and celebrate the return of the sun with us and our friends and neighbors. It was perhaps the most visually beautiful winter solstice event we have organized, with a winding luminaria path leading to an evergreen spiral in the center of which was a decorated and lit up holiday tree. A highlight this year was a shadow puppet show, which complemented the peace and quiet of the night.







# Summer Solstice by the Sea

June 20, 2024



















# Winter Solstice by the Sea

December 21, 2024







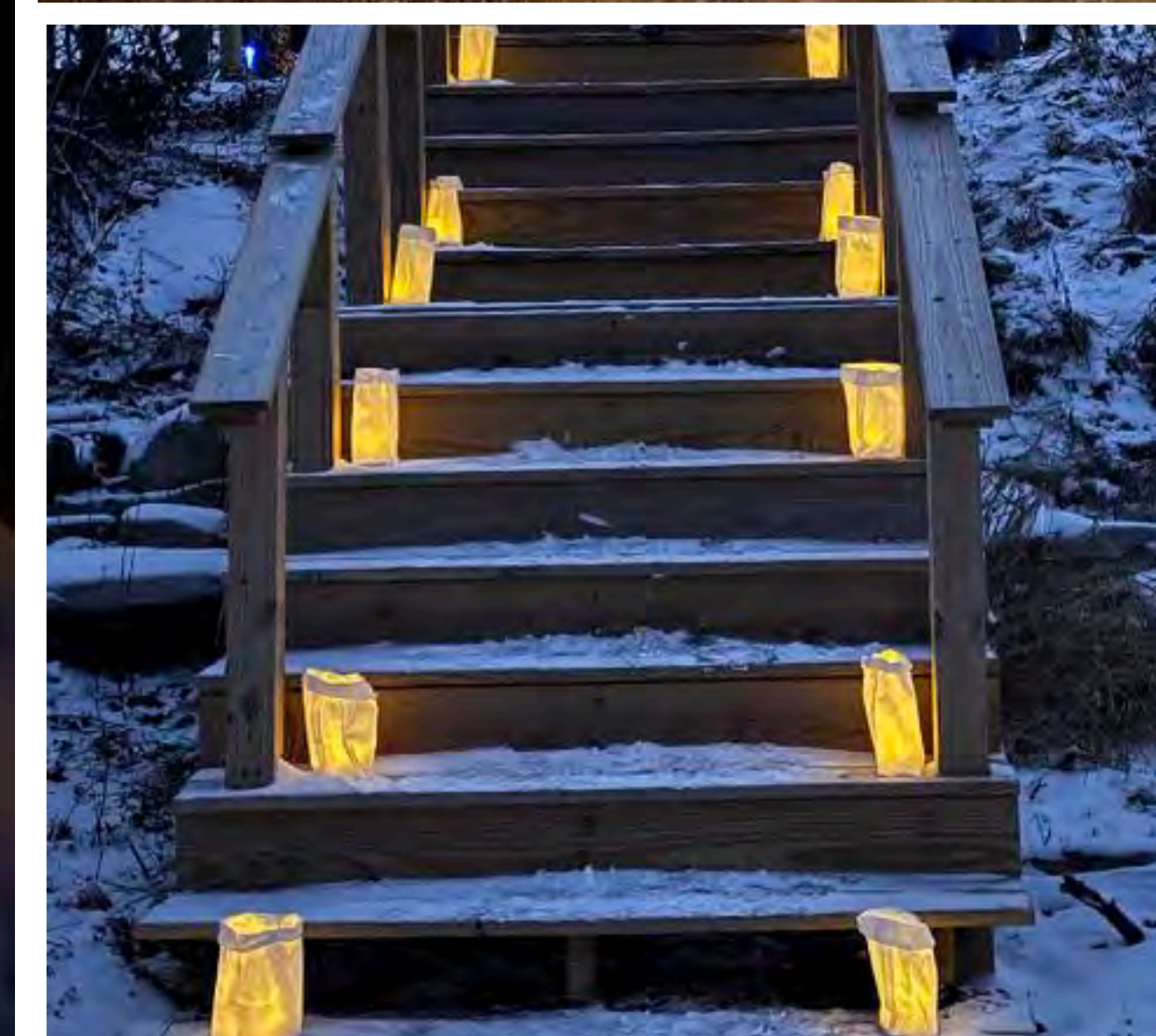






























# Website, Social Media & Technology

- The connected audience for our Facebook page has grown by 290 to 2,024 followers. The number of “content interactions” grew 12% over the previous year to more than 12,400 likes or reactions, saves, comments, shares. Our Instagram presence has grown by 110 followers to 667 engaged people.
- We have grown to 728 subscribers to our Mailchimp email system, and about 43% of recipients open the emails we send out.
- Excellent reviews continue to be posted on our “Google for Business” profile page, maintaining our 4.7 out of 5 stars average. One recent visitor wrote, “Fantastic park with great views.”
- This year FOSI purchased a license for a full Zoom account. We are hoping to offer the opportunity for viewers to participate via Zoom for some of our in-person events that are held indoors.
- Our website remains very popular, and in the coming years we plan to add a new gallery of wildlife images to the current offerings.





# Community Collaborations

FOSI continued to strengthen bonds and forge new alliances with many community groups in 2024:

- Carver Memorial Library
- Belfast Free Library
- Sierra Club Maine
- Searsport Recreation Department
- Alliance for Sears Island
- Campaign to Protect Sears Island
- Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition
- Searsport High School students





# Wind Port Updates

Sears Island named the selected site in 2024, but project remains uncertain



An artist's rendering of what a floating wind turbine manufacturing facility might look like on Sears Island, from Maine Department of Transportation





# Wind Port

## 2024 Developments

- On February 20, 2024, Governor Janet Mills stated at a press conference, “Sears Island is the best choice for an offshore wind port because it is already owned by the state, designated for the purpose of port development, will cost less in the short-term and long-term, and is expected to result in less environmental harm.”
- Sprague Energy has challenged the State’s reasons and has put forward a compelling case that their port at Mack Point can be reconfigured to fulfill all requirements, and that it would be less environmentally damaging.
- At this point, there are no confirmed cost figures for developing the port at either Mack Point or Sears Island.
- The state didn’t receive the \$456 million federal grant that would have paid for much of the planned port development; this is a serious blow.





# Wind Port

## 2024 Developments

- We were surprised in November to see pathways being cut through the forest on the Transportation Parcel for some geotechnical studies. This work follows similar work that was done two years ago in a different area.
- There are MANY people paying attention to what is going on, and some are deeply knowledgeable and experienced.
  - **Islesboro Islands Trust** has engaged an attorney to monitor and challenge the development when appropriate.
  - **The Alliance for Sears Island** is a consortium of key organizations (we are part of the Alliance) and individuals who have expertise and concern.
  - **The Campaign to Protect Sears Island/Wahsamkik** is another local activist group that continues doing excellent work. There are signs in people's yards all over the region advocating for the preservation of Sears Island.

