

Center of Gravity

2024 Annual Report



INLAND
WOODS+TRAILS

A Note from the Executive Director

Dear Friends, Partners, and Supporters,

I'm proud to reflect on 2024 as a year of growth, resilience, and deepened impact at Inland Woods + Trails. Our mission – to connect people to the outdoors through the thoughtful stewardship of trails, forests, and community spaces – has never felt more urgent or more inspiring. This past year, our team – with your support – deepened our focus on bettering our understanding of the changing relationship between people and the environment. In February, after a 13-month public planning process with our partners at The Town of Rumford, Trust for Public Land and the Northern Forest Center, Inland Woods + Trails became owner of the 446-acre Rumford Community Forest. On the trail side, the spring was spent utilizing your significant support to rehabilitate trail damage across our management caused by the December 2023 storms. Then in May, with much fanfare we opened Lower Gully Verse Travels in the Bethel Community Forest. A true thrill ride. Over the summer we continued development of CATS and opened nearly a full mile of new access there (we even snuck in one of my favorite things-some easy single track off of CATS for your riding pleasure) and then late in the summer-initiated work at Telstar High School on new mountain bike terrain there.

In the fall, the Maine Outdoor Economy Summit was held at Sunday River Resort, and this annual gathering of over 300 leaders from Maine outdoor recreation sector gave us the unique opportunity to show off this great region, its people, and recreation infrastructure. This is an incredible time to be doing this work with all of you. We will keep the momentum up knowing - that the power of trails – not just as physical paths, but as connectors of people, places, stories, community, and the future. None of this would be possible without our dedicated staff, generous donors, hard-working volunteers, and passionate partners across the region, state, and nation.

As we look toward 2025, we carry a sense of responsibility. There are still more trails to build, more woods to wander, and the communities to serve. But with your continued support, I'm confident we'll go farther than ever.

*Photo Credit:
Photography for the
People*



Thank you for joining us on this path.

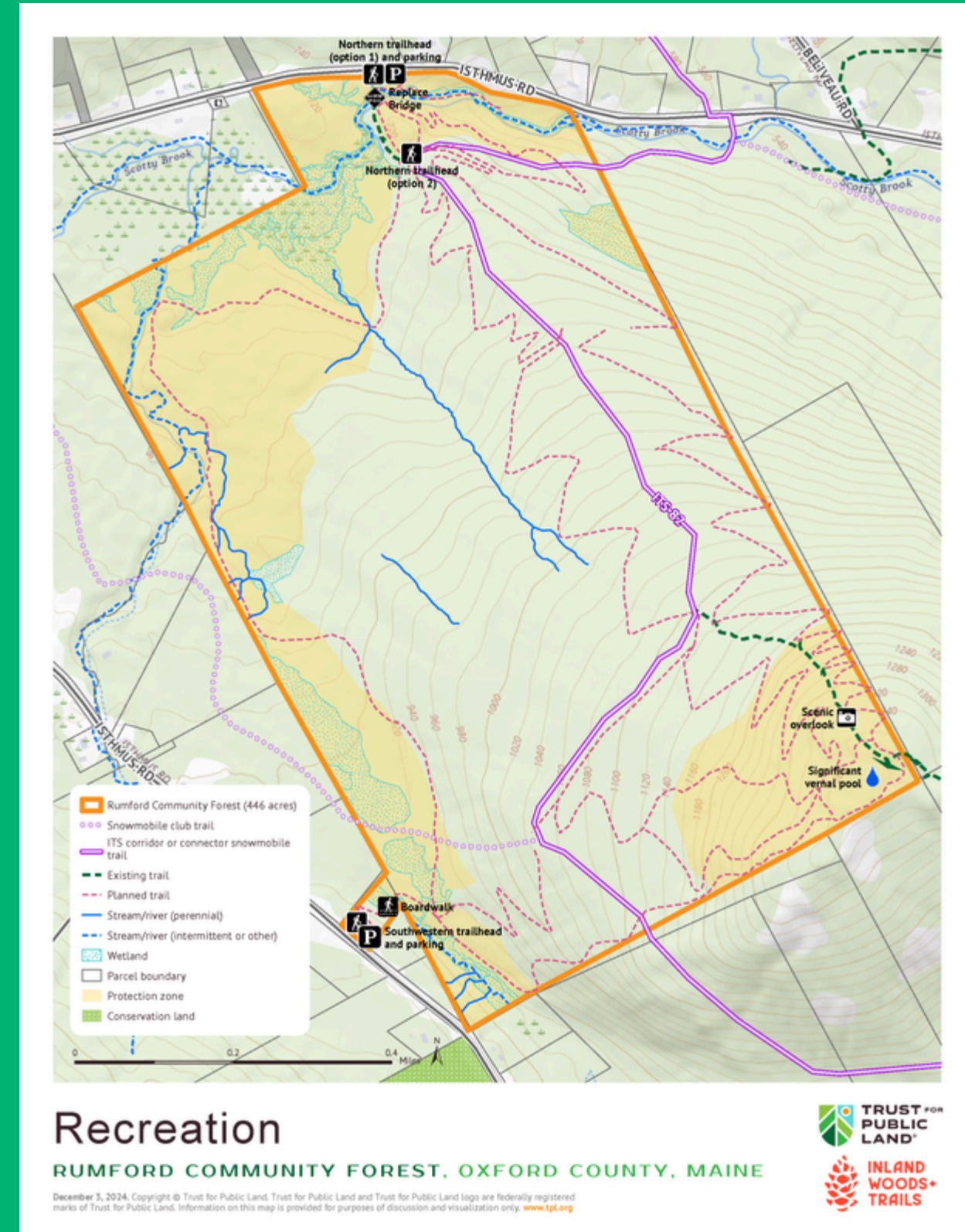
With gratitude,
Gabe Perkins, Executive Director

