

2022-2023

Annual Impact Report

Blazing the Way Forward



Bruce Trail  
CONSERVANCY



## BRUCE TRAIL CONSERVANCY

The Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) is one of Ontario's largest land trusts and the steward of Canada's longest marked footpath.

We actively preserve and care for land within the UNESCO designated Niagara Escarpment Biosphere to protect its ecosystems for the benefit of all. We connect people to nature through the Bruce Trail and our protected natural areas.

We are a member-driven, volunteer-based, charitable organization, governed by a 19-member Board of Directors. Working with each of the nine Bruce Trail Clubs, we are committed to caring for the Bruce Trail and to preserving land along its route.

### MISSION

Preserving a ribbon of wilderness, for everyone, forever.

### VISION

The Bruce Trail secured within a permanently protected natural corridor along the Niagara Escarpment.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy wishes to acknowledge and honour the lands of the Niagara Escarpment as the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples. In both spirit and partnership, we recognize and thank the Anishinaabek, Huron-Wendat, Tionontati, Attawandaron, Haudenosaunee, Métis, and all who provided stewardship of these lands over millennia.

Recognition of the contributions of Indigenous peoples is consistent with our commitment to making the promise of truth and reconciliation real in our communities. We are grateful for the opportunity to live, work, and play here and thank all those who have served and continue to serve as caretakers of this special place.

We are also mindful of broken covenants and the need to reconcile with all our allies and relations. Together, may we care for this land and each other, drawing upon the strength of our mutual history through peace and friendship, to create a lasting legacy of conservation for generations to come.

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## OUR IMPACT



### **70.6% of the Bruce Trail now on permanently protected land**

3.59 km of the Bruce Trail's Optimum Route was secured this year, bringing the Trail ever closer to being entirely protected in a natural corridor.



### **1,375 km of trail maintained and ready to be explored**

Our extensive trail network continues to provide safe, environmentally-responsible public access to nature.



### **7.9 km of trail removed from roads this year**

This improved trail experience was made possible through new protected areas and important new agreements with private landowners.



### **91 species of Conservation Concern recorded on BTC-managed land**

BTC Ecologists made 31 observations of 14 rare and at risk species this year.



### **37,067 trees planted to restore forest canopies along the Bruce Trail**

These efforts include the largest forest restoration project in the history of the Bruce Trail Conservancy.

## OUR GROWTH



### **\$1M donated by our community was matched by Environment and Climate Change Canada**

This generous support contributes to the first of a five year, \$5M matching grant from the Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund.



### **336 new Canadians became BTC Members with the Canoo app**

Our partnership with Canoo provides interested newcomers to Canada with a free one-year membership to the BTC.



### **36 legacy gifts confirmed**

We are honoured by the generosity and foresight of those who have chosen to include a gift to the Bruce Trail Conservancy in their will.



### **1,600 hikes led by BTC Clubs across our trail system**

We are grateful to our hike leaders for their incredible efforts connecting more people to nature all year long.

## Board Chair's Message



**Across the Niagara Escarpment and within the conservation community, we are blazing new trails.**

After another tremendously successful year for our organization, we are getting ever closer to achieving our vision of *The Bruce Trail secured within a permanently protected natural corridor along the Niagara Escarpment*.

With this Annual Impact Report, we are well into the first year of delivering on our new *2030 Strategy* – a strategic plan that will guide the Bruce Trail Conservancy's work as one of Ontario's leading conservation and trail organizations to the end of the decade.

As you read through this Report, you will learn about the five priorities that underpin the *2030 Strategy: Urgently Protect Land, Restore and Care for Niagara Escarpment Lands, Enhance the Bruce Trail Experience, Support People and Culture, and Inspire Generosity*.

In approving the strategy, the Board of Directors was impressed by and grateful for the visionary leadership of our Chief Executive Officer, Michael McDonald, in driving this ambitious plan. We were also assured that we were heading in the right direction – blazing the right trail – with the support of our nine Club Presidents.

Realizing our ambition requires the commitment and collaboration of many people in our Bruce Trail Conservancy community: more than 1,500 volunteers across our nine Clubs, over 12,000 members, thousands of passionate donors, dedicated staff, allied partner organizations, and countless others. For each person's efforts we are truly grateful. Collectively, their work enables us to confidently pursue our boldest plans and bring more Ontarians into connection with nature.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the Board of Directors for their diligence and commitment over the past year in setting the new strategic directions and ensuring good governance of the organization. They are an outstanding group of dedicated volunteers. I am honoured to serve as their Chair and work with them to advance our mission, *Preserving a ribbon of wilderness, for everyone, forever*.

Leah Myers  
BOARD CHAIR

## Chief Executive Officer's Message



**The power of momentum is truly incredible.**

This year the Bruce Trail Conservancy achieved inspirational results with the collective contributions of our staff, volunteers, members, donors and landowners. In this Report, I hope you will be inspired by the successes we have had in protecting the Niagara Escarpment while providing our communities with free public access to nature via the Bruce Trail.

Our newly launched *2030 Strategy* demonstrates our ambition and the urgency with which our work is needed. As you will see in the following pages, our staff and volunteers have already been working hard to bring this strategy to life. From making significant strides to reforest our protected natural areas and revive the globally rare tallgrass prairie ecosystem, to the outreach we've made to new Canadians and new communities, further ingraining diversity, equity and inclusivity into our organizational DNA, we are creating a brighter future for our beloved Bruce Trail for all to enjoy.

None of this would be possible without the support of our Bruce Trail community. In a landscape where land prices skyrocketed, and where climate change and development called for ambitious conservation work, our donors stepped up with transformational support to help us protect the Niagara Escarpment and the Greenbelt. Whether you volunteer your time, renew your membership, donate to our mission, or allow the Bruce Trail to cross your land, you are a champion of our natural spaces and the work it takes to preserve these lands for generations to come. We are steeped in gratitude for your ongoing support and for your encouragement to continue to be bold and ambitious in all that we do.

Together, we truly are blazing the way forward: not only as stewards of Canada's oldest and longest marked footpath, but as a leading conservation organization dedicated to preserving our ribbon of wilderness, one kilometre at a time. We are grateful for all that we celebrate today and excited for all of the progress that is yet to come.

Michael McDonald  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

# URGENTLY PROTECT LAND

The first priority of our *2030 Strategy* represents the essence of our mission: *preserving a ribbon of wilderness, for everyone, forever*. With sincere gratitude for the tremendous support of our donors and supporters, the BTC was able to secure all available properties within the Bruce Trail corridor over the last year and bring more acreage under permanent protection. We have realized this success while operating in a particularly challenging real estate market. The properties now under our stewardship are each important to piecing together sections of the Trail, navigating more kilometres of our footpath off of roads and improving the Bruce Trail experience for all who embark on an adventure.

