

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

SAND COUNTY FOUNDATION

* EMPOWERING LANDOWNERS | ADVANCING A LAND ETHIC *



PARK FARMING ORGANICS. 2023 CALIFORNIA LEOPOLD
CONSERVATION AWARD RECIPIENT * PHOTO: PAOLO VESCIA

SAND COUNTY FOUNDATION INSPIRES AND EMPOWERS FARMERS, RANCHERS, AND FORESTLAND OWNERS TO ETHICALLY CARE FOR THE LAND, SO FUTURE GENERATIONS HAVE CLEAN AND ABUNDANT WATER, HEALTHY SOIL TO SUPPORT OUR GROWING FOOD DEMANDS, PLENTIFUL HABITAT FOR WILDLIFE, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION.



KURT MYLLYMAKI, 2023 MONTANA LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD RECIPIENT | PHOTO: BRIAN ELLIOTT

Dear Friends,

Succession is defined as the act of succeeding or coming after another in order or sequence.

It comes in many different forms.

This Sand County Foundation Annual Report provides a snapshot of a dynamic organization whose work continues to evolve while staying true to its mission inspired by Aldo Leopold. In 2023, Sand County Foundation took on new conservation initiatives, completed others, and expanded our efforts to demonstrate and celebrate conservation success.

In farming and ranching, succession has multiple meanings. Beyond the transfer of land ownership, there's the passing of a conservation ethic from one generation to the next. Our Leopold Conservation Award recipients who improve soil health, water resources, and wildlife habitat, pass that motivation on to their children, and to other landowners across the fence line, and sometimes on the other side of the globe.

Recently, we experienced another succession as we passed Sand County Foundation's Chairman of the Board torch. We're just the second and third individuals to serve in that role in the organization's nearly 60-year history.

Thank you for being an important part of the environmental progress Sand County Foundation is igniting. We're deeply grateful for the support of donors and partners like you.

Homer Buell
Chairman, Sand County Foundation

Lynne Sherrod
Past Chairman, Sand County Foundation



Homer Buell
Chairman
Sand County Foundation



Lynne Sherrod
Past Chairman
Sand County Foundation

Sand County Foundation

was built more than 50 years ago on an idea advanced by Aldo Leopold; America's foremost conservation thinker and author of "A Sand County Almanac."