When a plan comes together: Rumford Community Forest

Inland Woods + Trails (IWT) loves it when a plan comes together. In fall 2022, after a rapid series of zooms, walks, calls, texts, and meetings with stakeholders, collaborators, funders, and the Town of Rumford, IWT made the bold decision to deepen its work in Rumford by agreeing to purchase the 446-acre Rumford Community Forest. This decision was not taken lightly, but after five years of working in Rumford and bringing the first purpose-built trail network there, great relationships had been established and with that, trust. Naturally, no better relationship to deliver a community forest in Rumford could be complete without collaboration with our partners at the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the Northern Forest Center.

In early 2023, IWT approached TPL to facilitate the purchase with the vision of turning it into the town's first community forest. This property, uniquely positioned between downtown and Black Mountain Ski Area, had previously been approved for 257 residential and condominium lots, but the burgeoning effort aimed to permanently conserve it with community input was winning the day. Working collaboratively with its partners, the town, and its citizens, IWT was able to secure the #1 ranked community forest project grant in the country (for the third time) through the US Forest Service Community Forest and Open Space Program and secured critical matching funds from the Land for Maine's Future program to acquire the land. In total, over \$1.1 million was raised for the project and on February 26th, 2024, IWT became the proud owner of the new shared resource that is the Rumford Community Forest.

While the project was spearheaded by IWT in collaboration with major conservation organizations, the forest is designed to serve as a hub for outdoor recreation, ecological stewardship, and community development—right on the edge of downtown Rumford – thanks to a community-driven 13-month public planning process which ended in June 2024. We cannot wait for you to experience it.





Some highlights from our work last year:

New Trails

- Added .4 miles of single-track to Gulley-Verse Travels in the Bethel Community Forest (Maine Trail Builders)
- Extended the Community Access Trail System (CATS) 1.37 miles from North Road to the Summit Access Road in the Bethel Community Forest (IWT Trail Crew)
- Added 3.1 km of Nordic ski trails

- Added two new singletrack trails off of CATS – Whiskers on Kittens (.45miles, Wondrous Trails) and Kitty Litter (.35 miles, IWT Trail Crew and Volunteers)
- Under Construction: 1 mile of hiking trail in the Bethel Community Forest including the construction of 96 stone steps (IWT Trail Crew); 800 foot singletrack trail (IWT Trail Crew); 3 advanced downhill mountain bike trails in the Bethel Community Forest (Gould Enduro Team + Volunteers)

Trail Maintenance

- General maintenance in addition to issues caused by the December 18, 2023 Grinch Storm
- Through a partnership grant from Bike Borderlands, IWT conducted planned repairs and improvements to the Bacon Hill trails, including resurfacing, building short bridges, installing culverts, and rock armoring sections of trail.