*We encourage you to visit the websites of these organizations to learn more and to perhaps become involved in their work.*







**Party**

SATURDAY,  
AUGUST 10, 3-7 PM  
*on the Island's*  
CAUSWAY and BEACH

*Campaign to Protect*  
**SEARS ISLAND / WAHSUMKIK!**

LIVE MUSIC *by the Midnight Ramblers!*  
FOOD TRUCK! SHAVE ICE! SPEAKERS!  
SOAPBOX! FUN FOR KIDS!

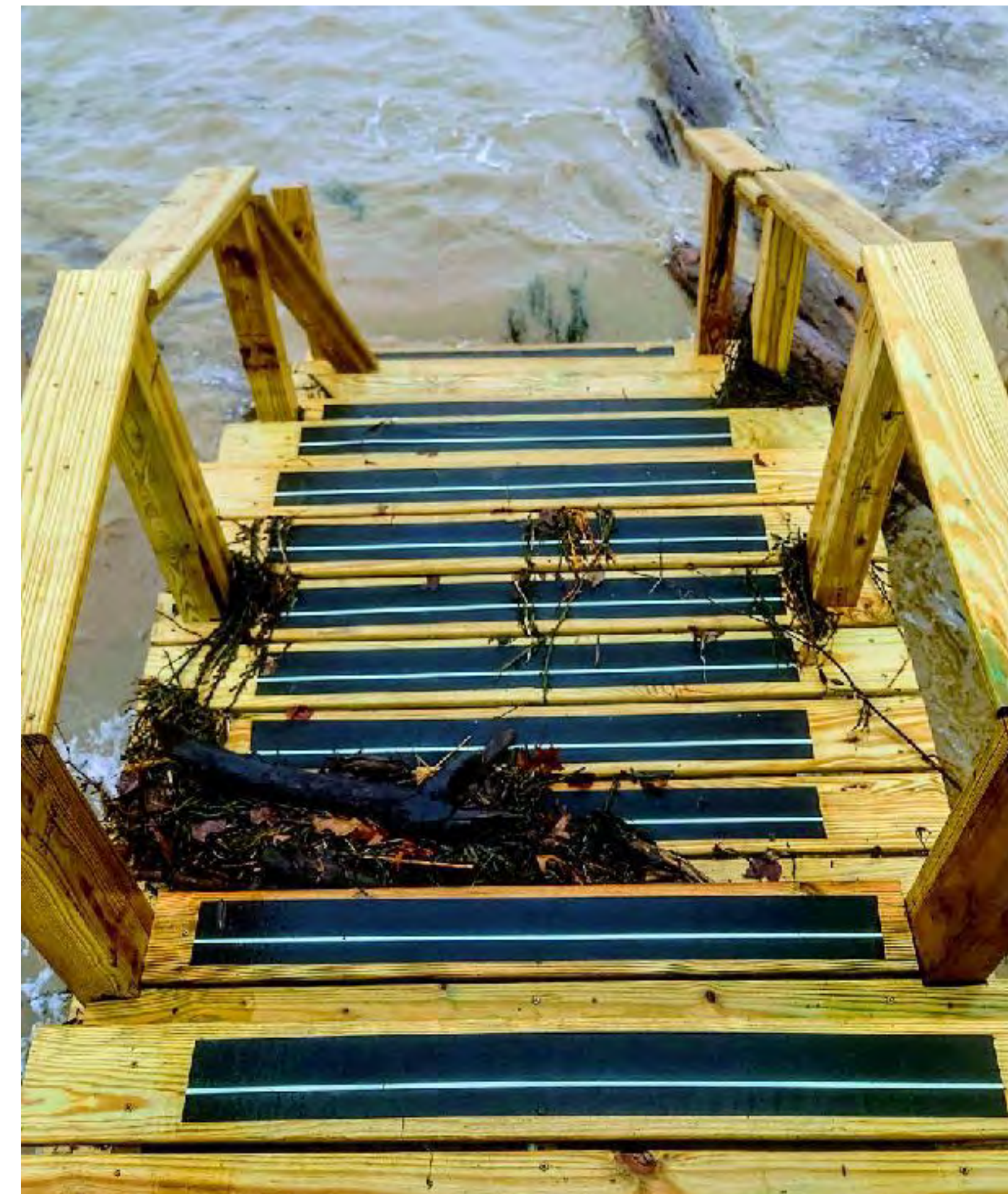
ProtectSearsIsland.org  
Instagram @protectsearsisland





# Trails Report

The trail crew had their work cut out for them this year. Besides the regular maintenance work, there were a couple of severe winter storms that brought down many trees and branches on our numerous trails and eroded banks. Dedicated volunteers removed fallen trees, repaired trails, cut encroaching brush away from the sides, mowed paths, and repaired signage.





# Trails Report

Other trail maintenance projects completed in 2024 included:

- Twenty durable, custom-made StoryWalk display boards were designed and built by one dedicated volunteer and later installed along the Homestead Trail by 10 volunteers. They were made possible by a generous donation of materials from Viking Lumber.
- New double-planked bog bridges were installed in a wet area on a connector trail between the Jetty Road and Homestead Trail. On this same trail, a set of dug-in, box steps were installed on a steep slope to make access to the trail safer.
- Due to last winter's powerful storms, the bank had eroded at the end of the Southern Shore Trail that made access to the beach very challenging. The trail had to be rerouted and, in a difficult area to work because of thick, slippery marine clay, volunteers constructed sturdy steps. It is now possible to safely access the scenic shore from this trail again.









# Volunteer Report

## Volunteers are the backbone of FOSI

- The FOSI Board and Advisory Group manage and administer the organization, maintain the trails, make trail signs, lead guided nature walks, help with on-island programs, coordinate community workshops, update our website, and staff fundraising events. Last year, this committed group put in over 2,400 hours of volunteer work for FOSI. We are very fortunate to have such a dedicated board and group of advisors to help guide the program and keep it running smoothly.
- Responding to a call for volunteers needed on a FOSI work day, five new volunteers (as well as five regular volunteers) showed up to help install the new display boards on the Homestead Trail. We depend on volunteers from the community to help us out when we have larger projects that require a lot of hands to get them done.









# Fundraising Activities

FOSI had several successful fundraising activities this year, most of them in partnership with local businesses. We had benefit dinners at Angler's and Darby's, and Sundog Solar in Searsport again sponsored our summer solstice celebration.