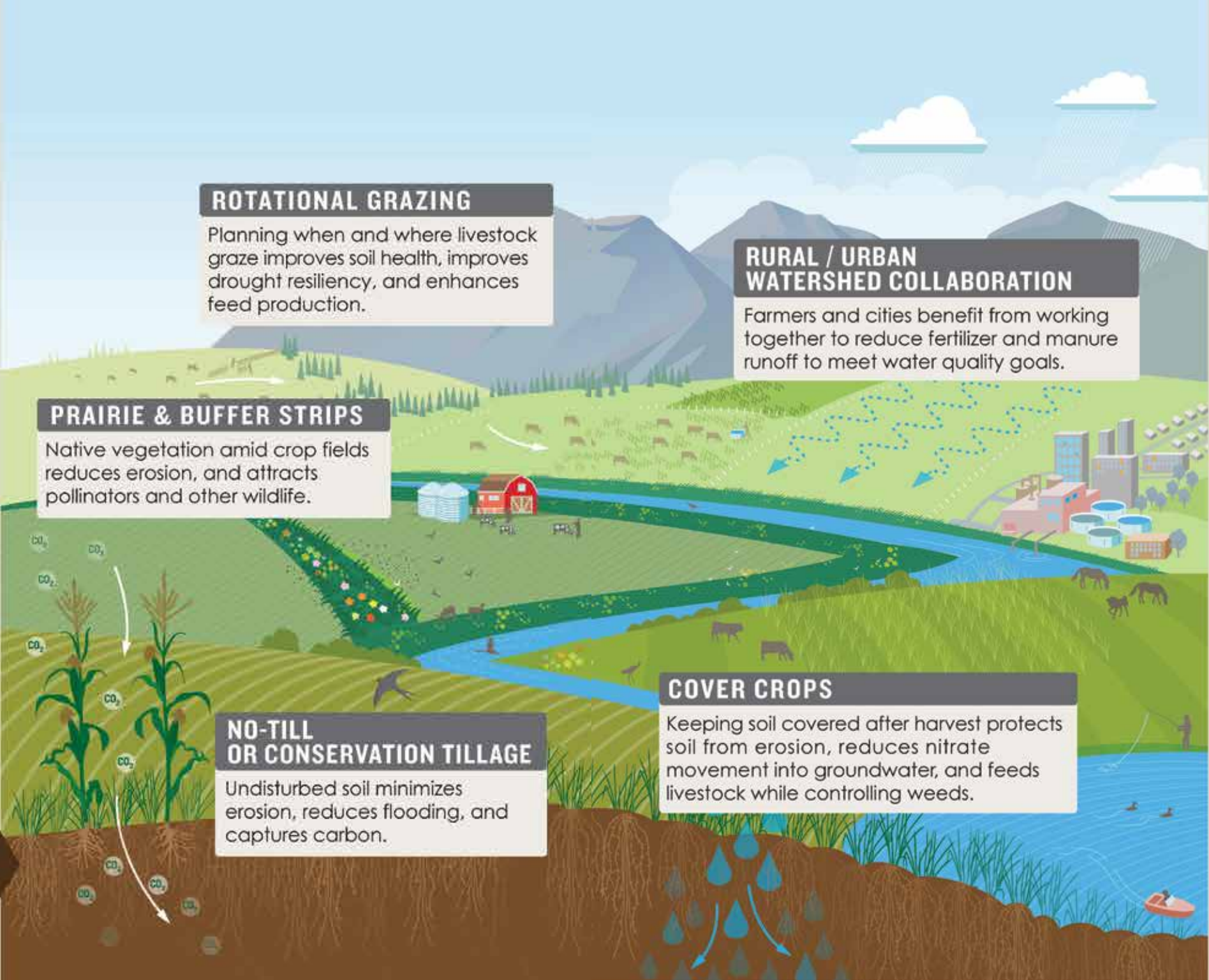


Leopold inspired landowners to adopt what he called a **"land ethic"** - a personal responsibility to treat land, water, and wildlife with respect.

Today, most of the land in the contiguous U.S. is owned and managed by farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners. Sand County Foundation is inspiring and empowering a growing number of them to become conservation leaders who ethically care for soil, water, and wildlife habitat while they work the land.



Here are some of the ways we help landowners express their land ethic.



INFORM

Sand County Foundation researches, demonstrates, and shares practical, scientifically-sound conservation methods that can improve water resources, soil health, habitat and a landowner's bottom line.

EMPOWER

We provide conservation mentorship for beginning and other historically underserved farmers and ranchers.