As we gradually secure more land along our conservation corridor, we are preserving ecosystems and supporting the many species that reside within our near-urban nature. Our new protected areas boast beautiful escarpment features and views, and will preserve and restore habitats for amphibians, nesting birds, and species of concern. By creating permanence for the Bruce Trail, we help mitigate the effects of climate change and offer generations to come the opportunity to connect with nature.

## Establishing New Protected Areas

### Areas Protected by the Bruce Trail Conservancy in 2022-2023

#### **MapleCross Ridge Nature Reserve (expansion) Sydenham section – 25 acres – 1,115 metres of Trail**

Our MapleCross Ridge property was expanded by 25 acres with this new addition, creating a large swath of protected natural land in the Kemble area. MapleCross Ridge was secured in 2019 and, with this addition, is now considered a nature reserve by BTC ecologists due to the increase in natural lands of ecological value. The addition, which is also adjacent to the Kemble Mountain Management Area,

has beautiful escarpment features such as large boulders and small crevices. With a forested section and cultural meadows, which are areas consisting primarily of grasses and herbs with less than 25% tree and shrub cover, this property represents Sydenham's history of agriculture and natural areas existing in harmony. The addition of this property completes an 11.5 km stretch of corridor in this area, providing a permanent home for the Bruce Trail and habitat for species in the region.



MapleCross Ridge Nature Reserve (expansion) – Sydenham

Photo: Brian Popelier

## Establishing New Protected Areas



Vineyard's Edge Nature Reserve – Niagara section

Photo: Joel Swagerman

### **Vineyard's Edge Nature Reserve** **Niagara section – 11 acres – 505 metres of Trail**

After the landowners generously allowed the Bruce Trail to cross through their property for many years, the BTC secured this beautiful wooded land adjacent to the BTC's Cherry Ridge property. Located in the wine region of Niagara in the Town of Lincoln, this strip of wooded escarpment land is bordered on both sides by picturesque vineyards featuring rows of grape vines. Some of the property is included in the Beamsville Escarpment

Provincially Significant Life Science Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) and is an important area for biodiversity in the region. With iconic bench escarpment features and a mature deciduous forest, this nature reserve provides important Carolinian habitat for many species of birds and mammals. With over half a kilometre of Trail meandering through its woods, the property also provides a serene and shaded hiking experience through magnificent wine country.

**Akela and Scouters Heather and Ross Hamlin Nature Reserve at Riverside Woods**

**Caledon Hills section – 216 acres – 1,180 metres of Trail**

Located south of the Hockley Valley Provincial Nature Reserve, the Akela and Scouters Heather and Ross Hamlin Nature Reserve at Riverside Woods features 216 acres of near-urban nature. A mature mixed forest nestled along the banks of the Nottawasaga provides a habitat for a variety of forest-dependent species. The property also has a swath of cultural meadows which feature plants such as Goldenrod, Aster and Milkweed that are vital for pollinators such as Monarch Butterflies and Eastern Bumblebees. This new nature reserve is also home to a

plantation and a seasonal pond that provide opportunities for the BTC to conduct a variety of restoration projects to improve the habitats and ecological systems in the area. With almost 1.2 km of Trail meandering through this land, securing this property means that the Trail will be moved off of nearby roads, improving the Bruce Trail experience in the area. When combined with the neighbouring Provincial Park and the BTC’s Rushing River Nature Reserve, this nature reserve creates a large conservation corridor vital for a variety of species in an area where natural spaces are increasingly at risk due to development.



Akela & Scouters Heather & Ross Hamlin Nature Reserve at Riverside Woods – Caledon Hills section

Photo: Brooke Henry

## Establishing New Protected Areas



### Honeywood Ridge (expansion)

**Dufferin Hi-Land section – 5.8 acres – 1,295 metres of Trail**

After crossing this land since the 1970s thanks to the generosity of landowners, the BTC has officially secured nearly 1.3 km of Trail in the rolling hills of the Dufferin Hi-Land section, taking 600 metres off nearby roads. This acquisition is one of four in this area that the BTC has secured since 2020. Together, these four properties make up what is now called Honeywood Ridge, protecting vital habitats and bettering the Bruce Trail experience through the area. This final piece of the puzzle features a small wooded area, historic agricultural lands as well as expansive views and scenic vistas of the beautiful Dufferin area.

### Sydenham Escarpment Nature Reserve

**Sydenham section – 52 acres – 503 metres of Trail**

Located near Owen Sound, adjacent to the Sydenham Forest East property owned by Grey Sauble Conservation Authority, is the BTC’s new Sydenham Escarpment Nature Reserve. This property features a healthy woodland, some of which is considered interior forest - a rare and important habitat in Ontario. This woodland and the former agricultural land on the property support many species of special concern including Eastern Meadowlark, Bobolink, Wood Thrush, Eastern Wood Peewee, Butternut and Hart’s-tongue Fern. With beautiful escarpment edges and crevices, this property has carbon sequestration potential which can help mitigate climate change for years to come. Securing this land has permanently protected over half a kilometre of Main Trail. The nature reserve is also adjacent to the BTC’s Ferndell property and combined, these two properties make up 70 acres of BTC-protected land in the area.



CONSERVATION CORRIDOR GROWTH	2022-2023	2021-2022	2020-2021
Acres of Niagara Escarpment preserved in the year	445 acres	1,039 acres	1,027 acres
Number of new protected natural areas established	6	14	10
Total acres stewarded by the Bruce Trail Conservancy	14,304.5 acres	13,932 acres	12,777 acres
Total acres the Bruce Trail Conservancy has been involved in preserving	19,637 acres	18,889 acres	17,674 acres
Length of Bruce Trail’s Optimum Route secured in the year	3.5 km	10.9 km	5.7 km
Percentage of Bruce Trail’s Optimum Route on permanently protected land	70.6%	70.2%	68.9%

**MapleCross Nature Reserve at Salamander’s Bluff  
Blue Mountains section – 50 acres – 313 metres of Trail**

Located in the Blue Mountains section of the Bruce Trail, this new nature reserve is bordered on two sides by the Nottawasaga Bluffs Conservation Area, adding to the protected natural spaces in the region. Bordered by a waterway that creates seasonal pools, this 50-acre property features a small White Cedar Swamp that provides habitat for amphibians such as the American Toad, Green Frogs, and Spring Peepers. Consisting

primarily of a regenerating meadow, the property has many young trees and shrubs making it an excellent habitat for nesting birds. The nature reserve also boasts a thriving Sugar Maple forest with beautiful escarpment features, typical of the area. This stand provides a home for many species that depend on deciduous forests, such as Red-eyed Vireos. With 313 m of Bruce Trail already running through the property, securing this land was important for the continuity of the Trail and for widening the conservation corridor in the area.



