

River
Bend
Farm



Annual Report | Fiscal Years 2019, 2020 & 2021



Celebrating Three Years at River Bend Farm

*“A shared vision is not an idea...it is rather, a force in people’s hearts...
at its simplest level, a shared vision is the answer to the question
‘What do we want to create?’” —Peter Senge, Systems Scientist*

Dear Friends of The Ecology School,

This Annual Report straddles a monumental shift in The Ecology School’s collective history. Between the years 2019 and 2021, the world as we knew it changed as COVID-19 spread globally and caused a massive upheaval of how we live our lives. As you read this Annual Report, you will see programmatic and Capital Campaign highlights and financials from three years, 2019-2021. The lower number of program participants in these past few years tells one story, but the new programs created and the amazing completion of the River Bend Farm campus construction tells a vastly different story and one of much more positive progress.



Drew Dumsch with wife Lisa and teenagers Nico and Sophie

While 2019 proved solid in programmatic revenue—a 20+ year trend that our non-profit organization is immensely proud of—in 2020 we saw an abrupt drop in our earned income of tuition and program revenue decreases due to in-person learning being nearly impossible because of COVID restrictions. Despite the miniscule \$10,377 on our balance sheet for program-related income in 2020, the innovative and fundraising spirit of The Ecology School’s staff was stronger than ever as we raised over \$4.6 million for both ongoing and new programs as well as our River Bend Farm Capital Campaign.

Running parallel to the launch of two new incredible programs (EcologyOnline.org and the Teacher Institute for Watershed Science and Conservation) was the \$14.1 million campaign for River Bend Farm. This was a financing and fundraising challenge that even in ordinary times would have been tough to complete, but seemed insurmountable during a global pandemic. But in true Ecology School fashion, the hard work and determination by our Board and staff, coupled with the astounding support from donors, resulted in true success! **At our April 24, 2021 ribbon cutting ceremony we officially opened our year-round River Bend Farm campus after exceeding our \$3.6 million fundraising goal for our Capital Campaign just two days earlier on Earth Day!**

So, in answer to the question the systems thinking visionary Peter Senge asks in his quote above, “What do we want to create?” The Ecology School, with the support of folks like you, is creating a special place at River Bend Farm where the energy of people looking to find their own role in taking positive action to help the planet has a permanent home. Both the wide-open spaces on our 105-acre farm and the comfortable lodging and dining spaces in our new Living Building Challenge buildings will embolden wide-open ideas and dedicated action to create a hopeful, resilient future together. River Bend Farm is already becoming a nationally recognized place where change can happen overnight!

I look forward to sharing this Annual Report 2019-2021 with you and our entire Ecology School community.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Drew Dumsch". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Drew Dumsch, Co-Founder, President & CEO