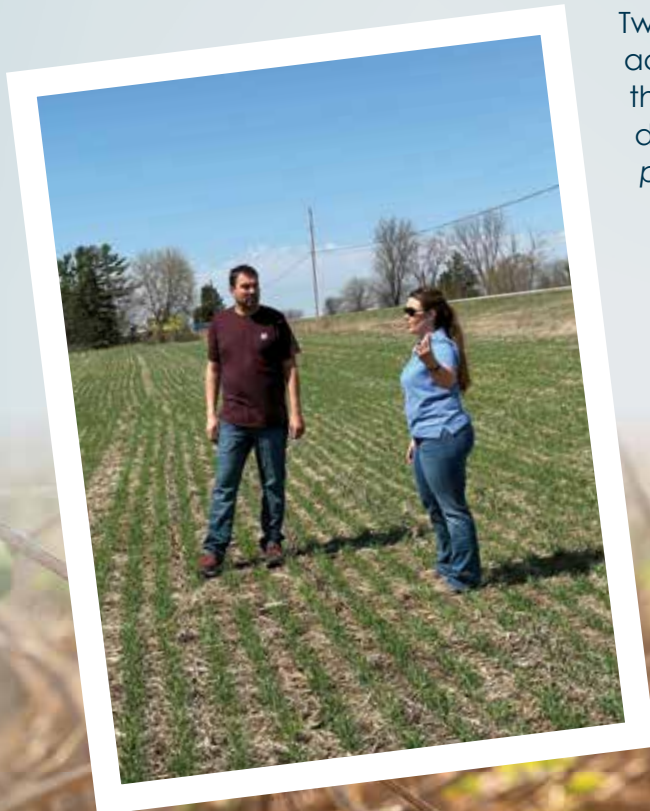
INSPIRE

We celebrate and promote the stories of leading land stewards whose conservation successes inspire others.



SCAN THIS QR CODE TO WATCH A SHORT VIDEO ABOUT OUR WORK.

Sand County Foundation's team of scientists partners with farmers, ranchers, and forestland managers to conduct applied research and field demonstrations on working land, to explore how innovative conservation management can increase farm resilience and protect the environment.



Twenty-five farmers are working with us to accelerate the adoption of conservation in the Lake Michigan Basin with a tailored, data-driven planning approach called *performance-based conservation*.

We're using on-farm data and computer models to show where conservation implementation can have the greatest impact on water quality and the farmer's bottom line.

Well-managed grasslands are critical to soil health, rural livelihoods, and the survival of many bird species. Our team works to promote grazing as a conservation tool.

We're providing technical assistance, education, and bird monitoring to landowners so they can succeed in managing their livestock grazing in a way that is profitable while enhancing the natural biodiversity. Keys to success include re-energizing locally-led grazing management networks, and offering peer-to-peer learning, farmer advising and habitat assessment.

This year we also completed a three-year demonstration of the agronomic and environmental costs and benefits of rotational grazing livestock on cover crops. The outcomes indicated that properly established cover crops can extend the grazing season and reduce feed costs. Our four collaborating graziers plan to continue to implement cover crops in their grazing management.



PHOTO: KARI WEIS-ASBURY



PHOTO: CASEY LANGAN

**We all want clean water
and healthy soil.**

Over the past three years, we supported 30 Corn Belt farmers with in-field sensors that provide real-time soil moisture and temperature data directly to their cellphones. This technology can inform their day-to-day decision-making throughout the growing season. This climate-smart conservation initiative is now engaging 50 additional farmers and expanding into Alabama and Mississippi.

Successful partnerships between cities and the farmers in their watersheds have been forged thanks to our municipal-agricultural watershed work that seeks to improve water quality and save taxpayer dollars. By helping nine cities in Iowa negotiate agreements with state regulators and area farmers, we're demonstrating how cities and their wastewater treatment plants can incentivize farm conservation practices that lead to cleaner water and less flooding. This effort is now expanding into additional states.



**Pollinator Habitat
Grant Program**

This past year we provided schools in five states with native wildflower seedlings, a training webinar, and \$1,000 grants, to inspire 4,500 high school students and their agricultural and science teachers to get their hands dirty and learn about ecology and conservation careers, all while helping beneficial pollinators and imperiled monarch butterflies.

Donor contributions directly to this program and to our Haglund Ecology Fund made it possible to hire a full-time environmental educator to expand this in-demand school grant effort.



PHOTO: TUCKER BOYD



PHOTO: KARI WEIS-ASBURY

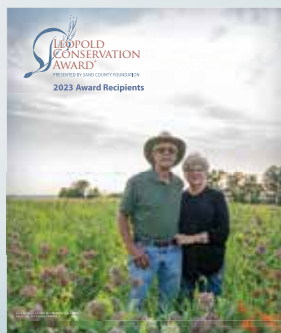


Sand County Foundation launched the Leopold Conservation Award more than 20 years ago in Colorado to honor farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners who go above and beyond in their management of soil health, water quality, and wildlife habitat on working land.