MapleCross Nature Reserve at Salamander’s Bluff – Blue Mountains section

Photo: Michael McDonald

**AREAS PROTECTED BY THE BRUCE TRAIL CONSERVANCY IN 2022-2023**

PROTECTED NATURAL AREA	CLUB SECTION	AREA PRESERVED	OPTIMUM ROUTE SECURED	FUNDING (See Legend)
MapleCross Ridge NR (Expansion)	Sydenham	25 acres	1,115 m	1
Vineyard’s Edge	Niagara	11 acres	505 m	1
Riverside Woods Nature Reserve	Caledon	239 acres	1,180 m	1,3,4
Honeywood Ridge (Expansion)	Dufferin Hi-Land	5.8 acres	1,295 m	1
Sydenham Escarpment Nature Reserve	Sydenham	115 acres	503 m	1,2,3,4
MapleCross Nature Reserve at Salamander’s Bluff	Blue Mountains	50 acres	313 m	1,4
<b>TOTAL - 6 Protected Natural Areas</b>		<b>445 acres</b>	<b>4,911 m</b>	

**LEGEND FOR FUNDING**

- 1 - BTC donors
- 2 - Donation of Land
- 3 - Ontario Land Trust Alliance
- 4 - Environment and Climate Change Canada

# RESTORE AND CARE FOR NIAGARA ESCARPMENT LANDS

As we secure increasing acreage along the beautiful Niagara Escarpment, we are taking important steps to restore the ecological health of the land through expert stewardship. Over the last year we have implemented numerous restoration projects that are returning the land to its natural state. This includes strategies to mitigate the impact of invasive species with boot brush stations and team work parties, maintaining the environment while providing education about how trail users can care for our natural spaces.

Stewardship of the land is also critical for protecting species at risk along our conservation corridor. Thanks to the support of our community, we are able to do this work in increasingly sustainable ways, caring for the land through time-tested natural methods and developing renewable seed programs to bring native species back to our protected areas. As our conservation activities expand, so does the lasting protection of increasingly rare habitats, such as interior forest and tallgrass prairie, creating environments where flora and fauna can thrive.



## TRAIL WORK BY THE NUMBERS

	2022-2023	2021-2022	2020-2021
<b>Trail maintained</b>	1,375 km	1,377 km	1,366 km
<b>Trail created or rerouted</b>	35 km	26.5 km	42 km
<b>Trail removed from roads</b>	7.9 km	4.6 km	4.0 km

## Bringing New Life to Bull Homestead

**On our Bull Homestead property in South Bruce Peninsula, our restoration projects are taking root with the help of tens of thousands of new trees.**

The Bull Homestead was secured by the BTC in 2008, adding over 62 acres to our conservation corridor. Since it came under our care, this land has seen many changes that are bringing it back to a natural state and encouraging the return of wildlife to the area.

Last fall, our partners at St. Williams Nursery and Ecology Centre approached the BTC with tens of thousands of coniferous and deciduous trees in need of a place to grow. Having worked with St. Williams for over four years on many restoration projects, we eagerly chose

to continue our collaboration and bring new life to Bull Homestead.

Over the course of just a few days, a team of five individuals from St. Williams Nursery used hand-held tree spades to plant 36,000 trees, marking the largest forest restoration project in the history of the BTC. Over time, this planting will increase local forest cover and provide new habitat opportunities for animals that favour interior forest, as well as species at risk, such as the Wood Thrush.



Photo: Brian Popelier

## Using Fire to Restore a Rare Ecosystem

**This year, for the first time in Bruce Trail Conservancy history, a controlled burn was conducted on a BTC-protected natural area to revive Ontario’s tallgrass prairies.**

On April 12, 2023, after years of preparation by BTC staff and volunteers, a blaze was ignited at Fisher’s Pond Nature Reserve north of Burlington. In just under two hours, the team from Lands & Forest Consulting Ltd. successfully burned an 11-acre area of grassland, an important step in restoring a healthy tallgrass prairie at this former agricultural site.

### What is a controlled burn?

A controlled burn, also known as a prescribed burn, is a deliberately set, carefully planned, and controlled fire that consumes ground-level fuels such as dried leaves, grass, needles, and fallen woody debris. This practice is a widely used and scientifically recognized method of controlling invasive and weedy plant species, allowing for the growth and regeneration of native grassland species.

### Why are tallgrass prairies important?

Tallgrass prairies are one of the most endangered ecosystems in Canada. These natural grasslands feature a diverse mix of sun-loving native wildflowers and tall grasses that support a range of wildlife species, including many species at risk. Once covering 1000 square kilometres in southern Ontario, less than three per cent of their original extent remains today, mainly due to urban development and agriculture. The remaining prairie habitats are under threat from succession to forest, invasive species, and climate change.

A range of bird and insect species depend on the shelter, food, nesting opportunities, and migration stopover areas tallgrass prairies provide. These ecosystems are home to many species of birds and pollinators as well as other insects, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals. These include species at risk such as the Eastern Meadowlark, Bobolink, and Monarch Butterflies. Reports of tallgrass bird populations being in steep decline make protecting and restoring their homes more important than ever.

Tallgrass prairies not only provide essential habitats but can also protect our water resources as they improve filtration and slow runoff, reducing the nutrients and bacteria entering our streams, rivers, and ponds. They are also effective at mitigating climate change as the roots of tallgrass prairie plants help store carbon in the soil.

### Why a controlled burn?

When the BTC secured Fisher’s Pond Nature Reserve in 2018, our ecologists identified the former agricultural lands as an opportunity to restore a tallgrass prairie. Since the beginning of the project the ecologists were aware that, after seeding the area in 2019, a controlled burn would



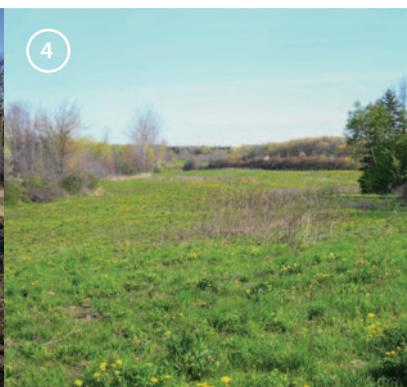
Controlled Burn at Fisher’s Pond Nature Reserve



need to be conducted to ensure a healthy ecosystem. This is because tallgrass prairie plants have evolved with and adapted to fire. Fire is a key driver in the creation and maintenance of tallgrass prairies and encourages seed production while preventing the encroachment of woody plants. Without periodic fires in tallgrass prairies, shrubs and invasive species take over, shading out and eliminating the prairie grass and wildflower species and converting the prairie into a different ecosystem.



Photo: Brooke Henry



### Fisher's Pond and Beyond

In the weeks following the burn, BTC staff returned to Fisher's Pond and, with help from volunteers, once again seeded the area with native grass and wildflower species including Big Bluestem, Switchgrass, and Yellow Coneflower. The intent was to give these native species a chance to take hold while any invasive species recovered from the burn.