We received funding from:

- First National Bank to support our Science Squad after-school program
- The Jane and William Curran Foundation to fund the design phase of an expanded kiosk that will include more information about the natural, cultural, and historical resources of the island; and to support our ongoing educational programs and trail improvements
- Viking Lumber in Belfast (donated materials) to build our new durable display boards for the "Story Walk" along the Homestead Trail





# Fundraising Activities

- Additional funds were raised through events we sponsored, especially our summer and winter Solstice by the Sea gatherings, which attracted significant donations.
- We also applied for, and were awarded, funds from the towns of Searsport, Stockton Springs, and Belfast.
- As always, we raised a significant amount of the funds we need to operate through individual and business donations.





# Financial Review

## Income & Expenses: 1/1/2024-12/31/2024

At the end of 2024, we have a net operating loss of \$4,432. The main reason for this is that we were not successful in our efforts to secure grant funding, but we also fell a little short of our fundraising from the local and regional business community. Our proposed budget for 2025 also shows a small loss of just under \$3,000. It is our strategy to always budget conservatively. Our current cash on hand is \$74,778, so we are well prepared to absorb these losses.

Income		Expenses	
Fundraising-	\$2,000	General Operating Expenses-	\$968
Donations-Business	\$6,686	Marketing Expenses-	\$444
Donations-Individual	\$17,575	Postage-	\$55
Donations-Municipal	\$3,050	Printing Expenses-	\$2,182
Fundraising-Events	\$2,585	Program Expenses-	\$30,435
Fundraising-Misc.	\$54	Trail/Island Maintenance-	\$1,275
Total Fundraising-	\$31,950	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$35,359</b>
Other Income-			
Interest Income -Banks	\$977		
Total Other Income-	\$977		
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$32,927</b>	<b>Net Operating Income</b>	<b>-\$4,432</b>



# Financial Review

## Balance Sheet: 12/31/2024

While even modest losses are frustrating in the short term, as we look back at our performance over the last seven years, the clear trend, by several key metrics, is toward sustainability.

Cash on hand has more than doubled since 2018, from \$34,000 to nearly \$75,000.

ASSETS		LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Bank Accounts		Liabilities	\$0
Bangor Savings Checking	\$37,351	Total Liabilities	\$0
Bangor Savings Money Market	\$10,417	Equity	
First National CD3	\$26,794	Opening Balance Equity	\$42,608
PayPal Bank	\$216	Retained Earnings	\$34,702
Total Bank Accounts	\$74,778	Net Income	-\$2,531
		Total Equity	\$74,778
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$74,778</b>	<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>	<b>\$74,778</b>

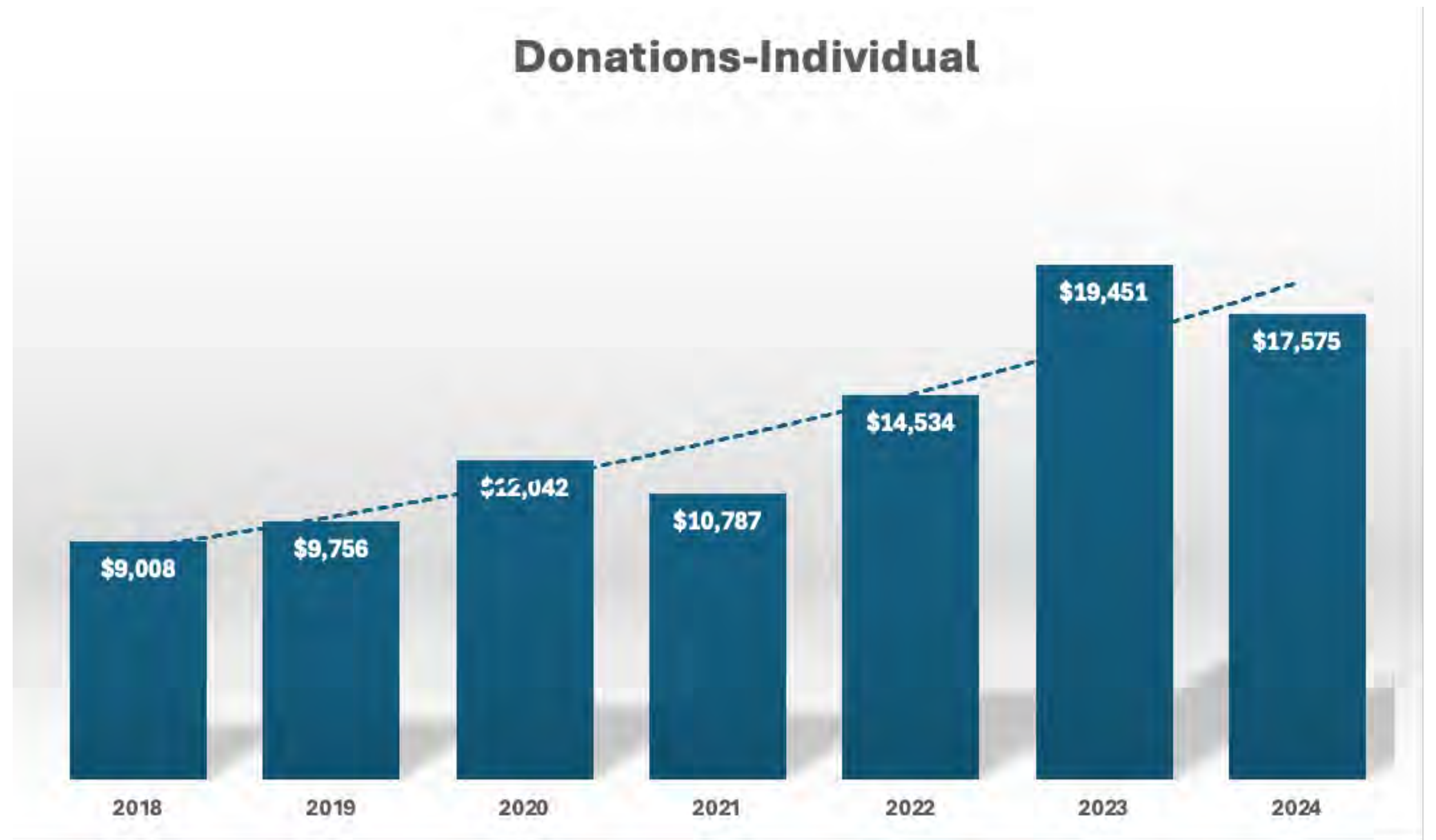
*We are currently in a strong cash position.*



# Financial Review

## Individual Donations 2018-2024

Donations from individuals have increased from \$9,008 in 2018 to \$17,575 in 2024.