Trail Planning

- The International Mountain Bicycling Association team designed 10 miles of trail in the Bethel Community and Bingham Forests.

Conservation

- Purchased the 446-acre Rumford Community Forest.

Staffing

- Hired three seasonal summer rec tech team members
- Launched the second year of the Woods + Trails Teen Team (WT3), hiring two teenagers from Telstar for summer trail work.
- Hired a summer intern from Saint Lawrence University
- Hired a Lands Coordinator

Development + Communications

- Hosted the 2024 NENSA Women's XC Sky Day in January
- Sponsored a free ski night at Black Mountain of Maine in January (334 people skied at no charge)
- Held an event at Luna Blu Lodge in Bethel which raised \$17,000 for Alpine Meadows.
- Hosted the Bethel Community Forest Day
- Finished a 13-month public planning process for the Rumford Community Forest



INLAND WOODS+TRAILS



3600
Facebook
followers

17,000
unique
website
hits

**Over
1000**
volunteer
hours

300
winter trail
passes



1993
conserved
acres

89
members

100+ miles
of trails
maintained

2900
Instagram
followers

9.2
new miles
of trail



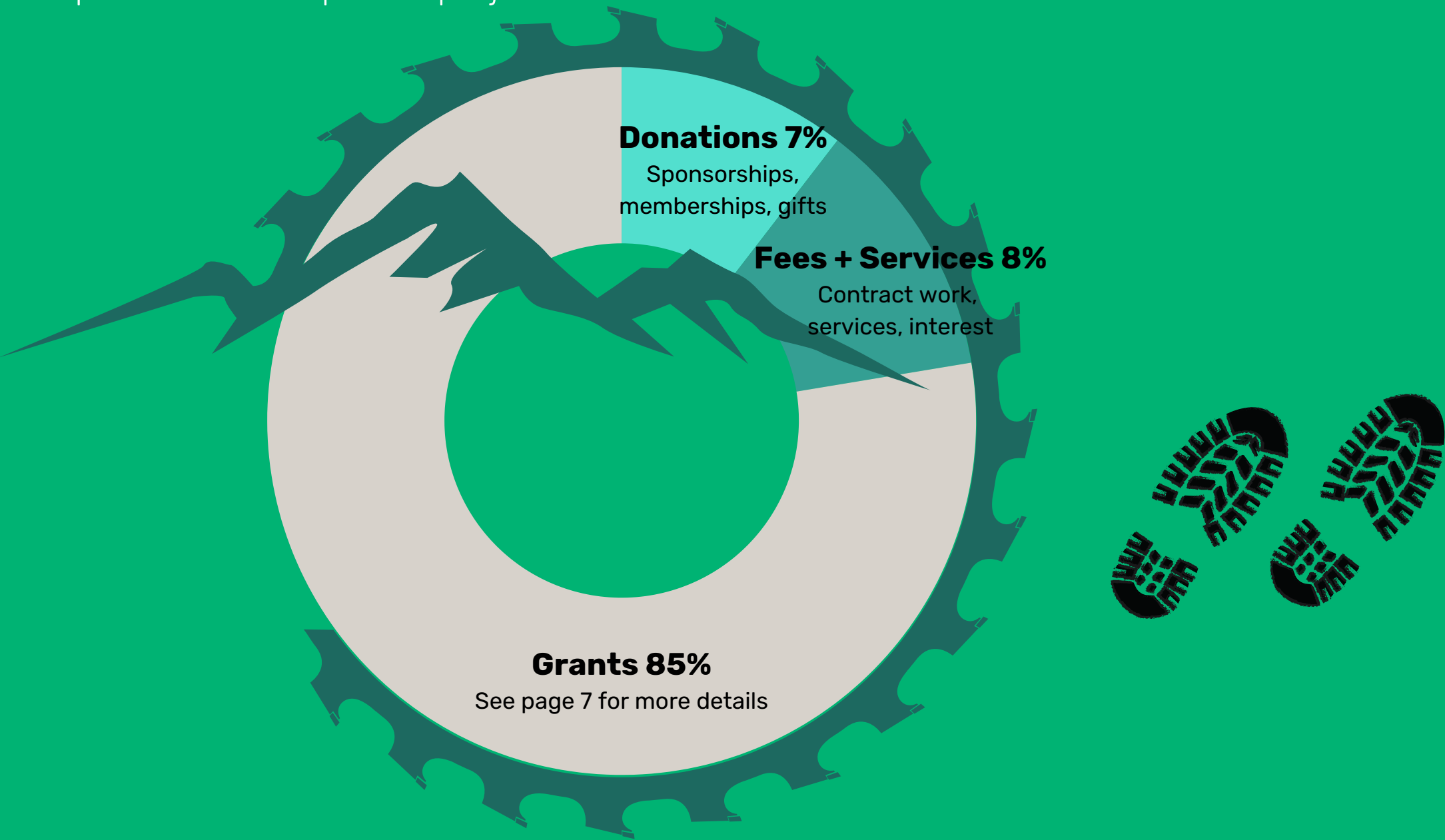
25,000
IWT trail
visits



2024 Financials at a Glance

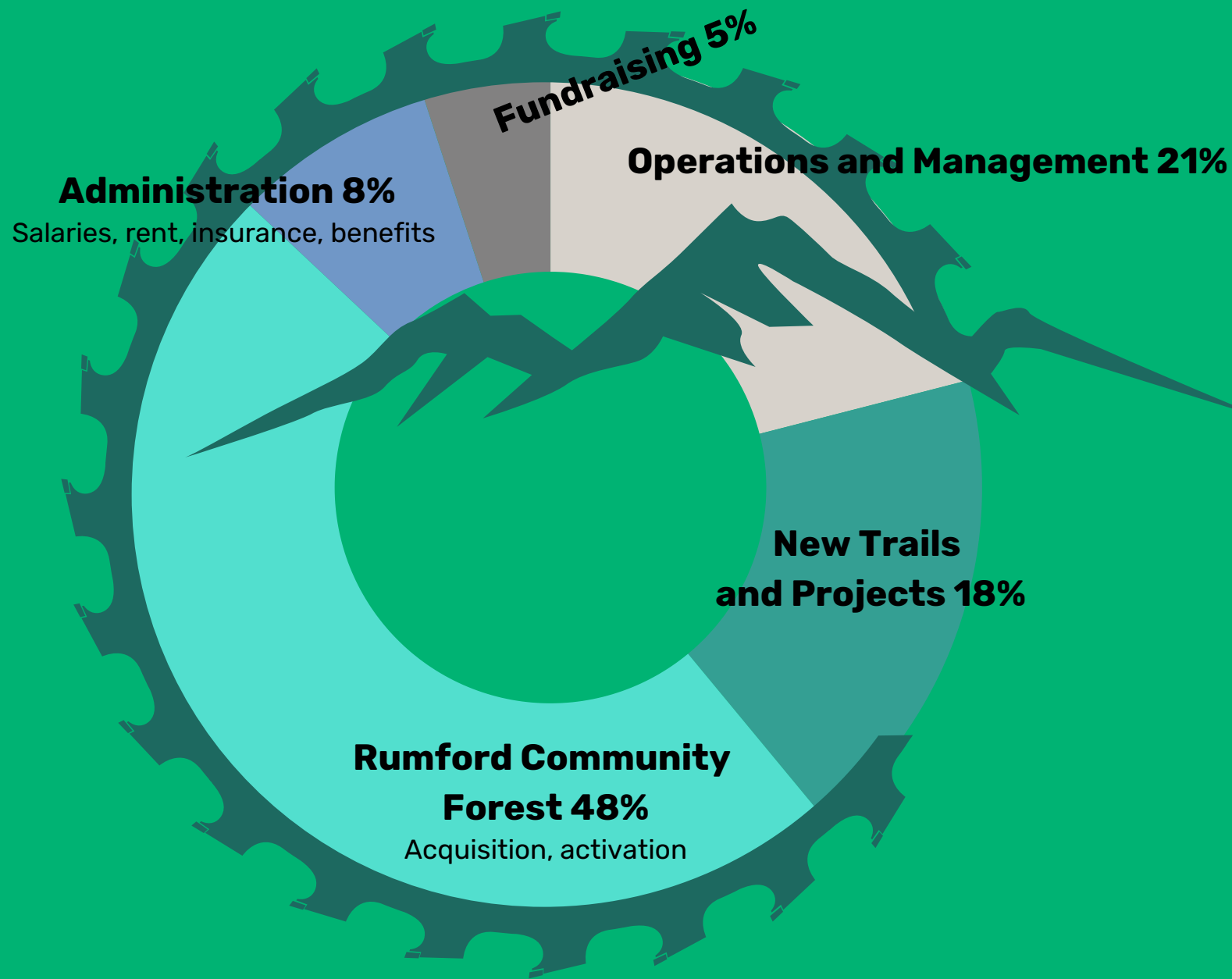
Income

Inland Woods + Trails Staff and Board are grateful for the support from individuals and businesses making up 7% of the \$1,681,736.00 total 2024 revenue including donations, sponsorships, contract trail work, and winter passes. Overall, donations are up 29% from 2023 in part due to the creation of the Resilience Fund which was spurred by the December 