Restoring a functioning, healthy tallgrass prairie to Fisher's Pond Nature Reserve will take time. Depending on the success of the seeding after this initial burn, it is likely that a second burn will be conducted on the property in the coming years. In the meantime, as stewards of this land, the BTC will continue to monitor the area and control invasive species at and near the site.

While the first burn at Fisher's Pond Nature Reserve is complete, the BTC continues projects on other protected natural areas and identifies new opportunities for restoration. Because some of these properties are more restricted in terms of access, proximity to water and nearness of urban areas, other methods such as mowing may be used for a similar effect. The BTC has several properties where work has been completed or is in progress, or where future meadow and prairie restoration opportunities have been identified.

#### *These include:*

- Vanishing Stream in the Peninsula section
- Bayview Bluffs Nature Reserve in the Sydenham section
- East Mountain Nature Reserve in the Beaver Valley section
- Campbell in the Beaver Valley section
- Dunedin Ravine in the Blue Mountains section
- Splitrock Narrows in the Dufferin Hi-Land section
- Riverside Woods Nature Reserve in the Caledon Hills section
- Fisher's Pond Nature Reserve in the Iroquoia section

The Bruce Trail Conservancy looks forward to providing updates on meadow and tallgrass prairie restoration projects in the coming years and reporting on the success of our efforts to create healthy and vibrant ecosystems along the Niagara Escarpment.

## Seeds of Sustainability

### Celebrating the Creation of the BTC's First Seed Orchard

Over the last ten years, the supply of plants and seeds native to Ontario has not been able to keep up with increasing demands. While we continued our restoration efforts across the Bruce Trail corridor, plans began forming to build our first seed orchard. This enterprising project would enable the BTC to sustainably grow the plants needed for our restoration work while navigating around any future supply issues. Our McNally property in the Iroquoia section provided the perfect opportunity to bring this vision to life.

Development of the McNally Seed Orchard began in September of 2022. After six weeks of work preparing the earth, installing fencing and planting, the project was ready to weather the winter.

The creation and maintenance of this sustainable seed program would not be possible without the dedication of BTC volunteers. This spring, volunteers from the Iroquoia Club began tending the orchards with weekly maintenance including planting, weeding, and mulching. Marking the entrance is a beautiful sign created and gifted to the BTC by William Jack, a BTC Trail Ambassador in the Iroquoia section.

The plants now blooming in the orchard are not for propagation or replanting, but specifically for seed collection. Biodiversity teams can visit the orchard and collect seeds for same-day restoration projects. The seeds will then be scattered in appropriate areas throughout our conservation corridor, leaving nature to do the rest.



Photo: Lyndsey Wilkerson



This pilot project has yielded many learnings about the importance of proper site preparation, mulching to keep weeds at bay, and how to keep the space safe for animals and people while allowing the plants to thrive. Having successfully completed this first year of the seed orchard initiative, plans are now in development to create similar orchards in each Club section that will support either sun-loving species, like those found at McNally, or forest understory species. Areas in the Niagara and Caledon Hills sections have already been identified for the next phase of the project with the goal of each Club section caring for a seed orchard of their own in the coming years.



### Species Found in the McNally Seed Orchard

- |                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| Big Bluestem       | Black-eyed Susan     |
| Indiangrass        | Foxglove Beardtongue |
| Wild Bergamot      | New Jersey Tea       |
| False Sunflower    | Spicebush            |
| Hoary Vervain      | Serviceberry         |
| Evening Primrose   | Paper Birch          |
| Butterfly Milkweed | Eastern Cottonwood   |

# ENHANCE THE BRUCE TRAIL EXPERIENCE

As we protect and restore Escarpment lands along our iconic Bruce Trail, it is also important that we work to foster a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone who explores our trail network. In all of our Club sections, volunteers and staff have been hard at work supporting the improvement of infrastructure, such as bridges and boardwalks, and providing opportunities to marvel at the natural wonders found along the Trail. All of this is achieved using world class sustainable trail design and with an eye to the future.

Our entire community contributes in some way to this area of our work. Member support enables us to maintain trail blazes and signage. The generosity of our donors emboldens us to be ambitious and confidently plan for the future. Hundreds of volunteers give their time, energy and knowledge, together with the expertise of our staff, making collaborative plans come to life. Landowners graciously allow Bruce Trail explorers to cross their land, enabling us to avoid rerouting the Trail onto roads. By working together we are fostering a thriving ecosystem, along the Niagara Escarpment and within our Bruce Trail community.



## Working Together: Landowners and Partners

Being the stewards of Canada's oldest and longest marked footpath and protecting near-urban nature takes the cooperation and collaboration of allied organizations, agencies and landholders. These relationships not only ensure the continuity of our Trail, but provide helpful opportunities to discuss best practices and share successes, confident in the knowledge that working together yields the best outcomes for the nature we protect and the people who value it.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy is honoured to work in the territories of the Anishinaabek, Huron-Wendat, Tionontati, Attawandaron, Haudenosaunee, and Métis, and on land held and cared for by:

- 23 municipalities
- Seven Conservation Authorities (representing 46 conservation areas along the Bruce Trail)
- Saugeen Ojibway Nation
- Parks Canada
- Ontario Parks
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry
- Ontario Ministry of Northern Development
- Ontario Heritage Trust
- Royal Botanical Gardens
- Private landowners of over 670 properties

We are incredibly grateful for the valuable relationships we have with all of our landholding partners. We thank them for the critical role they play in enhancing the Bruce Trail Experience for hundreds of thousands of trail users each year.



## Building a Better Trail Experience at Hogg's Falls

In the summer of 2018, discussions began around making improvements to the area of the Bruce Trail known as Hogg's Falls in the Beaver Valley. It was clear that areas of the property were under threat of degradation by environmental factors such as flooding, in addition to visitor impact due to a lack of defined paths. Unsafe river crossings kept the Trail route on roadways and updated signage was needed. There were many opportunities to improve the visitor experience, while also protecting and restoring habitats.