With our national sponsor, American Farmland Trust, and dozens of state-level partners and sponsors, we now present Leopold Conservation Awards in 27 states.

In 2023, another diverse and inspiring group of award recipients joined an alumni network of more than 200 families. They include landowners who grow tomatoes in California, milk cows in New York, graze cattle on the Great Plains, and tend to Christmas trees in Connecticut.

The award expanded to Illinois and the Carolinas in 2023, and we will welcome the first award recipients from Minnesota and Mississippi in 2024.



READ AND WATCH
the stories of each
2023 Leopold Conservation
Award recipient at
sandcountyfoundation.org/LCA23



Land Ethic Mentorship

For Historically Underserved Farmers & Ranchers

Historically underserved farmers and ranchers from 31 states and the District of Columbia are now part of our growing Land Ethic Mentorship program. Seventy-two mentees have opportunities to learn from one another, connect with Leopold Conservation Award recipient mentors, and engage with conservation leaders through field day events and webinars that attracted more than 300 attendees last year.



LEARN MORE ABOUT
becoming a mentor, mentee or sponsor at
sandcountyfoundation.org/mentorship



2023

BY THE NUMBERS

ON-FARM
DEMONSTRATIONS WITH

170
FARMERS
MANAGING
30,000
ACRES

OUR CONSERVATION MESSAGES WERE
SEEN IN MORE THAN

1000
NEWS
ARTICLES



THROUGH MEDIA COVERAGE ACROSS THE U.S.

MORE THAN
200

DIVERSE PARTNERS AND SPONSORS
MADE THE LEOPOLD CONSERVATION
AWARD PROGRAM POSSIBLE IN

27
STATES



4500

STUDENTS ENGAGED IN
HANDS-ON POLLINATOR
HABITAT PLANTING.

WE
REACHED

11,200

FARMERS, RANCHERS AND OTHERS THROUGH
PRESENTATIONS, FIELD DAYS AND WEBINARS

203

WATERSHED
LEADERS FROM
15 STATES
ATTENDED OUR
LEADERSHIP FOR
MIDWESTERN
WATERSHEDS
FORUMS



LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD RECIPIENTS NOW MANAGE
NEARLY 4 MILLION ACRES

THANK YOU TO OUR 2023 DONORS AND PARTNERS!

Donors support Sand County Foundation's work to advance voluntary conservation on private land and find solutions to some of the most pressing environmental issues we face. We gratefully acknowledge those who generously donated in 2023 and those who have continually supported us over the years.

AFAN (Alliance for the Future of Agriculture in Nebraska)
AgriBusiness Association of Kentucky
AgWest Farm Credit
Greg Alexander
Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
Alliance of Crop, Soil and Environmental Science Societies
Amazon Smile Foundation
American AgCredit
American Farmland Trust
American Farmland Trust of New England
ANB Bank
Anonymous
APEX Clean Energy
Ascendium Education Group, Inc.
Audubon Great Plains
Audubon New York
Bad River Ranches
Basin Electric Power Cooperative

Ramona & Lee Bass
Belle Fourche River Watershed Partnership
Bird Conservancy of the Rockies
Blair Brothers Angus Ranch
Mike Bleech
Brenda Boydston
Caty Brown
The Brubaker Family
Nancy & James Bruins
Homer & Darla Buell
Ingrid C. Burke
Burleigh County Soil Conservation District
Caerus Foundation
California Farm Bureau Federation
California LCA Recipient Alumni
Amy & Gary Cammack
Candle Cocoon
Cargill
Matthew C. Carlson

Carolina Farm Trust
Cass County Soil Conservation District
Dick & Kim Cates
Centier Bank
Chesapeake Conservancy
Beth & Guy Choiniere
Brenda Christensen & Tom Barry
CKP Insurance
CoBank
Colorado Cattlemen's Association
Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust
Colorado Department of Agriculture
Colorado Parks & Wildlife
Compeer Financial
Conservation Districts of Iowa
Constellation Energy
Cornell Cooperative Extension
Scott Dahlberg & Laurel Campbell
Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin
Daybreak Fund