2023 Grinch Storm to assist IWT in being ready and responsive as issues or opportunities present themselves. We continue to build and strengthen relationships with individuals, businesses, private foundations and public institutions that provide 85% of revenue necessary for operations and specific projects.



Revenue Utilization

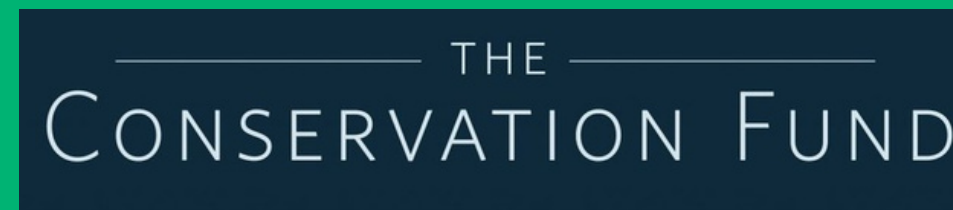
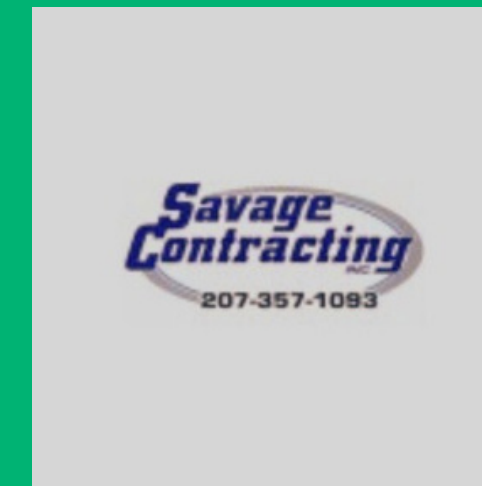
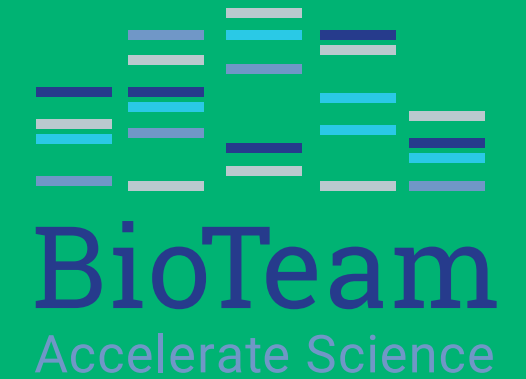
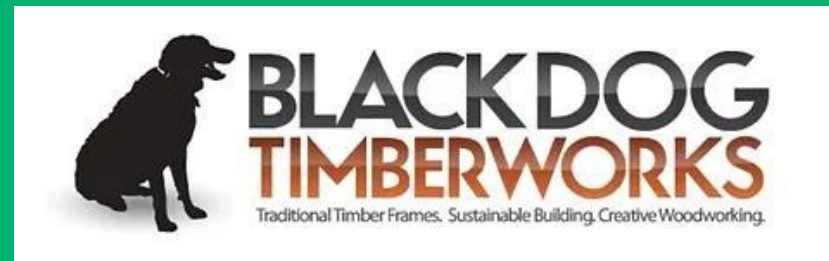
Almost half of the total income generated in 2024 was acquired primarily from grant sources for the acquisition and activation of the Rumford Community Forest. Other revenue utilization areas include operations and management (21%), new trails and projects (18%.) administration (8%) and fundraising (5%).