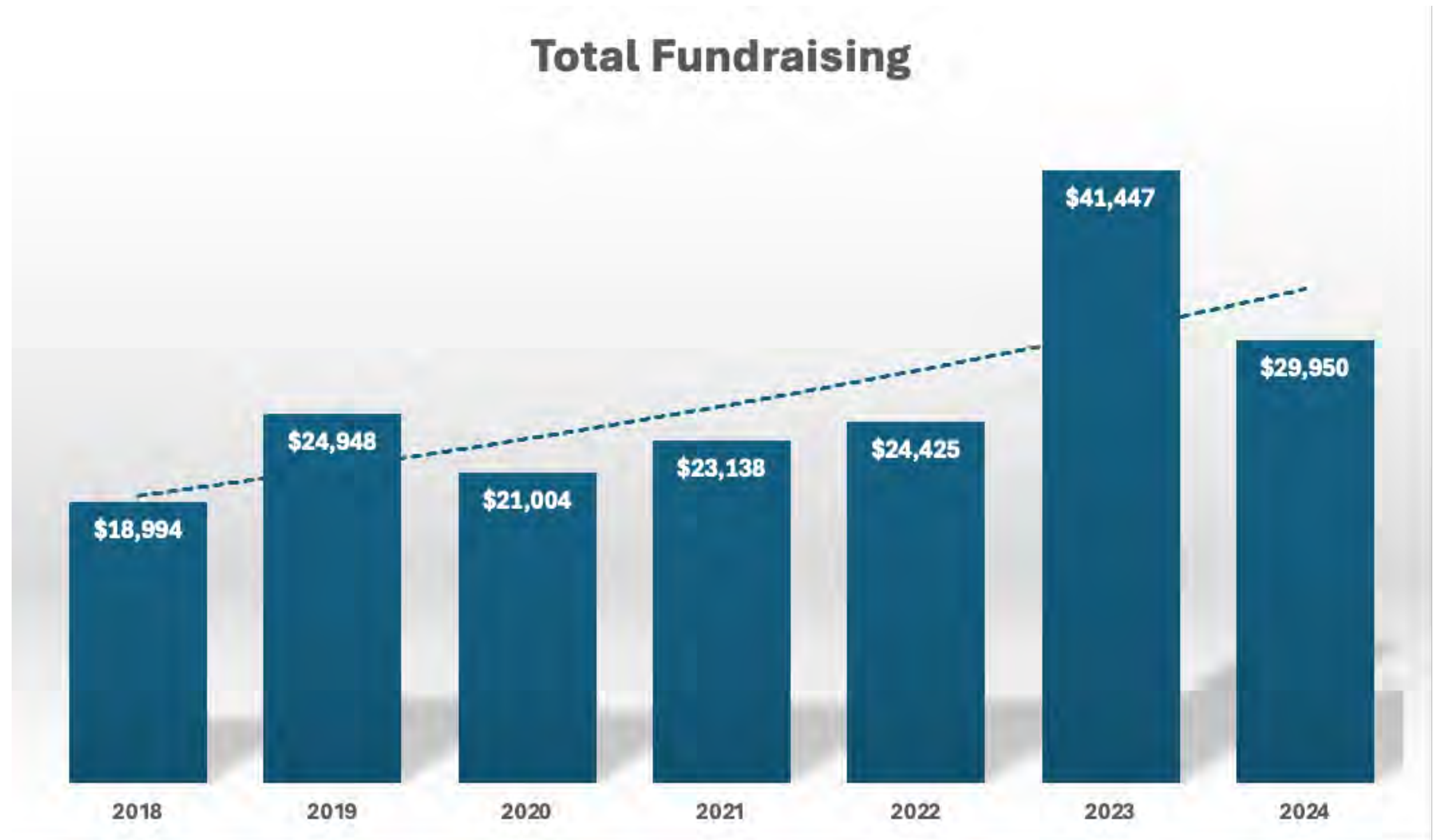
*The growth trend in individual donations is clear.*



# Financial Review

## Total Fundraising 2018-2024

Total fundraising, including donations from the regional business community and special events, has increased from \$18,994 in 2018 to \$29,950 in 2024.



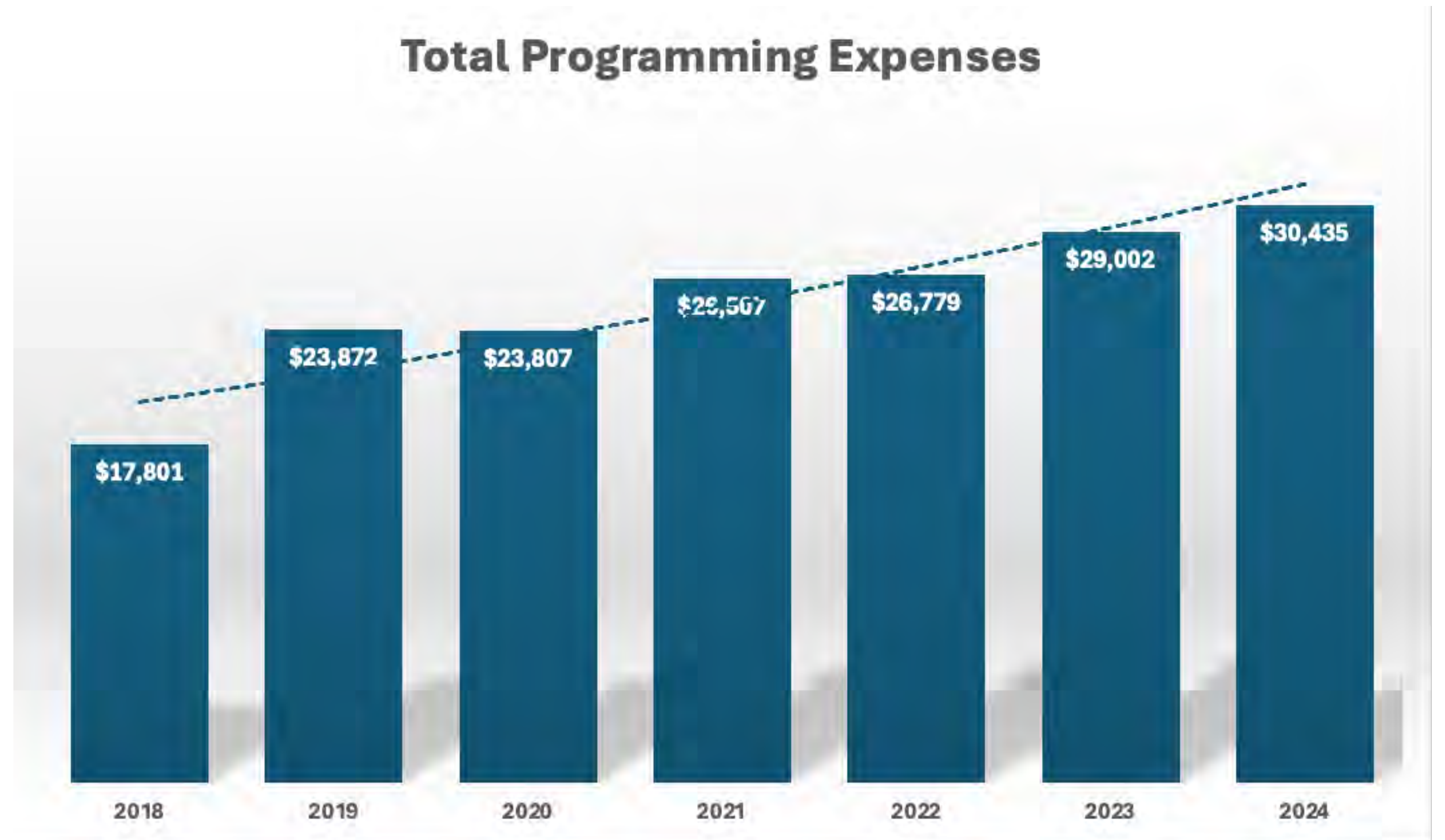
*The trend in total fundraising is also clear.*



