



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

YELLOWSTONE
NATIONAL PARK
photo: Sinthang Has

Dear Friends

At Wilderness Inquiry, we believe that time spent in nature feeds the mind, body, and soul. More than a trip or program, a Wilderness Inquiry adventure is an experience. An opportunity for connection. A sense of belonging.



In 2023, we paddled, hiked, and camped alongside thousands of people who inspired us with the unique and meaningful ways they engage with nature. We welcomed participants of all ages and with any level of outdoor experience, supporting them as they discovered and deepened their own journeys into the outdoors. And our foundational emphasis on diversity, equity, inclusion, and access in nature has proven successful in growing our work and reach.

Across the following pages, we reflect on the meaningful moments that were created from spending time outdoors together. In every program and on every trip, we are reminded that our mission is people-centered and nurtured along by the generosity of our Wilderness Inquiry community.

Thank you for adventuring with us.

Erika Rivers

Erika Rivers
Executive Director

SANTA BARBARA
photo: Matt Przeslicke



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“ A very memorable moment was hiking Storm King as a group. Everyone in the group gave it a try and everyone was encouraging each other. It was nice to challenge myself.”

— Olympic National Park Hike and Explore - Disabled American Veterans

OLYMPIC
NATIONAL PARK
photo: Trent Dilks



CORE BELIEF

Everyone Belongs in the Outdoors



MISSION

Connecting people of all ages, backgrounds, identities, and abilities through shared outdoor adventures so that all people can equitably experience the benefits of time spent in nature.

CORE VALUES

paddling Together

Seeking the Exceptional

Finding a Way

Nurturing Inclusion



Wilderness Inquiry Serves

82% of participants are under the age of 21

47% of participants identify as BIPOC

28% of extended trip participants and 7% of participants across all programs identify as having a disability

2023 By the Numbers

In 2023, **34,428** people joined us for immersive and life-changing outdoor adventures.

1,487

individuals and families joined extended and near-nature overnight adventures, building confidence and immersive connections in the outdoors

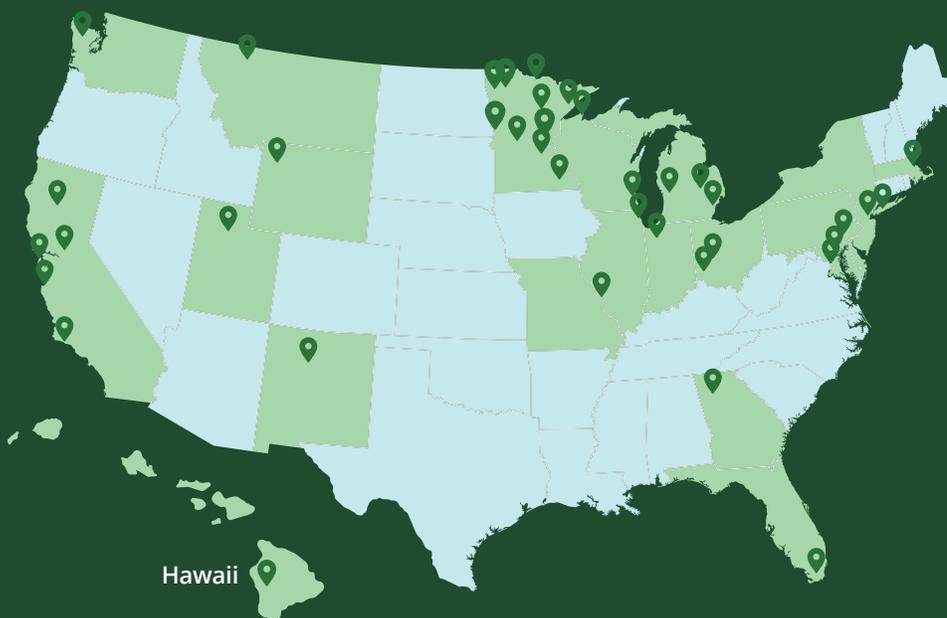
32,806

youth, adults, and families paddled, learned, and explored outdoors through Canoemobile and multi-day programs, promoting outdoor equity and nurturing engagement with the natural world

135

individuals participated in leadership and career pathways, fostering deeper connections to community and lifelong engagement in the outdoors

2023 Adventure Destinations



Connecting Individuals and Communities to the Benefits of Time Spent in Nature

Through a progression of repeating and reinforcing outdoor experiences, our Pyramid of Outdoor Engagement offers deepening levels of participation, exploration, and connection within nature.