Under the leadership of Robert Hann, Director of Trail Development and Management for the Beaver Valley Bruce Trail Club (BVBTC), volunteers and community partners began developing ambitious plans. One thing was evident early on: such an expansive trail improvement project would need to be a collaborative effort between community partners at every level, from volunteers of the BVBTC to local businesses, allied organizations to varying levels of government. Together, these partners established plans for a new 700-foot boardwalk, three new bridges,

*This project was made possible with the generous support of the following funders:*

**Canada**

This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

**Grey County**  
Colour It Your Way

### Enhancements at Hogg's Falls

This project thoughtfully considered the best ways to conserve and enhance the natural environment while improving the hiking experience of resident Trail visitors

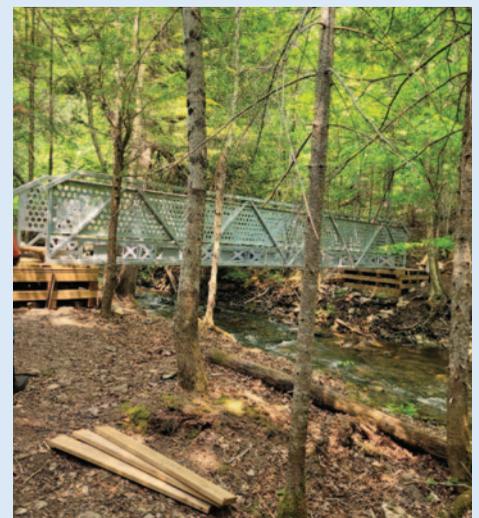
and first time explorers alike. The results are truly a testament to the power of collaboration between community members at every level.

- A 700-foot boardwalk now winds through the forest, guiding visitors on a safe and enjoyable route without impeding natural water-flows.



- Two new metal and wood bridges now span the Boyne River and its tributary, enabling 800 m of Trail to be rerouted off of roadways and onto a riverside path.

- A third bridge creates another safe crossing over the Boyne River. Together with other upstream bridges and boardwalks, these enhancements create a short 2.8 km loop trail past the falls and river.



educational signage, and the development of well-signed trail loops throughout the area.

In March of 2022, construction finally began. The driving force behind this ambitious build was a dedicated group of BVBTC volunteers who provided over 2,800 hours for the planning and construction of each project. Volunteers with project management, construction management and construction trade experience were especially valuable to executing their bold plans. Completed in June 2023, the results of their collective efforts are now open to the

public, just in time for summer visitors.

We are grateful for the valuable contributions of the project's many partners: Ontario Ministry of Northern Development, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Grey County, Municipality of Grey Highlands, Ontario Parks, Grey Sauble Conservation Authority, Niagara Escarpment Commission, and Regional Tourism Organization 7 (BruceGreySimcoe).



- Seven Preferred Hikes have been created, each highlighting different features in the area and offering varying levels of intensity. The variety of this new trail system aims to encourage visitors to return for further exploration.



- Improved signage has been installed, including easy to read maps and colour markers pointing the way for the various Preferred Hikes.

- Updated information has been installed at existing and new kiosks, educating visitors about the Bruce Trail, hiker etiquette, geological information and more.



## Creating a New View of Devil's Monument

For many years, people have been drawn to Devil's Monument, the largest flowerpot sea stack formation on the Bruce Peninsula. Devil's Monument stands in an area owned by the Ontario Heritage Trust and managed by the BTC and is well known for its spectacular views. In 2019, plans started to take shape for a structure to be built around the monument to protect it and the surrounding environment. While the COVID-19 pandemic slowed the permitting process and delayed the start of work, the plans for enhancing and preserving this area remained.

In the fall of 2022, the BTC was given the green light to begin construction. Production had to be carefully planned to avoid bird breeding season and inclement weather, so the early spring of 2023 provided the perfect timing to assemble this impressive structure.

Doug Hill, a local volunteer and contractor, led the project with Peninsula Bruce Trail Club (PBTC) volunteers and the support of BTC staff. The construction involved the heavy work of moving 7,000 lbs of building materials over 700 m of trail, including a staircase on a cliffside. The Ontario Heritage Trust generously funded the materials and labour for the build.

Thanks to the dedication and hard work of this outstanding volunteer team, a 24-foot by 14-foot observation deck has been constructed at the base of the monument, giving visitors a safe area to take a closer look at this incredible geological feature while leaving the sensitive ecology of the area undisturbed. In the first months since opening, the new viewing platform has already provided hundreds of visitors a safer view of this wonder of nature.



Photo: Tamara Wilson



# SUPPORT PEOPLE AND CULTURE

As we continue to blaze a way forward, the Bruce Trail community will always be at the heart of our progress. This priority within our *2030 Strategy* outlines our commitment to building an inclusive, diverse and welcoming Bruce Trail community that celebrates and protects the Niagara Escarpment. This includes nurturing engaging relationships with our Clubs, proactively reaching out to new communities, and working closely with Indigenous allies, landowners, members and volunteers. We want to ensure that the Bruce Trail experience is an enjoyable, purposeful and fulfilling one for all to explore.

Critical to this goal is proactive work to make everyone feel comfortable, safe, and welcome on the Bruce Trail, no matter their background, identity, or level of outdoor experience. From seasoned explorers to those just starting to foster a greater connection to nature, the Bruce Trail is for everyone.



## Connecting New Canadians to our Ribbon of Wilderness

**This year, the Bruce Trail Conservancy began a new partnership with Canoo, an app connecting newcomers to Canada with leading cultural institutions, encouraging people to explore our country “openly and freely, with a sense of adventure.”**

Newcomers within their first year of citizenship and new permanent residents within their first five years of residence can access the Canoo app through their smartphone app store. Through Canoo, new Canadians are eligible for a free one-year BTC membership, as well as entry to over 1,400 of Canada’s best museums, art galleries, theatres and parklands.

Shimeem Al-Ayash, Volunteer & Outreach Assistant at the BTC, personally connected to the app as a new Canadian after relocating to Ontario. She found it to be so useful when she was new to the area that she initiated the BTC’s partnership with Canoo based on her experience. In this

first year of our partnership, 336 new Canadians have used Canoo to become members of the BTC and begin exploring our conservation corridor.

While the Trail is always open to everyone, we want to ensure new Canadians have the introduction, opportunity and support to connect with the beautiful natural spaces along the Niagara Escarpment and explore all 1,400 km of our world-class trail system. We are excited by the diverse voices and perspectives joining our growing Club communities and look forward to introducing many more new Canadians to our ribbon of wilderness.



Photo: Brooke Henry

## Indigenous Connections: Building a way forward together

As we work to further our mission, the Bruce Trail Conservancy acknowledges the rich history and enduring presence of Indigenous peoples as stewards of the land and waters of the Niagara Escarpment. We are committed to expanding and strengthening our relationships with Indigenous communities, organizations and individuals to advance reconciliation through our work and further conservation together.

Bruce Trail Conservancy staff members have formed an Indigenous Relations Working Group, which focuses on strengthening Indigenous cultural competency within the Bruce Trail Conservancy, building relationships with Indigenous partners, and identifying areas within our work where positive changes can be made with respect to Indigenous inclusion and engagement. Our Bruce Trail Clubs are also taking strides on this journey and have begun building important local connections.

Training, engagement, and collaborative projects this year included:

- Coordinating bimonthly learning opportunities for BTC staff and volunteer leadership to provide a foundation of understanding of Indigenous rights, histories, cultures, protocols, diverse perspectives, and connections with the Niagara Escarpment.