# Financial Review

## Program Costs 2018-2024

During the same period, our programming costs have increased, too, from \$17,801 in 2018 to \$30,435 in 2024. This is the result of our offering more programs and annual increases for our Program Coordinator, but at a rate and scale that makes sense, given our income and other factors.



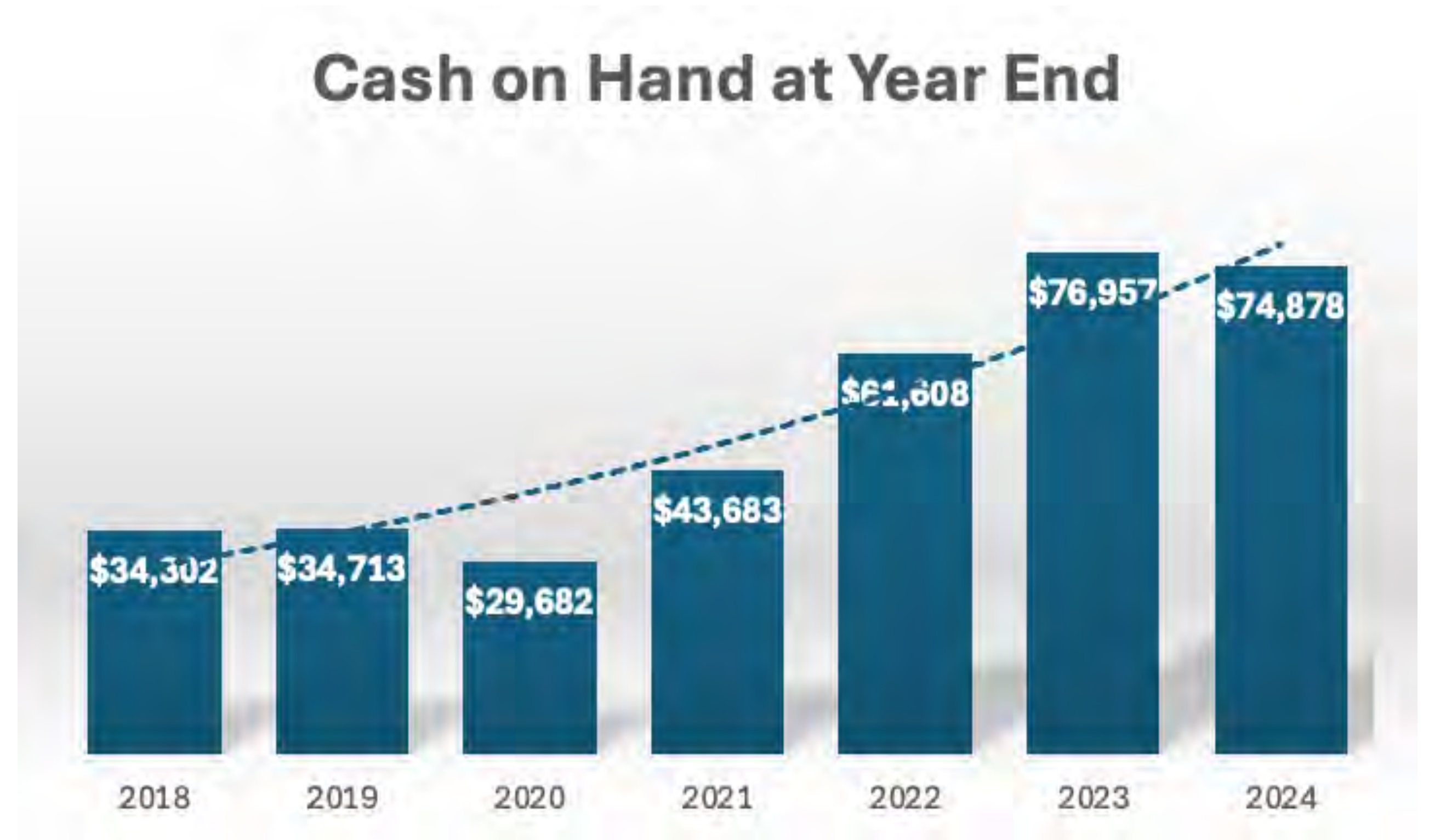
*Programming and related costs have grown responsibly.*



# Financial Review

## Cash on Hand at Year End

We are not yet a fully sustainable nonprofit organization, and we may never be. Our net income has fluctuated wildly over the last seven years, as it will in the future. During a few recent years we received large, unexpected grants and donations. That's a wonderful surprise, but we cannot count on that. Currently, we have nearly two years of operating funds in the bank, and we can take some pride and comfort in that, but we must not become complacent.