2024 Grants Received

- **Betterment Fund**, operational support
- **Community Outdoor Recreation Assistance Recovery**, Alpine Meadows
- **The Conservation Fund**, outdoor recreation survey
- **The Nature Conservancy**, Rumford Community Forest
- **Friends of the River Valley**, Rumford Community Forest activation
- **Land for Maine's Future**, Rumford Community Forest acquisition
- **Maine Mountain Bike Fund**, resiliency and adaptive optimized trail connectivity in Bethel Community Forest
- **Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund**, Rumford Community Forest all-persons trail
- **RK Mellon Foundation**, operational support
- **Trust for Public Land**, Rumford Community Forest acquisition
- **USDA NRCS**, land improvements and forestry in the Bethel Community Forest
- **US Forest Service Community Forest Program**, Rumford Community Forest acquisition

Thank You To Our Sponsors and Partners



2024 Volunteer Report from Andy Bartleet, Trails Director



Volunteers are what make IWT tick. From trail reports to stepping up when there is a job to do to providing unbridled enthusiasm for crafting new trails. In 2024, IWT was fortunate to have the enthusiasm of locals and Gould students and faculty, as well as inviting people to volunteer for Forest Fridays. The main volunteer event was the Rake and Ride in May at the Bethel Community Forest.

Gould Academy provided students from the Enduro Team, the Farm and Trail program, and staff to help with mountain bike trail maintenance and new trail building with over 15 participants for a total of 65 hours. Projects included finishing work on Kitty Litter, including spreading gravel, raking out the surface, and weed whacking; tread work on gravity trail Humerus; building up parts of Tribute with fill and gravel and improving drainage; finish work on the new trail behind Telstar Middle and High Schools; and general maintenance such as leaf blowing, stick clearing and tread work.

Bethel Village Trails had 4 volunteers join IWT staff on the inaugural Forest Friday (total of 16 volunteer hours) to help build a small bridge on the Bingham Loop, and assist with adding culverts and raising the trail level on Helix.

Bethel Community Forest Rake and Ride in May had the biggest volunteer turnout (36 people!) for a total of 90 hours of volunteer time doing routine trail maintenance projects on the bike and hiking trails, including raking, lopping, moving fill onto trails, improving drainage.

A special thank you our Trail Adopters and to the volunteers who donated their time and equipment to do much needed regrading and drainage improvements on Locke Mountain Road, the main entry point to the Bethel Community Forest.



2024 Staff Updates



We welcomed Travis Dustin to our IWT team in 2024. Born in southern New Hampshire, he has lived and traveled all over the US. In 2017, Travis, his wife Alicia, and two boys Oliver and Maxwell moved to Maine to be closer to the mountains they love. He is an avid snowboarder and has more than 25 years of experience in the backcountry. When all the snow is gone, you can find him rock climbing, hiking, mountain biking, backpacking, and doing various paddle sports. Travis is excited to combine his passion for the outdoors with his professional skills to help maintain and build more trails for everyone to enjoy and love.



Travis Dustin
Lands Coordinator

Woods + Trails + YOU!



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Karen Wilson, Secretary

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Jim Tasse



Thank You

Connecting people to communities in Western Maine through the sustainable management of high quality, durable trails and woods for all seasons