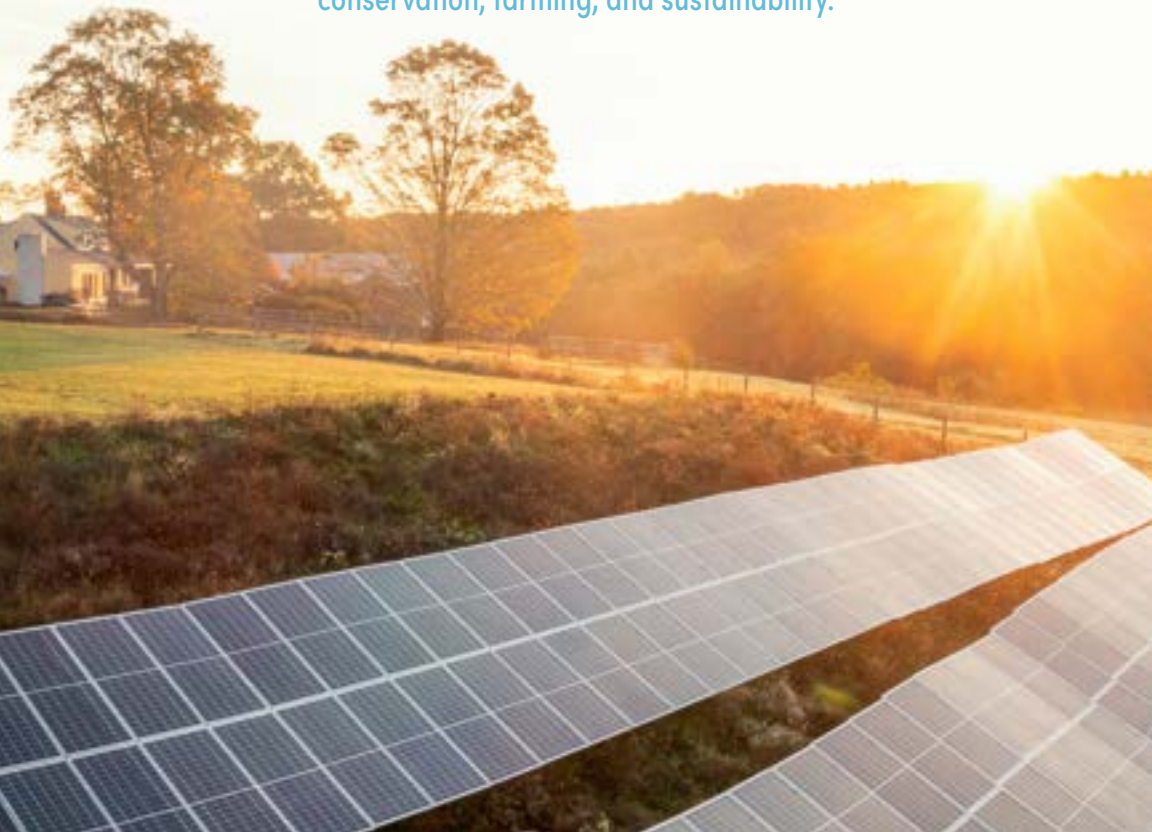
River Bend Farm

SACO, MAINE

River Bend Farm, home to The Ecology School, is an historic 105-acre farm located on a scenic bend in the Saco River, just twenty minutes from the Maine coast. Built to The International Living Future Institute's *Living Building Challenge*, the most comprehensive green building standards in the world, our Poland Spring® Education & Dining Commons and dormitory buildings are designed to create a symbiotic relationship between people and all aspects of the built environment. In 2021, we opened our doors at River Bend Farm to the community, bringing people and nature together through "live what you learn" opportunities.

As the former owners of River Bend Farm, Tom and Polly Merrill have been essential to The Ecology School since the day they placed the farm on the market. The Ecology School's mission fueled Tom's decision to join the Board of Directors, becoming Vice Chair and Co-Chair of our Capital Campaign for River Bend Farm. He and Polly are now two of The Ecology School's biggest advocates and most generous supporters.

The Ecology School inspires stewardship of and connection to the natural world through experiential learning in ecology, conservation, farming, and sustainability.



“The Ecology School is instilling in the next generations a love and appreciation of nature, of sustainable community, and providing a working model to aspire to.”

—Tom Merrill



Tom Merrill, pictured with his wife Polly





*River Bend Farm by
the Numbers...*

105

ACRES OF FIELDS,
FOREST & WATERFRONT

3.5

MILES OF TRAILS

144

BED DORMITORY

7,000

SQUARE FOOT POLAND SPRING®
EDUCATION & DINING COMMONS

712

SOLAR PANELS GENERATE...

105%

OF THE CAMPUS'
ENERGY NEEDS

1

ACRE WORKING
AGROECOLOGY FARM

The Capital Campaign to Transition
to River Bend Farm



Our first ever Capital Campaign began in 2018 and in April 2021 we celebrated the official opening at River Bend Farm with capital gifts totaling \$3.7 million.