*We have nearly two years of operating cash on hand.*





















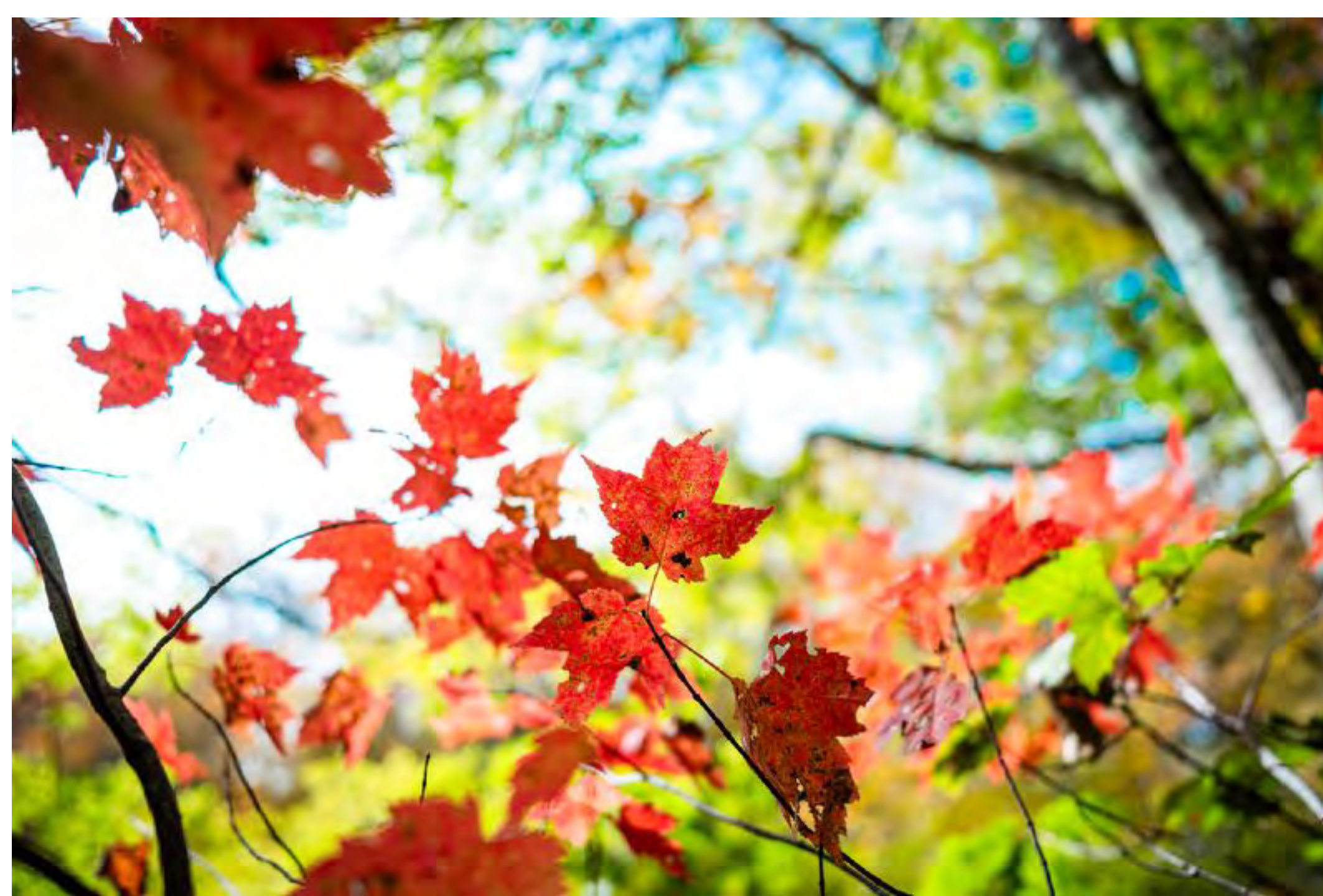
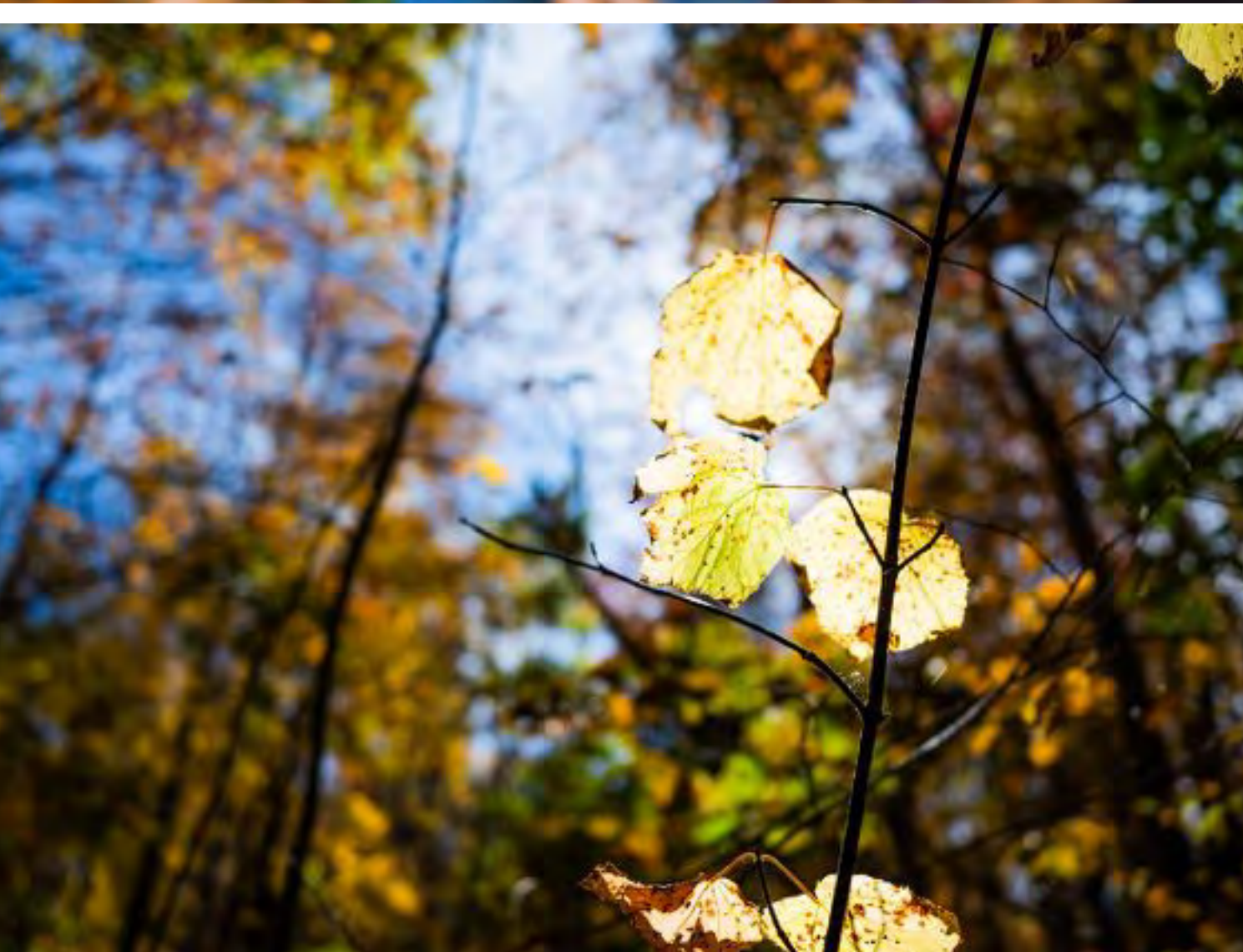






