The diagram is a pyramid divided into three horizontal sections. The top section is the smallest and contains a compass icon. The middle section is larger and contains a tent icon. The bottom section is the largest and contains an icon of two people in a canoe. Each section is associated with a dark blue horizontal bar containing text.

Leadership & Career Pathways

**Resilience, Outdoor Skills Development,
Network Building**

Fellowships, Outdoor Careers, Training

Near-Nature & Extended Overnight Adventures

**Accomplishment, Immersion in Nature,
Group Belonging**

Near-Nature Overnights, Lodge-Based Trips,
Backcountry Adventures

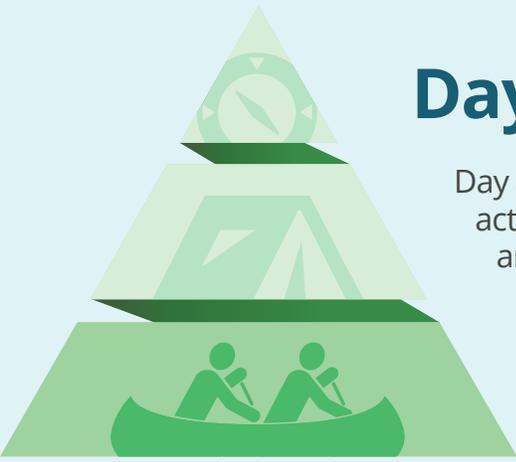
Day & Multi-Day Programs

**Confidence, Exposure to
Natural World, Positive Identity**

Canoemobile, Community Events, Outdoor
Credit Recovery, Virtual Programs

Day & Multi-Day Programs

Day and multi-day programs offer an introduction to nature-based activities, build outdoor skills, increase confidence in outdoor settings, and expose participants to the physical, mental, and social-emotional benefits of time spent in nature. Single- and multi-day experiences are designed for participants of all ages and abilities, and are enriched with land-based learning activities such as STEM exploration, cultural and geographic history, and environmental stewardship.



“Our students had an amazing experience and the lessons learned go far beyond anything we could teach in a classroom.”



I'm a believer in outdoor education and giving students the opportunity to participate in activities that promote healthy, lifelong experiences.”

— PATTI, TEACHER, STEWARTVILLE, MN

left to right, from upper left

LAKE PHALEN
photo: Nora West

THEODORE WIRTH REGIONAL PARK
photo: Nora West

LAKE PHALEN
photo: Nora West

FORT SNELLING
photo: Riss Leitzke

SANTA BARBARA
photo: Sarah Palladino



Near-Nature & Extended Overnight Adventures

Near-nature and extended overnight adventures provide deeper, immersive outdoor engagement through supported group experiences that build community and connect participants to public lands, waterways, wilderness areas, national parks and forests, and international destinations. Adventures last 2-15 days and engage youth, adults, and families in ways to safely explore the outdoors.



"I never knew that spending time in the outdoors, and in a culture that I'm unfamiliar with, could have such a potent effect on the way I view the world."



From the wonderful hikes we did as a group to the amazing dinners we shared together, Wilderness Inquiry made this trip one to never forget."