The Campaign for River Bend Farm 2016-2021

In recognition of Our Generous Donors

SUGAR MAPLE

\$100,000+

Poland Spring

L.L.Bean

Daniel E. Offutt III, Charitable Trust

In Honor of Mary D. Merrill:

Tom and Polly Merrill

In Honor of Norma Harrison:

David and Cynthia Harrison

Marjory Keeler

The Lozier Family

John and Mary Dumsch

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Gail Parker

Jeffery and Margaret Swinehart

Linda Proefrock

Peggy Kornegger and Anne Katzeff

Jane Cloutier

Connie and Bob Lehner

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Kristin Hunter-Thomson and Malin Pinsky

Susan Hunter

Whitney Hunter-Thomson

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Jane's Trust

The Whitehead Foundation

Mary Love May and Paul W. Gabrielson

NORTHERN RED OAK

\$50,000-\$99,999

In Honor of Sharon Parent:

Amy and Lucien Ouellette

Scott and Wendy Parent

Craig and Mary Parent

Reg Parent

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Nathan and Wendy Townsend

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The Reed Family

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Ecology of Architecture Collaborative:

Zachau Construction

Kaplan Thompson Architects

Richardson and Associates

Simons Architects

Briburn

Quimby Family Foundation

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Dee and Tom Brown

Nolan and Kathy Stokes

Saco and Biddeford Savings Institution

Virginia Hodgkins Somers Foundation

In Honor of Alumni Educators:

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Nate Schumacher

Mike McGee

Leanna Bonds

Chelsea Hubert

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Tessa Diehl

Clare Cunningham

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Sara Gabrielson

Geoff Stack

Rich Bell

Hillary Loomis

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 Noelle Jordan
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 Alicia Gow
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 Andrea Kuegel
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 Alex Chasse
 Bridget Benson
 Brody Todd
 Krissy Lynch
 Nolan Crees
 Sandy Lowden
 Emily Cook

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\$10,000-\$49,000

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 Morton Kelly Charitable Trust
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 Androscoggin Bank
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 Hancock Lumber
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 Spectrum Healthcare Partners
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Barbara and Tim Cole
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John and Krysta Ibsen
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Silvia M. Young
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Victoria Clare
Bill and Louisa Graver
*In Memory of Waldo Evans Stone,
Stone Environmental Schools:
The Stone Family*
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Maine Center for Disease Control &
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Davis Conservation Foundation
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\$5,000-\$9,999

Mary and Forrest Martin
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Kevin Matluk
Joanne Clare

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\$1,000-\$4,999

In Honor of Grayson Hayman:
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The Ouellette Family
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Anonymous
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Maggie and Bob Daigle

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\$150-999

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 Cathy Gill
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 Lois and Brown Pulliam
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 Dogan and Loretta P. Arthur
 Mark S. McLaughlin
 Michael Fein
 Peter Levin
 Nate Schumacher
 Ethan and Miho Seal
 Charles Dewitt
 Naples Properties
 Kate Anderson

Up to \$150
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 Julie Chickola
 Matthew Brosco

Naomi Seppala
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 In memory of Jeffrey Fletcher
 Kevin L. Sutherland
 Kyle Mersereau
 Leonard Nelson
 Pamela Fischer
 Paul P. Theophilopoulos
 Susan and James Marcotte
 Vicky and Arthur Leknes





Charles Dewitt
 Carol Lenna
 Charles G. Toto
 Christopher Hastings
 Donal G. Cahill
 Donald and Cherry Brewster
 Robert Crawford
 Clare Cunningham
 Tessa Diehl
 Elaine and Michael Bonds
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 Mary and Edmund Musholt
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 Peter and Margaret Zack
 Roland and Joy Eon
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 Gail Parker
 Jennifer Farquhar
 Laura McBride
 Anonymous
 Mauro R. Azoifeia
 Nan Schildroth
 Nathaniel DuBrule
 In Memory of Tim Sullivan
 Sue Henry
 Teddy Lyman
 Jim Tiberii
 Jacob and Abby Endres

We are so grateful for this expansive list of donors. We extend our apologies if there was a mistake made. For a correction or if you would like to be listed differently, please reach out to Leanna Bonds, Director of Advancement & Community Partnerships: leanna@theecologyschool.org.