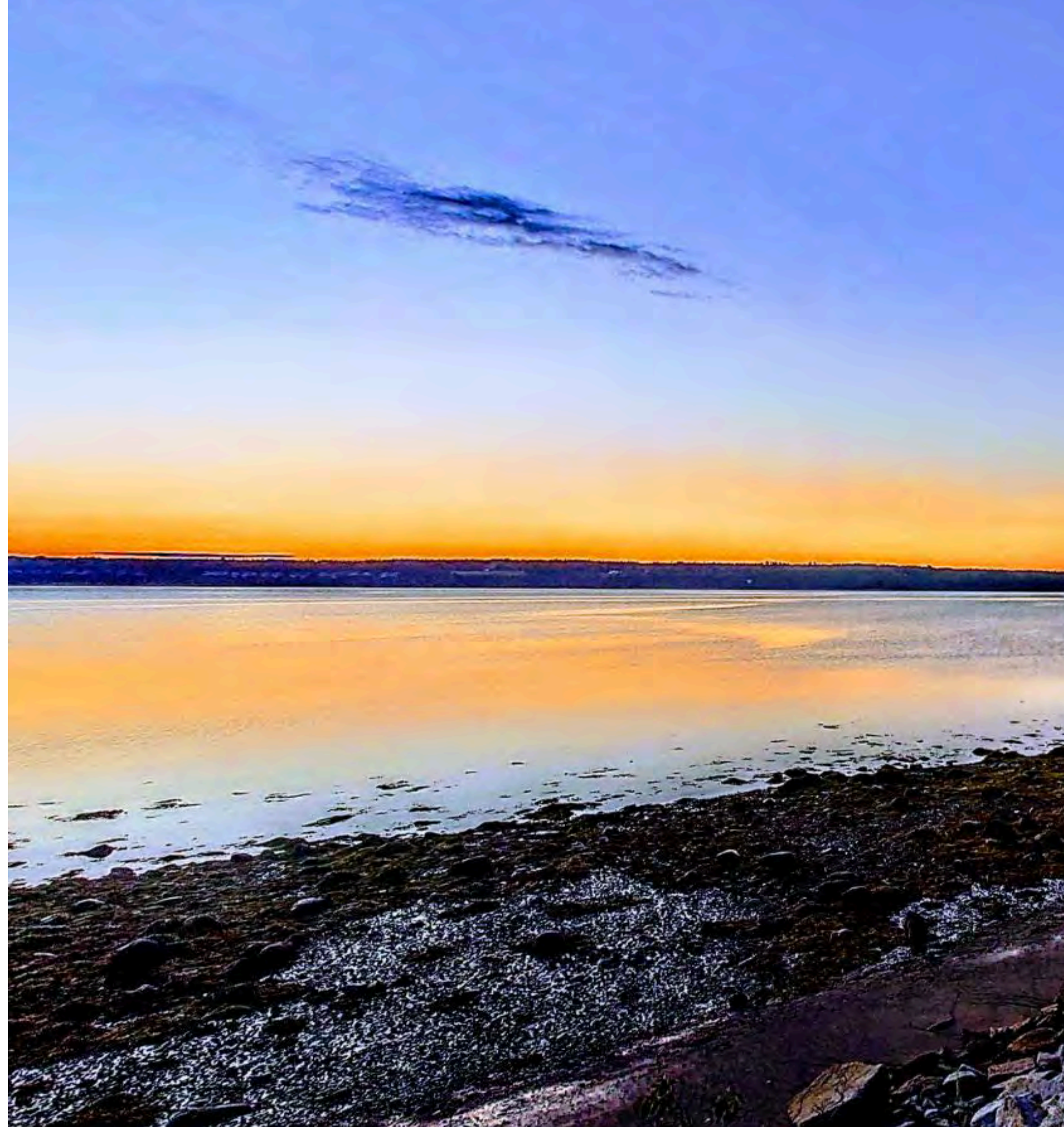




# What's on the Horizon?

Here's what's planned for the coming year:

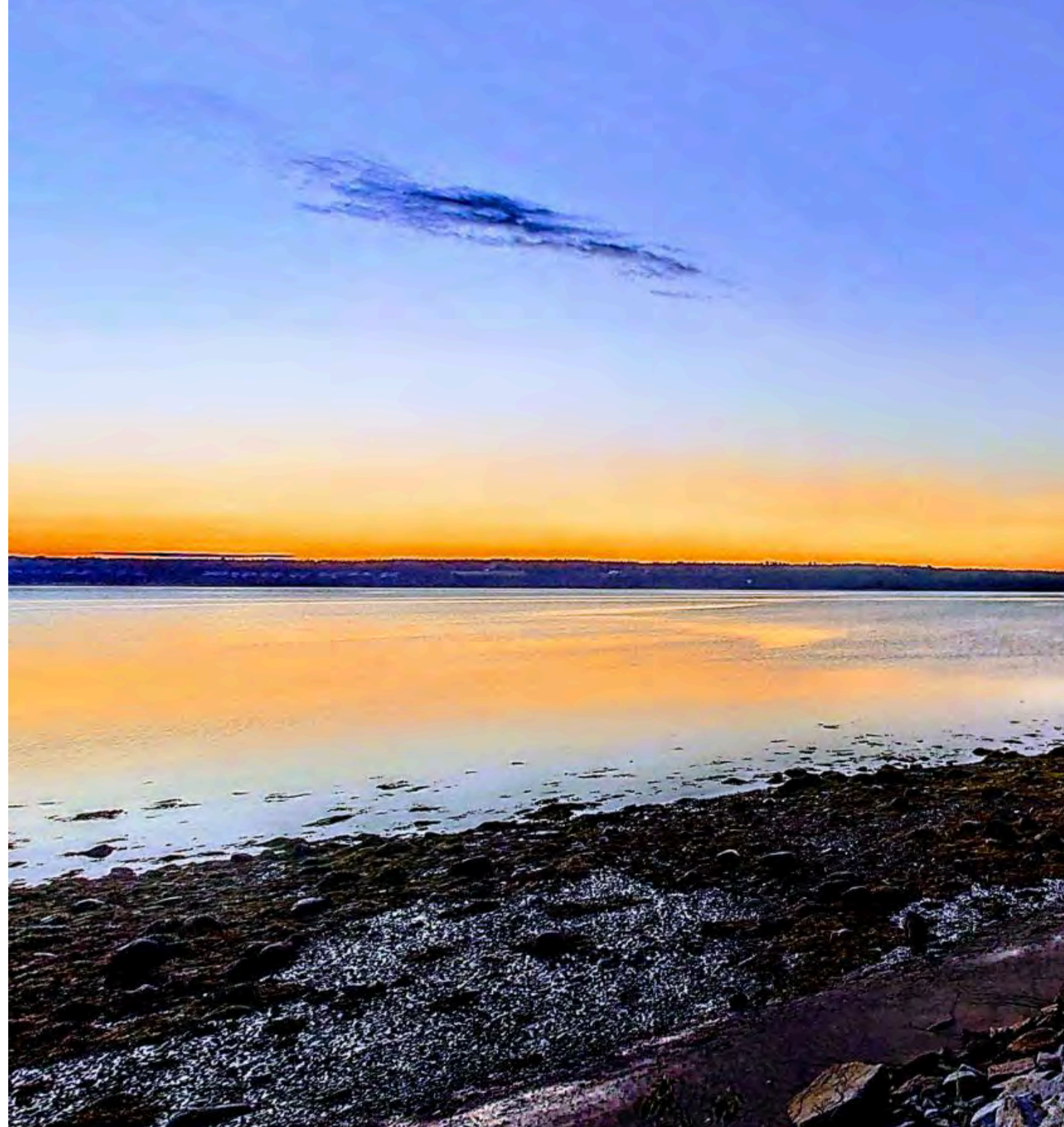
- We will continue to improve the trails to make them safer and easier to navigate.
- We have wanted to build an expanded kiosk with an attached shed for maintenance equipment and tools for several years. This year, we will get it designed and research sources of funding to build it, which includes writing proposals to building supply companies to request donations of some materials.
- Multiple academic researchers conducted studies on Sears Island during 2024—on brown tail moth reproduction, varieties of fungi, rockweed abundance, genetics of species found in vernal pools, and documenting animals in the forests using wildlife cameras. We plan to invite these researchers to present their findings in one or more public programs during the coming year. We will also consider having another program highlighting high school student projects (Searsport, Belfast and Bangor).