DelMarVa Chicken Association
Nancy & Marc DeLong
Delta Waterfowl
Diane Derouen & Glenn Chambliss
Dixon Water Foundation
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
Ducks Unlimited South Dakota
Linn A. & Ann Duesterbeck
John P. Duncan & Anita Sarafa
Gerald & Signe Emmerich
Emmons County Soil Conservation District
Emmons Family
Farm Credit
Farm Credit Associations of Kansas
Farm Credit East
Farm Credit Illinois
Farm Credit Mid-America
Farm Credit of New Mexico
Farm Credit of Southern Colorado
Farm Credit Services of America
Farmers Edge
Farmers National Company
Jim & Carol Faulstich
Fidelity Brokerage Services LLC
Field to Market
First Dakota National Bank
General Mills
Bob Giacomini
Green Cover Seed
John C. & Janet C. Green
Dr. Brent Haglund & Dr. Dayle Keitel Haglund
Kurt Haglund
George & Joan Hall
Alan Haney
Dave Hanson & Linda Bochert
Harvey L. & Maud C. Sorensen

Foundation
Hinrichs Foundation
Horizon Farm Credit
William Hutchins
IL Corn
Illinois Department of Agriculture
Illinois Soybean Association
Illinois Sustainable Ag Partnership
David & Ann Ingram
Iowa Agriculture Water Alliance
Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship
Iowa State University
Linda Irving
ISG Inc.
ITC Great Plains
Dean & Rebecca Jackson
John J. Frautschi Family Foundation
Amy & Toby Johnson
Brian & Jamie Johnson
Scott & Jean Johnson
Tom Johnson
Johnsonville LLC
Kalkowski Family
Kansas Association of Conservation Districts
Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks
Kansas Department of Agriculture, Division of Conservation
Kansas Forest Service
Mike L. Keiser
KEM Electric
George & Valerie Kennedy
Kentucky Agricultural Council
Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts
Kentucky Cattlemen's Association
Kentucky Corn Growers Association

Kentucky Department of Agriculture
Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources
Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation
Kentucky Pork Producers
Kentucky Soybean Promotion Board & Soybean Association
Kentucky Tree Farm Committee
Kentucky Woodland Owners Association
John Koepke
Jim & Karen Kopriva
Gregory Lang
Myrna & David K. Langford
Leopold Landscape Alliance
Ruth Linnemann
Jen Livsey
Madison Region Economic Partnership
John Magnuson
Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts
Maryland Department of Agriculture
Maryland Farm Bureau Inc.
Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment
Kevin McAleese & Tricia Wheeler
McDonald's USA
Mike McNerney
Millborn Seeds, Inc.
Bill & Dana Milton
Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District
Missouri Farmers Care Foundation
Modoc Resource Conservaton District
Monarch Joint Venture
Montana Chapter, Soil & Water Conservation Society
Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation



FREY FAMILY FARMS, 2023 ILLINOIS LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD RECIPIENT

Montana Farm Bureau Federation	Noble Research Institute
Montana Rangeland Resources Program	North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education
Al Montna	North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts
Dina & Mark Moore	North Dakota Chapter of the Wildlife Society
Robert & Robin Moore	North Dakota Natural Resources Trust
Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative	North Dakota Game and Fish
Todd & Debra Mortenson	North Dakota Grazing Lands Coalition
Terry Mulcahy	North Dakota Stockmen’s Association
National Fish & Wildlife Foundation	Nutrien
National Instruments	Scott O’Brien
Nebraska Department of Agriculture	Odin Christensen & Phyllis Lucas
Nebraska Land Trust	Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts
Nelnet Foundation	Oklahoma Conservation Commission
New England Forestry Foundation	Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture
New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts	Oklahoma State University
New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau	Dave & Diane Olenchek
New York State Agribusiness Association	Leta & Ed Olson
New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets	Scott Park
Nancy Sugden & Robert Newbery	Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts
Niel Bien & Family	Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
Martha & Joseph Nielsen	
Chad Njos	