Dear Friends of River Bend Farm,

As I complete my eleventh year on The Ecology School Board, it is a time of deep gratitude for the richness that TES has added to my life. TES has not only remained true to its mission through adversity and significant organizational growth, but has also strengthened its commitment to a sustainable future. **During this time, The Ecology School has transitioned to a new home and moved from seasonal programming to providing year-round educational and environmental opportunities for individuals and groups.**

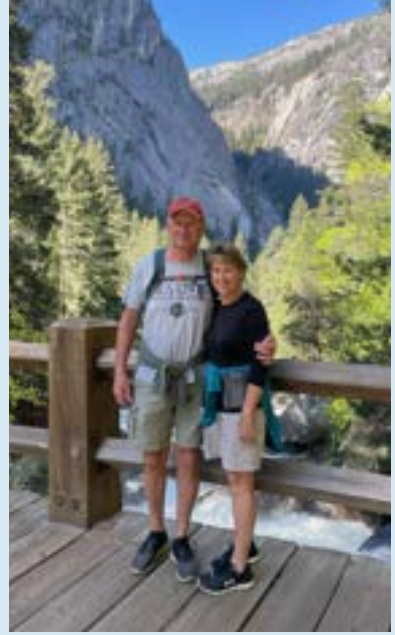
Our home at River Bend Farm, which began with the 2017 purchase of the 1794 farmhouse and barn, now includes a three-wing dormitory, dining commons, yurt village, working farm and active waterfront. As I reflect on the multi-year program planning and building process, it is not the individual action steps that come to mind. **It is the perseverance, optimism, and resiliency of The Ecology School administration, staff and Board, as well as the support from partners and friends that has made a lasting impression.** It is the collective commitment to creating an environment that mirrors the kind of home where people grow and thrive. The Ecology School provides a home that includes fresh food, comfortable places to gather and sleep, safety, the beauty of nature, and strong human connection.

The Ecology School places a priority on our shared home, the Earth. Stewardship of and connection to the natural world are demonstrated in The Ecology School's green buildings, educational and community programs, and farming practices. As a model for overnight, immersive environmental education, The Ecology School addresses issues as wide ranging as the ecosystems that make up River Bend Farm to global climate change in the hope that participants will return to their own homes more deeply connected to the Earth and one another.

The reality of our home at River Bend Farm is proof that the ties that bind us together are strong. With your generous support, The Ecology School exceeded the goals of our Capital Campaign and secured funding for the River Bend Farm project. During the pandemic, we were able to employ staff, complete a strategic visioning process, offer a virtual program, and grow as a Board. **The Ecology School at River Bend Farm continues to look for ways that positively impact our shared home.** Thank you for joining us on this purposeful journey and for supporting the belief that we are stronger together.



Mary Martin
Chair, The Ecology School Board of Directors



Mary Martin with husband Forrest





Immersive School Programming

In our overnight program, schools come to our site for a multi-day, immersive experience, exploring food systems, the forests, fresh water sources, and other natural areas. Through three ecosystem-based lessons per day (at least six hours), students explore the environment first-hand, drawing connections between ecosystems, observing patterns, processes, and changes in the world around them.

2019 marked The Ecology School's transition from our first home at Ferry Beach to a temporary one at the Poland Spring Resort in Poland, Maine while our new campus was under construction. 2020 was a notably unusual year, as we faced the impact of COVID and the disruptions and restrictions to in-person learning, greatly affecting the number of students we served. In 2021, although we were still experiencing the challenges of COVID restrictions and guidelines, we resumed in-person programming, welcoming students to River Bend Farm for the first time.