— DEVIN, HAWAII HIKE AND EXPLORE PARTICIPANT



left to right, from upper left

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK
photo: Callianne Jones

HAWAII
photo: Devin Singh

TANZANIA
photo: Anne Strootman

GLACIER NATIONAL PARK
photo: Callianne Jones

APOSTLE ISLANDS
photo: Conny Bell



Leadership & Career Pathways

Leadership and career pathways provide connections to community, and support well-being, belonging, and lifelong engagement in the outdoors. This includes leadership development, educational and professional opportunities to experience outdoor careers, paid fellowships and internships with Wilderness Inquiry and partner organizations, and training, credentialing, and skills development.



“Through the Fellowship, I valued getting to know amazing coworkers and exploring who I am as a leader in a safe and productive environment,



AND learning new skills related to camping, driving a trailer, leading, and teaching, as well as interacting with a variety of participants.”

— 2023 WILDERNESS INQUIRY FELLOW

left to right, from upper left

HIDDEN FALLS REGIONAL PARK
photo: Nora West

WILLIAM O'BRIEN STATE PARK
photo: Nora West

MARK TWAIN NATIONAL FOREST
photo: Henry Brooks

SISKIWIT LAKE
photo: Noah Reedy

ST. PAUL
photo: Samantha Ellsworth



Paddling with Partners

Across our work, we continuously strive for equitable and inclusive access to natural spaces. We're proud to partner alongside a variety of organizations who share in our mission of building an outdoors where everyone belongs and who help bring our work to life.

➔ We joined Blue Star Families in Washington, D.C. to mark the beginning of a growing partnership program - Military Families Outdoors - that will connect thousands of service members and their families to a continuum of outdoor experiences that support positive health, belonging, and well-being.

photo: D. Calvin



photo: Brian Muchiri Waihenya



photo: Lara Boudinot

← More than 100 new and longtime partners joined us for our annual Partner Paddle on the Mississippi River as we shared the river, reflected on the work we do together, and celebrated the power of collaboration.

↓ Wilderness Inquiry leadership staff spent an incredible week with the Aspen Forum For Community Solutions (AFCS) Opportunity Youth Forum, a powerful convening led by and for youth, and with leaders driving strategies for outdoor equity.

↑ We proudly hosted 2023 U.S. Department of State Mandela Washington Fellow Brian Muchiri Waihenya from Kenya, who paddled on the Mississippi River and camped in the Apostle Islands with us as we connected on best practices for creating inclusive, accessible programs and activities.



photo: CJ Goulding / Fresh Tracks

Financial Summary

“Wilderness Inquiry ended 2023 on solid financial footing. Wilderness Inquiry takes its fiscal responsibility for donor and stakeholder resources seriously and has implemented conservative accounting, financial, and governance practices to ensure the safety of these assets. This approach is validated by Wilderness Inquiry’s ongoing high ratings from Charity Navigator, which demonstrates the organization’s trustworthiness, transparency, and efficiency.

Audited financial statements are prepared by Carpenter, Evert & Associates, Certified Public Accountants, and reflect our financial position as of December 31, 2023.” — JOHN D. HINCK, TREASURER

CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET

Assets	2023	2022
Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$587,527	\$580,516
Short Term Investments	\$2,131,116	\$1,251,287
Other Current Assets	\$1,136,869	\$388,380
Property & Equipment & Right of Use Asset	\$880,116	\$1,064,142
Endowments & Investments	\$2,722,309	\$2,552,417
Long Term Investment - Wilderness Inquiry Foundation	\$6,147,856	\$5,731,360
Total Assets	\$13,605,793	\$11,568,102
Liabilities & Net Assets	2023	2022
Current Liabilities		
Accrued Expenses	\$318,114	\$232,785
Deferred Revenue	\$219,900	\$168,156
Total Current Liabilities	\$538,014	\$400,941
Long Term Liabilities & Lease Liability	\$761,965	\$854,246
Net Assets	\$12,305,814	\$10,312,915
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$13,605,793	\$11,568,102

“In our opinion, the consolidated financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Wilderness Inquiry, Inc. as of December 31, 2023 and 2022 and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.”