- Working with Indigenous advisors and contacts to incorporate Indigenous content in our public communications, including BTC's social media channels, calendar, Bruce Trail Reference, and magazine.
- Initiating introductory meetings with Indigenous leaders, organizations and Knowledge Holders to foster cross-cultural and cross-organizational understanding and find opportunities for collaboration.
- Launching two Healing Gardens projects in partnership with Plenty Canada, Forests Ontario and Indigenous partners. Anticipated next year, these unique additions to BTC nature reserves will highlight Indigenous connections to the land and provide natural locations for learning and reflection.

With humility and openness, we look forward to continuing to collaborate with Indigenous communities and allies to advance conservation projects, increase opportunities for engagement, and make meaningful contributions to both reconciliation and the long-term stewardship of the Niagara Escarpment.



BTC staff, volunteers and partners visit Smokey Hollow Nature Reserve to plan an Indigenous Healing Garden

Photo: Mark Zelinski

## Reaching Out at Pride Toronto

Between June 23 and 25, 2023, the BTC joined in Pride Toronto; one of the largest 2SLGBTQ+ celebrations in North America. As a platform that aims to make people feel safe and welcomed, Pride Toronto provided a great opportunity for staff and volunteers to connect with the thousands of attendees from across 2SLGBTQ+ communities who stopped by the BTC booth.

BTC Staff, Trail Ambassadors, and volunteers joined the festivities, helping forward the BTC's allyship by celebrating the 2SLGBTQ+ community and engaging in conversations, not only about diversity and inclusion, but about attendees' love for the Bruce Trail. Many individuals shared memories about growing up exploring the Trail and the enjoyment they found in its amazing landscape; stories of new and old adventures that many are excited to continue. For those new to the Bruce Trail, volunteers

and Trail Ambassadors provided information about our mission, conservation work and how to start exploring.

We want everyone to feel welcome on the Bruce Trail. The BTC stands in support to promote equal representation and participation. We are committed to actively pursuing ways to support and strengthen our allyship with 2SLGBTQ+ communities - our incredible three days making connections at Pride Toronto is just the beginning.



Photo: Frank Yee

# INSPIRE GENEROSITY

We are tremendously fortunate that donors and supporters at all levels share our commitment to *preserving a ribbon of wilderness, for everyone, forever*. The exceptional support of our donors and partners ensures our work can not only continue, but provide an example as one of Ontario's leading conservation and trail organizations.

The generosity shown by thousands of donors in the last year is once again outstanding. Every gift is meaningful, representing a commitment to protecting our natural spaces, and, very often, a deeply personal connection to the Bruce Trail. This critical support ensures that we can continue to be bold and ambitious in our plans as we blaze the way forward to protect and preserve the Bruce Trail and Niagara Escarpment. Our gratitude cannot be overstated - because of the support of our community, the future of the Bruce Trail is a bright one.



# Environment and Climate Change Canada Grant

This year, Environment and Climate Change Canada awarded the Bruce Trail Conservancy a prestigious five-year, \$5 million matching grant through the Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund. Directed to the protection and conservation of carbon-rich Niagara Escarpment lands as a nature-based solution to climate change, this grant represents the largest government investment in our work to date and recognizes the BTC’s expertise in bringing ecologically important lands into our conservation corridor. As a matching grant, we relied on donations of every size to realize its full impact. This opportunity truly inspired generosity within our community. In Year One of the program, our donors gave \$1 million which has been matched by Environment and Climate Change Canada. Please watch for upcoming campaigns, our community’s continued support in realizing these matching funds is paramount.

DONATIONS			
	2022-2023	2021-2022	2020-2021
<b>Number of unique donations</b>	11,015	10,890	12,111
<b>Total dollars donated</b>	\$15.87 M	\$15.62 M	\$12.65 M

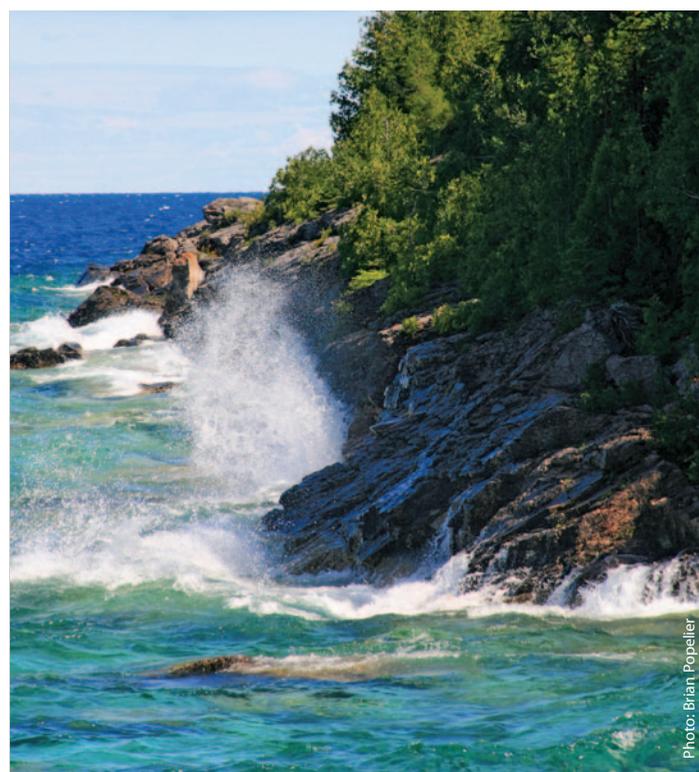


Photo: Brian Popelier

## Legacy Gifts: Seeds Where the Future Grows

The decision to make a legacy gift is a powerful, hopeful, and meaningful one that can help ensure the permanence and health of the Bruce Trail for many years to come. This year we received confirmation from 36 individuals of their decision to include the Bruce Trail Conservancy in their estate plans. We are tremendously grateful to these individuals and all those who make this lasting commitment to our ribbon of wilderness.

*“I decided to include a gift in my will to the Bruce Trail Conservancy because it’s doing such important work to help protect and preserve the Niagara Escarpment. With all the development pressures and building going on throughout southern Ontario, I feel securing land permanently for conservation is more important than ever. The Bruce Trail has brought me so much joy over the years, nurturing my love for nature and adventure. It is my hope that my gift will help to ensure that the BTC will be able to carry on its important work for many years.” – Norm W.*

## ESTATE GIFTS (RECEIVED IN 2022-2023)

- Jantje (Janneke) Baan
- Marie Blazic
- James Robert Borbridge & Aileen Borbridge
- Joyce Dain
- Joyce Marian Gardiner
- Beryl Herman
- Matti C. Ingerman
- Daisy G. Lazarovits
- Akira Omatsu
- Jennifer Rigg
- Adrianus Cornelis Rijlaarsdam & Margaretha Rijlaarsdam
- Joan C. Savage
- Henry Donald Williams

# Thank you to our 2022-2023 Bruce Trail Conservancy Donors

The generous support of our donors enables us to be ambitious in our plans for the future while encouraging our natural spaces and dedicated community to thrive today. We celebrate their commitment to preserving our ribbon of wilderness and the impact their generosity will have for many years to come.