EDUCATORS & SEASONAL STAFF 2019-2021

Dawn Allison, RN
 Emily Anderson
 Caroline Black
 Casey Boland
 Gabby Brodek
 CC Clapp
 Clayton Coleman
 Alyson DeMerchant

Tessa Diehl
 Ben Durham
 Hazel Edwards
 Chris Emery
 Jacob Endres
 Ann Garbowski
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 Josh Miller
 Jen Moore

Victoria Nash
 Madison Plunkert
 Priyanka Shakyra
 Katie Schulz
 Eric Walton
 Catherine Wessel



“I really enjoyed the night lessons and doing our nature journals outside. This experience was so fun. I have never done anything like it before.”

—Madison, 7th grade student

2019

9,545

SCHOOL
PARTICIPANTS

170,270

CONTACT HOURS

2020

404

SCHOOL
PARTICIPANTS

2021

2,464

SCHOOL
PARTICIPANTS

8,164

CONTACT HOURS

Teacher Institute for Watershed Science and Conservation, Sponsored by Poland Spring®

The Ecology School and Poland Spring® partnered in 2021 to bring K-8 teachers from around the United States to Maine for a free 4-day professional development institute focusing on watershed science, conservation, and community impact.

EcologyOnline, Sponsored by Poland Spring®

EcologyOnline.org is an online learning experience created by The Ecology School to take students—no matter their age—away from their screens to engage with the outdoors.

Adult Gatherings & Programs

From overnight retreats and conferences, to workshops, professional development, and volunteering opportunities, River Bend Farm is a place where people of all ages come to connect—with themselves, each other, and nature. Here, they find comfortable accommodations, delicious food, and beautiful outdoor spaces to explore amidst ecologically-focused ways of growing food, conserving energy, and living sustainably. At River Bend Farm, we strive to live, learn, work and play in ways that are restorative to the world around us.

Summer Camps

Living and learning together at The Ecology School continues through the summer with nature-based camp experiences that nurture a life-long appreciation of the outdoors, helping learners of all ages explore how people and the environment are connected. During the summers of 2019 and 2021 The Ecology School hosted an Eco Adventure Day Camp for kindergarten–sixth grade campers to spend time outdoors, exploring, discovering, and making connections in the ecosystems of Maine.

AgroEcology & Farming Operations at River Bend Farm

In 2020, under the guidance of Scott Courcelle, a former educator at The Ecology School and owner of Alchemy Gardens in Vermont, we were able to lay the groundwork needed to begin our first year of farming. 2021 marked our first full growing season at River Bend Farm and the hiring of Marguerite Wiser, Farm Manager. Using agroecology, a system of regenerative farming, our working farm has become an integral part of our food systems education.





“This was my absolute best professional development in my 30+ years of voluntary and required professional development.”

—Julie Pitt, 6th grade science teacher



Teacher Institute

65

EDUCATORS FROM

17

STATES

1,755

TOTAL CONTACT HOURS

EcologyOnline

5

MODULES

245

UNIQUE USERS

28,659

MINUTES OF LEARNING

AgroEcology & Farming Operations

5,151

POUNDS OF PRODUCE
HARVESTED

2,617

POUNDS DONATED TO

2

LOCAL FOOD BANKS

2019-2021 Financial Highlights



2019

The Ecology School did its spring and fall term overnight school programs at the leased Poland Spring Resort site. The River Bend Farm Capital Campaign, which officially began in 2018, continued on and construction of the new River Bend Farm campus began in the fall.

2020

Faced with the restrictions of the COVID pandemic, The Ecology School shut down all in-person programming, severely reducing program income. Federal COVID relief funds were instrumental in keeping our operations moving ahead. Construction of the campus continued and strong results in both Capital Campaign fundraising and new program creation funding from Poland Spring (\$1M for *Teacher Institute for Watershed Science & Conservation* and \$500K for *EcologyOnline.org*) increased fundraising and grants revenue by 277%.

2021

While COVID restrictions continued to impact program levels and revenue, the campus construction wrapped up and the River Bend Farm Capital Campaign successfully concluded in April with \$3.7M raised, including generous gifts from L.L.Bean. Programming in our new dormitory and Poland Spring® Education and Dining Commons buildings began in June and a \$500K gift from the Daniel E. Offutt III Charitable Trust helped fundraising and grants to exceed \$2M for the second year in a row.