-- CARPENTER, EVERT & ASSOCIATES,
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS, MARCH 2024



CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Support & Revenue

	2023	2022
Grants, Contributions, Gifts*	\$3,400,108	\$1,560,717
Government Grants	\$1,389,068	\$987,046
Program Fees	\$1,359,480	\$1,056,470
Endowment Payment	\$69,368	\$71,337
Special Event & Miscellaneous Income	\$167,988	\$163,262
Investment Income	\$814,056	-\$148,301
Total Support and Revenue	\$7,200,068	\$3,690,531

Expenses

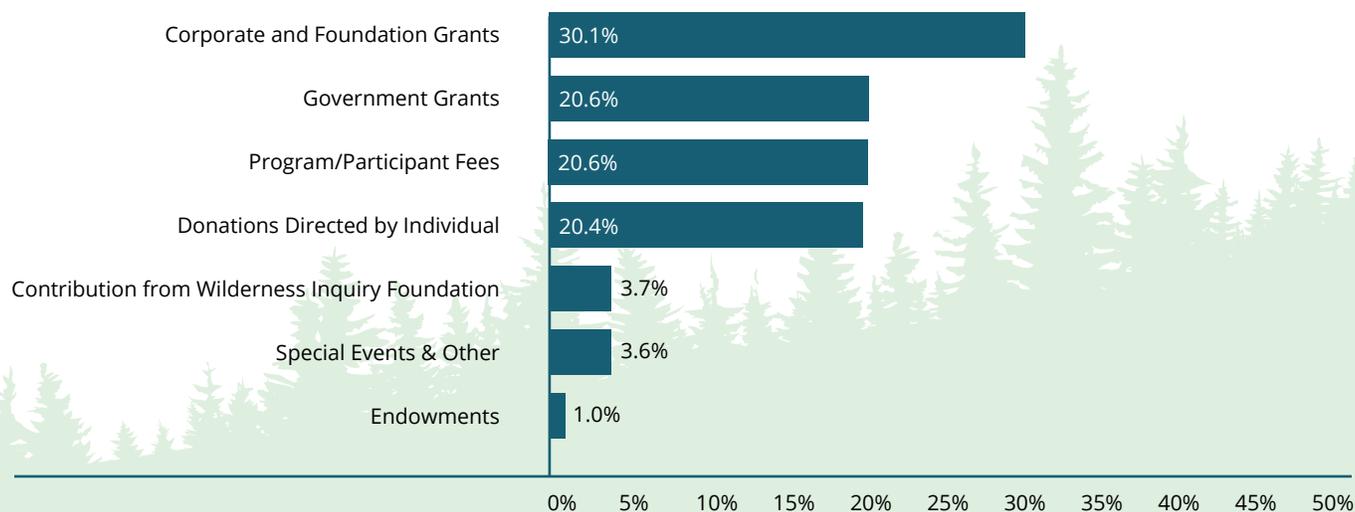
	2023	2022
Program Services	\$4,384,917	\$3,461,528
<i>Day and Multi-Day</i>	\$2,641,527	\$1,651,625
<i>Extended Adventures</i>	\$1,515,794	\$1,347,197
<i>Training, Learning, & Career Pathways</i>	\$227,596	\$462,706
Management & General	\$702,325	\$586,303
Fundraising	\$239,104	\$263,391
Total Expenses	\$5,326,346	\$4,311,222

Financial Adjustments

	2023	2022
Change in Value of Endowment	\$187,245	-\$185,764
Less: Endowment Payout for Operations	-\$69,368	-\$71,337
Endowment Contributions	\$1,300	\$291,429
Gain on Sale of Building	NA	\$303,904
Change in Net Assets	\$1,992,899	-\$282,459
Net Assets - Beginning of Year	\$10,312,915	\$10,595,374
Net Assets - End of year	\$12,305,814	\$10,312,915

*In 2023, Wilderness Inquiry received a significant number of restricted gifts that are included in 2023 revenues but will be used for expenses in future years.