*We are grateful to the following donors who made gifts between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023.*

## **\$5M–\$9.99M**

Anonymous (1)

## **\$500,000–\$999,999**

Heather & Ross Hamlin Fund  
Patrick J. McNally Charitable Foundation

## **\$100,000–\$499,999**

Echo Foundation  
Peter Gilgan Foundation  
Brian & Colleen Johnston  
David Kendall & Grecia Mayers  
The MapleCross Fund  
Adrianus Cornelis Rijlaarsdam & Margaretha Rijlaarsdam  
Estate of Joan C. Savage  
Wendy Thompson  
Anonymous (2)

## **\$50,000–\$99,000**

Michael Andrassy & Ann Guthrie  
Tony & Anne Arrell & Family  
Estate of Joyce Marian Gardiner  
Chris Hoffmann & Joan Eakin  
Estate of Akira Omatsu  
Anonymous (3)

## **\$25,000–\$49,999**

Caledon Hills Bruce Trail Club  
Definity Insurance Foundation  
Dufferin Hi-Land Bruce Trail Club  
Fidelity Investments Canada Ltd  
Estate of Matti C. Ingerman  
George Lennon  
Christine H. Lewis  
Mary Anne & Chris Miller  
Niagara Bruce Trail Club  
Tony Paine & Susan Collacott  
Joel G. Parkes  
Estate of Jennifer Rigg  
TAKLA Foundation  
Toronto Bruce Trail Club  
Anonymous (2)

## **\$10,000–\$24,999**

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Sydenham Bruce Trail Club  
The Taylor Family Foundation  
John & Vicki Tremayne  
Waghmare Family Foundation  
Estate of Henry Donald Williams  
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## **\$5,000–\$9,999**

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David & Debbie Wright  
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## **\$1,000–\$4,999**

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Tamarack Ltd

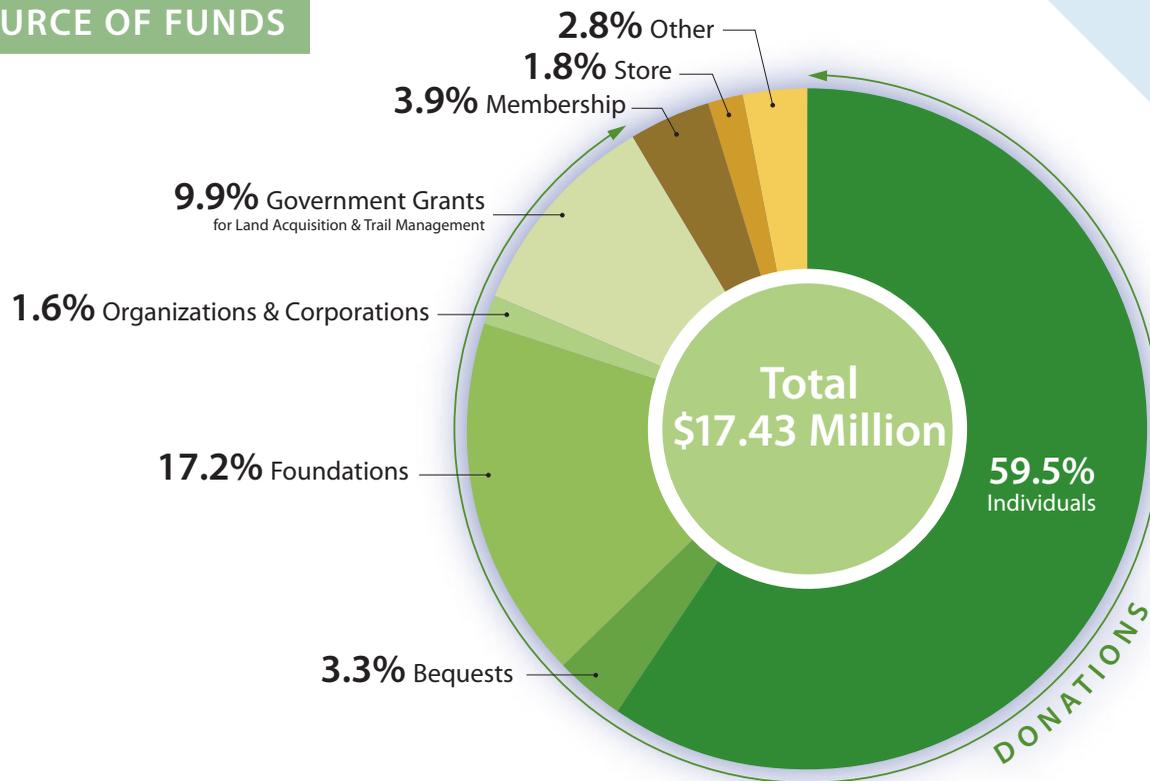
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Connie S Wong  
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Loudon Young  
Lynn Zwart  
Anonymous (11)

#### DONATIONS OF LAND

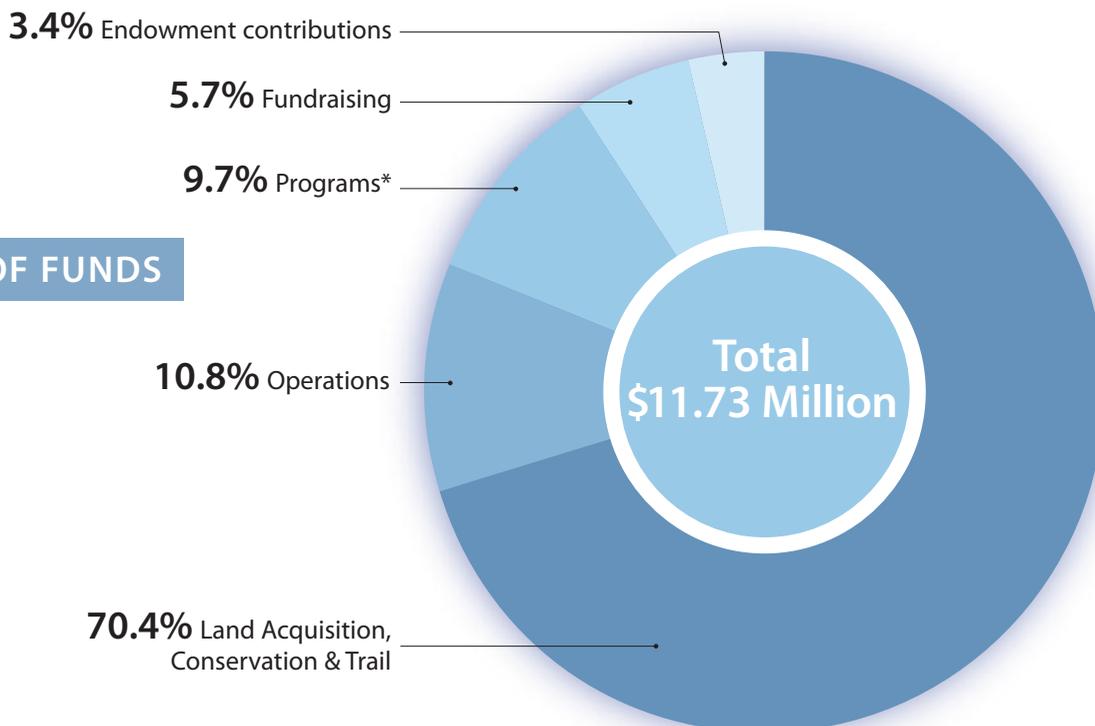
Maynard Family:  
• Helen Maynard  
• Estate of Elizabeth Crannie  
• Estate of Jean Burrows  
• Gordon Maynard