CURRENT & OTHER ASSETS	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Cash & cash equivalents	140,252	1,677,533	1,667,322 *
Restricted Reserve Funds			357,180
Pledges & other receivables	663,955	450,164	166,797 **
Inventory	6,120	7,789	1,543
Prepaid expenses	2,532	4,039	16,112
Investments	1,554	1,940	2,246
Debt issuance costs	<u>48,850</u>	<u>48,850</u>	<u>0</u>
<i>Total Current & Other Assets</i>	<i>863,263</i>	<i>2,190,315</i>	<i>2,211,200</i>
PROPERTY & EQUIPMENT	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Land (105-acres) & Land Improvements	936,141	936,141	3,543,047 ***
Buildings (farmhouse, barn, dorm, DHC)	698,335	712,024	9,147,852 ***
Furniture & Equipment	30,204	30,204	489,662 ***
Construction in progress	2,158,837	10,059,853	81,435
Less Accumulated Depreciation	<u>(62,122)</u>	<u>(82,097)</u>	<u>(434,303)</u>
<i>Net Property and Equipment</i>	<i>3,761,395</i>	<i>11,656,125</i>	<i>12,827,693</i>
TOTAL ASSETS	<i>4,624,658</i>	<i>13,846,440</i>	<i>15,038,893</i>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Current Liabilities	-	-	-
Line of credit	250,000	250,000	0
Current portion of long term debt	13,000	6,956,467	37,581
Accounts payable	316,099	1,408,694	374,224
Accrued expenses	12,697	76,131	25,046
Program deposits	<u>129,541</u>	<u>79,767</u>	<u>79,234</u>
<i>Total Current Liabilities</i>	<i>721,337</i>	<i>8,771,059</i>	<i>516,085</i>
<i>Long-Term Debt, net of current</i>	<i>2,320,905</i>	<i>1,874,591</i>	<i>11,078,244</i>
NET ASSETS			
Without donor restrictions	(393,467)	(945,883)	1,966,686
With donor restrictions	<u>1,975,883</u>	<u>4,146,673</u>	<u>1,477,878</u>
<i>Total Net Assets</i>	<i>1,582,416</i>	<i>3,200,790</i>	<i>3,444,564</i>
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	<i>4,624,658</i>	<i>13,846,440</i>	<i>15,038,893</i>

Audited financial statements conducted by Albin, Randall & Bennett CPAs

*Restricted program funds increase **2021 Capital Campaign concludes ***2021 campus construction finishes

REVENUE	2019	2020	2021
Fundraising and Grants Income	973,928	2,697,704*	2,030,057*
Program Income	592,063	10,377	108,623**
Other Income (Sales, Interest, & Rent)	25,049	52,417	85,590
Total Revenue	1,591,040	2,760,498	2,224,270

*Capital Campaign increases
 **COVID closures reduced income



<u>EXPENSES</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Program Expenses	774,724	574,813	1,243,452***
Support, Management	288,110	291,456	341,730
Fundraising Expenses	252,558	275,855	395,314
Total Expenses	1,315,392	1,142,124	1,980,496

***2021 River Bend Farm Campus opens



The Ecology School Annual Fund 2019-2021

The Ecology School has increased our Annual Fund and continues expanding programs thanks to the generosity of the following donors:

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—Leanna Bonds, Director of Advancement & Community Partnerships

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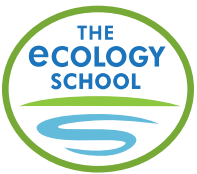
* Joined 2021

** Term ended within 2019-2021

We are so grateful for this expansive list of donors. We extend our apologies if there was a mistake made. For a correction or if you would like to be listed differently, please reach out to Leanna Bonds, Director of Advancement & Community Partnerships: leanna@theecologyschool.org.







The Ecology School at River Bend Farm

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