2023 EARNED REVENUE AND CONTRIBUTIONS





Financial Supporters

Our generous supporters and talented partners are behind each and every moment of impact. We are deeply grateful to the many individuals, families, and corporate, foundation, and government partners who help make our mission possible.



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photo: Eileen Raphael

ATLANTA

LCCMR: Canoemobile’s “floating classroom” engages youth across Minnesota to experience place-based, environmental, and STEM learning in the outdoors. Since 2017, with support from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), more than 43,500 youth from across Minnesota have explored local ecosystems and the species that depend on healthy watersheds in our headquarters state.



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HIDDEN FALLS REGIONAL PARK

LEGACY: Support from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment provides place-based, hands-on experiences for Minnesota youth to learn about the history, culture, and geography of our state's natural resources. Since 2016, more than 34,500 youth have explored Minnesota's rich outdoor heritage through immersive learning on local waterways and public lands.



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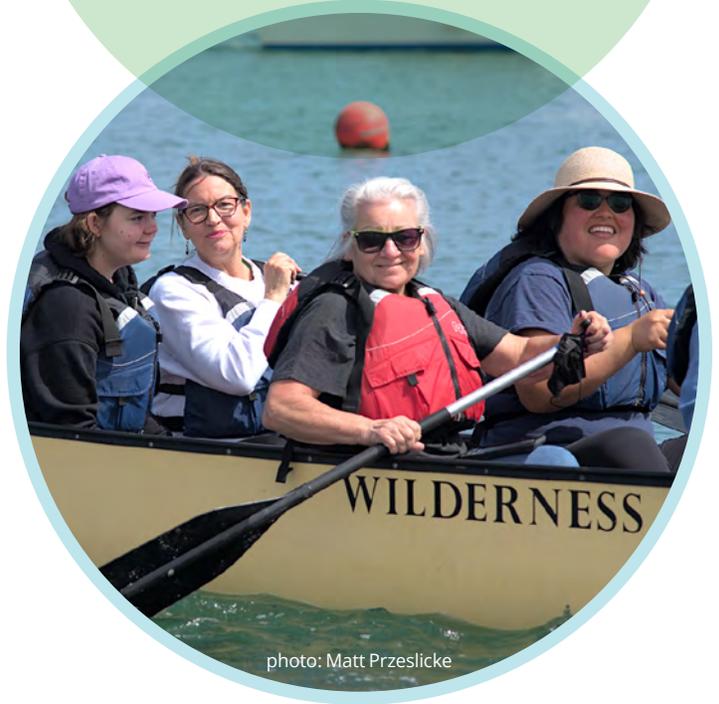
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From the Boundary Waters to Alaska and spanning several decades, longtime participant and donor Liebe Gray adventured far and wide with Wilderness Inquiry. We are honored that Liebe discovered Wilderness Inquiry during a critical time in her life, and we are grateful for her transformative estate gift that will support inclusive experiences for years to come. As her partner shared, "If there are kayaks in heaven, Liebe and her wheelchair are in one of them."



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Endowments help us fulfill our mission in perpetuity. We deeply appreciate those who give generously and share their passion for the outdoors through dedicated endowments.

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Thank you to sponsors who raced to close the opportunity gap.

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GREAT RIVER RACE: In 2023, our 13th annual Great River Race brought together friends and supporters for a day of purpose, impact, and paddling fun. More than 300 people raced and cheered along the mighty Mississippi River in support of closing the outdoor opportunity gap for youth. Thanks to Nature Valley, Thomson Reuters, and Winnebago Industries for their presenting sponsorships and to all of the sponsors and partners who joined us to create equitable and inclusive outdoor opportunities!



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OUR MISSION: Connecting people of all ages, backgrounds, identities, and abilities through shared outdoor adventures so that all people can equitably experience the benefits of time spent in nature.



GLACIER NATIONAL PARK
photo: Callianne Jones

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