# Financial Summary 2022-2023

## SOURCE OF FUNDS



## USE OF FUNDS



\* Includes: Membership, Communications and Bruce Trail Enterprises

Thanks to the generosity and commitment of our members, donors and other supporters, the Bruce Trail Conservancy ended Fiscal Year 2023 in a financially healthy position.

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY (Fiscal Year 2023)

Opening cash position:	\$7.75 M
Funds Received:	\$17.43 M
Funds Used and Endowed:	\$11.73 M
Closing Cash Position:	\$13.45 M

## Connecting to our Financial Statements

Here's how to find information from our Annual Report Financial Summary in our audited financial statements:

### SOURCE OF FUNDS

Comprised of:	Found in Statement of:	\$ in millions
Total Revenue	Operations	10.23
Interest/investment income in reserves	Operations	-0.24
Restricted Donations	Cash Flows	7.39
Net Change in working capital	Cash Flows	
Deferred membership revenue		-0.04
Deferred contribution and grants		0.12
Accounts Receivable		-0.03
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>17.43</b>

### DONATIONS

Comprised of:	Found in Statement of:	\$ in millions
Donations of cash and securities	Operations	8.33
Donations and grants restricted for land purchase	Cash Flows	6.98
Donations contributed to endowment	Cash Flows	0.40
Grants	Operations	0.16
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>15.87</b>

### OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDS

Comprised of:	Found in Statement of:	\$ in millions
Membership Dues – Conservancy	Operations	0.57
Membership Dues – Club	Operations	0.13
Deferred membership revenue	Cash Flows	-0.04
Bruce Trail Enterprises	Operations	0.32
Interest and Realized Investment Income	Operations	0.68
Interest and Realized Investment Income (Reserves)	Operations	-0.24
Rental Income	Operations	0.05
Accounts receivable	Cash Flows	-0.03
Deferred contributions and grants	Cash Flows	0.12
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1.56</b>

### USE OF FUNDS

Comprised of:	Found in Statement of:	\$ in millions
Total Expenses	Operations	4.69
Less: Amortization		-0.08
Insurance premiums		-0.01
Purchase of land and easements	Cash Flows	5.87
Interfund Transfer:		
Internal restriction to Land Stewardship	Changes in Fund Balances	0.61
Endowment contributions		0.40
Net Change in working capital	Cash Flows	
Purchase of other capital assets		0.17
Merchandise Inventory		0.06
Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities		0.02
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>11.73</b>

The Bruce Trail Conservancy audited financial statements are available online at [brucetrail.org](http://brucetrail.org) (*About Us > Financial Statements*)

# Bruce Trail Conservancy Board of Directors 2022-2023

**Leah Myers**  
Chair



**Graham Allen**



**Cynthia Archer**



**Heidi Bischof**



**Gail Di Cintio**



**John Dickason**



**Nadia Dubyk**



**Michael Edney**



**Robin Garrett**



**Tim Johnson**



**Brian Johnston**



**Corrie Kellestine**



**Linda Kerec**



**Jaclyn Moody**



**Lori Shalhoub**



**Wendy Thompson**



**Bonni Titgemeyer**



**Michael Treuman**



**John Whitworth**



## **Governance Committee**

Wendy Thompson (Chair)  
Graham Allen  
Robin Garrett  
Lori Shalhoub

## **Finance & Risk Committee**

Heidi Bischof (Co-Chair)  
Jaclyn Moody (Co-Chair)  
Cynthia Archer  
Nadia Dubyk  
Michael Edney  
Corrie Kellestine

## **Human Resources Committee**

Bonni Titgemeyer (Chair)  
Gail Di Cintio  
Linda Kerec  
Michael Treuman

## **Land Securement Committee**

John Whitworth (Chair)  
John Dickason  
Tim Johnson  
Brian Johnston  
*Together with one representative from each of the nine Bruce Trail Clubs.*

For more about our Board of Directors visit [bruce-trail.org](http://bruce-trail.org) (About Us > Board of Directors).



Photo: Rhiannon Carruthers

## Looking Ahead

**As we celebrate the conservation successes of this year, another blaze has been freshly painted, guiding our path forward.**



As you have read, there are many reasons to be proud of the progress we have already made guided by the *2030 Strategy*. From bringing more Escarpment acres under our care to reaching out to new groups with an invitation to explore, we are building a flourishing community dedicated to protecting our precious natural areas and the species that rely on them.

The expansion of our conservation corridor is urgent, both in terms of kilometres of Trail secured and acres preserved forever. As we move forward, we will continue to maximize every opportunity to create permanence for the Bruce Trail and protect more of the Niagara Escarpment, while supporting the regeneration of rare habitats. This in turn will help mitigate the effects of climate change, and encourage healthy and active communities across Ontario.

The Bruce Trail community is championing the protection of near-urban nature in the face of development, climate change and biodiversity loss, making a tangible impact now while building momentum for a promising future. By continuing to grow our connections with like-minded organizations and the greater Bruce Trail community, we will more efficiently and effectively reach our conservation and trail enhancement goals.

**We look forward to sharing our future successes with you as we blaze our way to 2030, preserving our beautiful ribbon of wilderness for many generations to come.**



# Bruce Trail CONSERVANCY

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Dr. Philip R. Gosling

## Bruce Trail Founders

Raymond Lowes, Dr. Philip R. Gosling,  
Dr. Norman Pearson, Dr. Robert McLaren

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Photo: Brooke Henry

## Thank You

Our work is possible thanks to the generous support of members, donors, and volunteers. Your contributions provide permanence for the Bruce Trail and critical momentum for greater conservation impact across the Niagara Escarpment. Thank you for all the ways you support our conservation corridor and growing community.

### Deliver to:



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