# What's on the Horizon?

- A lot has been happening with the state-proposed offshore wind port project—and FOSI has taken the responsibility of informing the public about the latest developments. In the spring of 2025, we plan to co-sponsor (with the Alliance for Sears Island and the Campaign to Protect Sears Island) a public meeting in Searsport to present the most up-to-date information available about the project and answer questions.
- In the fall of 2025, we will work with the University of Southern Maine North Atlantic Institute and the Parsonage Gallery in Searsport on an exciting project that explores the intersection of art, ecology, and sustainability.
- For our educational programs, we plan to offer more self-guided activities using our new interpretive trail display boards, which could showcase artwork or historical photos, or provide wellness/ mindfulness tips for visitors walking the trail. We hope to collaborate with other community groups on some of these activities.



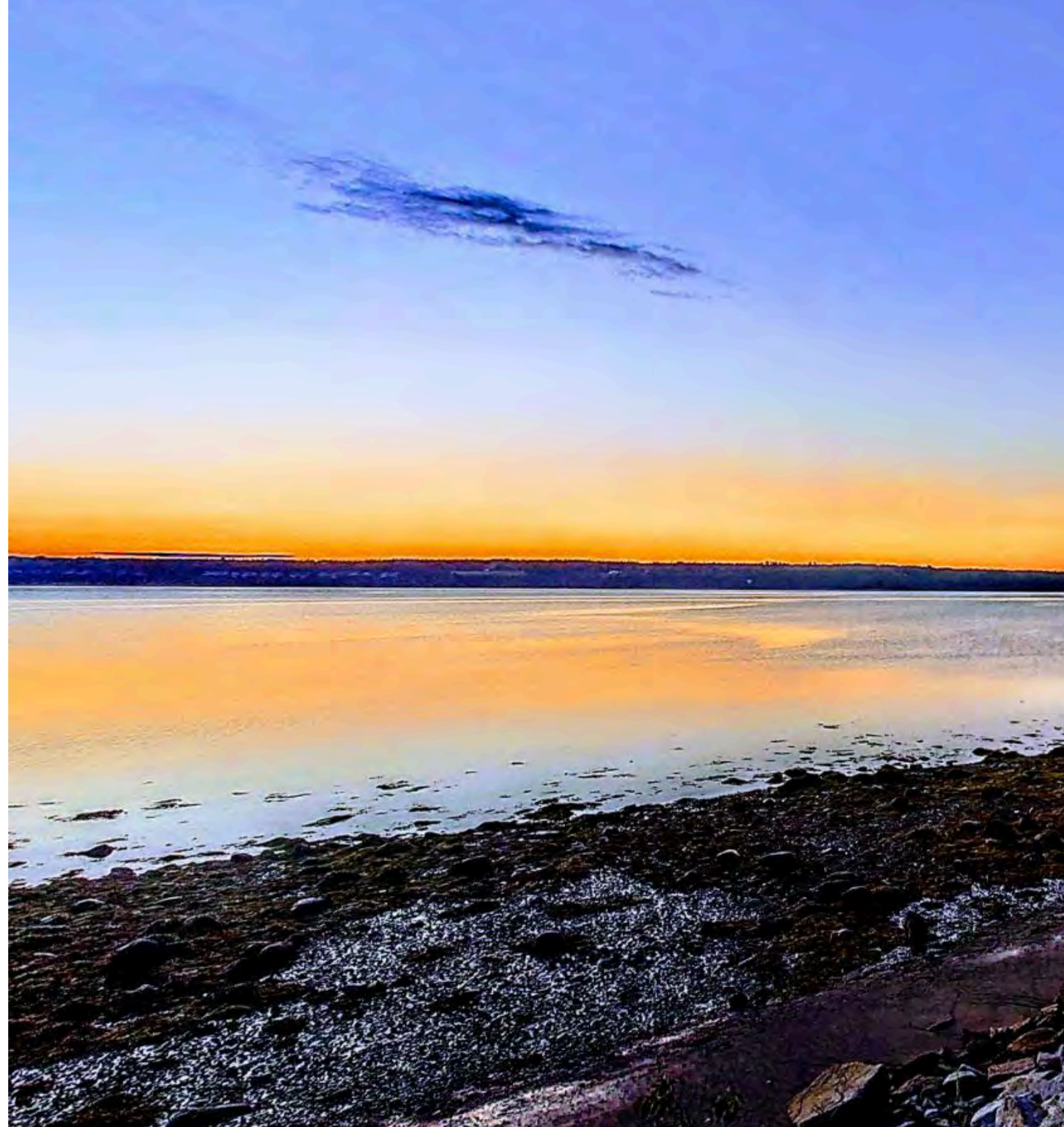


# What's on the Horizon?

To support this and other work, we need to increase the number of individuals and businesses who donate to FOSI, as well as grant support, and encourage past donors to increase their gifts, if possible.

Although we have a committed core group of reliable donors, every year some people move away, their financial situation changes, or they have other priorities. It's an ongoing challenge to grow our donor base, even as we lose contributors each year.

We encourage you to tell your friends, neighbors, work colleagues, and others to consider supporting FOSI's mission with a donation.







**Thank you for helping us preserve and protect Sears Island, a unique and wonderful natural and recreational resource for the people of Maine.**