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
Bruce Peterson
Rex, Nancy, Patrick & Krista Peterson
Rolf & Carolyn Peterson
Pheasants Forever, Inc.
Pheasants Forever South Dakota
Practical Farmers of Iowa
Premier Farm Credit
Producers Livestock Marketing Association
Professional Alliance
Quivira Coalition
Rainwater Basin Joint Venture
Ranchers Stewardship Alliance
Ranchland Trust of Kansas
Lee A Riordan
Kurt Rongstad
Roughrider Electric Cooperative
Sandhills Task Force
Lynn Scarlett
Chris Schellpfeffer
Del & Lynne Sherrod
ShoreRivers
Sibanye Stillwater
Alice Sittler

Slope Electric Cooperative
David B. Smith
Soil Regen
South Dakota Agricultural Land Trust
South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts
South Dakota Cattlemen’s Association
South Dakota Department of Agriculture & Natural Resources
South Dakota Farm Bureau Federation
South Dakota Farmers Union
South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks
South Dakota Grassland Coalition
South Dakota Soil Health Coalition
South Dakota Soybean Association
South Dakota State University Foundation
Stanko Ranch
Emily Stanley
Starion Bank
Peter Stent
Rob & Mary Stroud
Sustainable Conservation
Sustainable Food Lab
Syngenta Crop Protection, LLC
Culver Franchising System, Inc.
Table Rock Farm
Taos Valley Ski Foundation
Stanley Temple
Texas A&M University
Texas Parks & Wildlife
The Heinz Endowments
The Ida and Robert Gordon Family Foundation
The Nature Conservancy Colorado
The Nature Conservancy Illinois
The Nature Conservancy Iowa
The Nature Conservancy Maryland
The Nature Conservancy North Dakota

The Nature Conservancy Pennsylvania
The Nature Conservancy South Dakota
The Nature Conservancy Utah
The Nature Conservancy Wisconsin
Dianne Thompson
Christy & Joe Tomandl
Trane Technologies
Marcus Trapp
Homer Trecartin
University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food & Environment
USDA NRCS - Colorado
USDA NRCS - Illinois
USDA NRCS - Iowa
USDA NRCS - Kansas
USDA NRCS - Kentucky
USDA NRCS - Maryland
USDA NRCS - Nebraska
USDA NRCS - New Mexico
USDA NRCS - New York
USDA NRCS - North Dakota
USDA NRCS - Oklahoma
USDA NRCS - Pennsylvania
USDA NRCS - South Dakota
USDA NRCS - Wisconsin
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Utah Association of Conservation Districts
Utah Cattlemen’s Association
Utah Department of Agriculture and Food
Utah Department of Natural Resources
Utah Farm Bureau Federation
Nita Vail
Wagner Land & Livestock
Ed Warner & Jackie Erickson
Kevin Warring
We Energies Foundation

Wells Fargo
Western AgCredit
Western Landowners Alliance
Western Sustainability Exchange
Bill White
Wisconsin Corn Growers Association
Wisconsin Corn Promotion Board
Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation
Wisconsin Land + Water
Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association
Wisconsin Soybean Marketing Board
World Wildlife Fund - Northern Great Plains Program
Yale School of the Environment
Tom Zale

Gold
Transparency
2024

Candid.

Sand County Foundation is a Gold Level GuideStar participant. This means we are committed to demonstrating transparency and accountability to our donors. View Sand County Foundation’s profile on GuideStar’s website to find details about our financials, program activities and impact.

Foundation Staff

- Kevin McAleese**
President & CEO
- Lance Irving**
Vice President - Leopold Conservation Award
- Heidi Peterson, Ph.D.**
Vice President - Agricultural Research & Conservation
- Christina Schellpfeffer**
Vice President - External Relations
- David Bailey**
Western Director - Leopold Conservation Award
- Alice Canchola Fenchio**
Administrative Coordinator
- Nikki D’Adamo-Damery**
Conservation Outreach & Equity Director
- Haley Diem**
Education and Outreach Specialist
- Craig Ficenec**
Senior Director - Agricultural Conservation
- Liina Keerd**
Program Relations Coordinator
- Samuel Kwakye, Ph.D.**
Agricultural Field Data Scientist
- Casey Langan**
Communications Director
- Gwen Lewis**
Conservation Outreach Advisor
- Greg Olson**
Field Projects Director
- Holly Perrotti**
Director of Finance & Operations
- Briana Schnelle**
Agricultural Conservation Specialist
- Haleigh Summers, Ph.D.**
Agricultural Geospatial Data Scientist
- Tricia Verville**
Director of Agricultural Systems
- Katie Ziemer**
Soil Conservationist

Board of Directors

- CHAIRMAN**
Homer Buell
NEBRASKA
- VICE CHAIR**
David J. Hanson
WISCONSIN
- SECRETARY**
Nancy DeLong
IOWA
- TREASURER**
Thomas D. Zale
WISCONSIN
- Jimmy Bramblett**
GEORGIA
- Blair Calvert Fitzsimons**
TEXAS
- Dick Cates, Ph.D.**
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- John P. C. Duncan**
ILLINOIS
- Tom Foley**
CONNECTICUT
- Brent Haglund, Ph.D.**
WISCONSIN
- Kevin McAleese**
WISCONSIN
- Lynn Scarlett**
CALIFORNIA
- Lynne Sherrod**
COLORADO
- Stanley A. Temple, Ph.D.**
WISCONSIN
- Nita Vail**
CALIFORNIA
- Edward M. Warner**
COLORADO
- DIRECTOR EMERITUS**
Indy Burke, Ph.D

Financial Responsibility

Assets	
ASSETS	
Cash	3,603,286
Accounts Receivable	45,125
Promises to Give	1,446,070
Prepaid Expenses	35,806
Long-term Investments	11,935,347
Property & Equipment - Net	0
Operating Lease	419,980
TOTAL ASSETS	\$17,485,614

Liabilities and Net Assets	
LIABILITIES	
Accounts Payable	131,699
Grants Payable	86,490
Accrued Vacation & Wages	26,479
Operating Lease	441,190
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$685,858
NET ASSETS	
Without Donor Restrictions	5,873,508
With Donor Restrictions	10,926,248
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$16,799,756
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$17,485,614

Sand County Foundation has always been committed to full financial transparency. The Foundation is classified as a 501 (c)(3) Public Charity under IRS code. The report of an independent auditor, 2023 audited financial statements and our 2023 tax return are available at sandcountyfoundation.org

Sand County Foundation has an operating budget of approximately \$3.3 million. Our board-designated and donor-restricted funds are valued at approximately \$11.8 million. Within our net assets are various funds we use to fund operations, invest in high-impact conservation partnerships, and expand outreach.

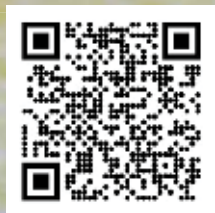
Not everyone reads the financial information in annual reports....

... but everyone likes a farm dog.

“Ricky” lives at Slovek Ranch, the recipient of the 2023 South Dakota Leopold Conservation Award.

Create Your Own Conservation Legacy

DONATE TODAY, AND CONSIDER A FUTURE
GIFT TO SAND COUNTY FOUNDATION
THROUGH YOUR WILL OR BENEFICIARY
DESIGNATION. EXPLORE WAYS TO GIVE AT
[SANDCOUNTYFOUNDATION.ORG/DONATE](https://sandcountyfoundation.org/donate).



SCAN THIS QR CODE
TO DONATE.

FREY FAMILY FARMS, 2023 ILLINOIS LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD RECIPIENT