



20  
24

ANNUAL  
REPORT

# Dear Friends

In 2024, Wilderness Inquiry saw meaningful growth and a deepening impact of our mission. It was a year of transformative change.

Alongside our strong network of partners, we achieved milestones that brought us closer to building an outdoors where everyone belongs. We continued to innovate by introducing new programs, forging new partnerships, and embracing new communities to best serve all who adventure outdoors with us. And we closed out the year having served more than 40,000 people across familiar and new locations nationwide and internationally.

We are deeply grateful for the community of supporters whose generosity significantly contributed to our success. And we're proud to celebrate these highlights from 2024 that reflect the moments and people who are important in our work.

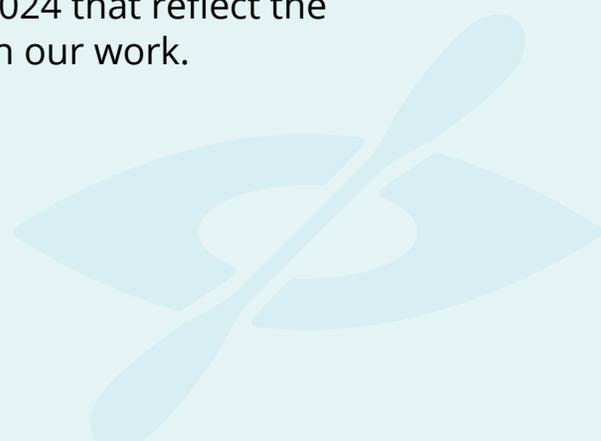
Thank you for adventuring with us.



Erika Rivers  
Executive Director



Everyone belongs in the outdoors.



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“ I just retired from a teaching career and the trip jump-started my self-confidence and desire to try more new things. I felt strong and capable, and I felt valued as a person. I was crying when I had to say goodbye to the leaders and my fellow travelers.”

— Catherine, Apostle Islands Women's Trip

”





MCCARRONS LAKE  
photo: Nora West

# 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.

## OUR ADVENTURE PROMISE

Wilderness Inquiry serves adventurous travelers and participants who want to get more out of their outdoor experience.



We do this by facilitating travel experiences that intentionally eliminate barriers to participation, and encourage people to connect with themselves, with others, and with the natural world, so that everyone can experience belonging in the outdoors.



APOSTLE ISLANDS  
photo: Kwik Trip



## CORE VALUES

- Paddling Together
- Seeking the Exceptional
- Finding a Way
- Nurturing Inclusion

# 2024 ADVENTURE DESTINATIONS



## 2024 By the Numbers

In 2024, **41,213** people joined us for immersive and life-changing outdoor adventures.

**38,977**

38,977 youth, families, and communities paddled, learned, and explored outdoors through **Canoemobile and multi-day programs**, engaging communities from San Francisco, CA to Norfolk, VA.

**472**

472 individuals participated in **leadership and career pathways**, including a new American Sign Language Communication Facilitator fellowship.

1,764 individuals and families joined **extended and near-nature adventures**, as they canoed, hiked, and camped along rivers, mountains, and sea caves.

**1,764**



# Our Program Pillars

Spanning our Pyramid of Outdoor Engagement model, Wilderness Inquiry programs served as the foundation from which we **grew our impact, advanced our mission and purpose, and continued to invest in our community of people.**

## Day and Multi-Day Programs

Day and multi-day programs, including **Canoemobile** and **Outdoor Credit Recovery**, offer introductory nature-based activities that build outdoor skills, increase confidence in outdoor settings, and expose participants to the physical, mental, and social-emotional benefits of nature. Designed for participants of all ages and abilities, experiences engage people with the outdoors in the communities where they live, work, and play.

## Near-Nature and Extended Overnight Adventures

From **Military Families Outdoors** to **national park trips**, near-nature and extended overnight adventures provide deeper outdoor engagement. Experiences build community and connect participants to public lands, waterways, wilderness areas, national parks and forests, and international destinations. Adventures engage youth, adults, and families to safely explore nature and build confidence and immersive connections in the outdoors.

## Leadership and Career Pathways

**Fellowships**, skills development training, and credentialing encompass our leadership and career pathways that support well-being, belonging, and lifelong engagement in the outdoors. From opportunities with partner organizations to on-trail guiding along our adventures, experiences foster outdoor career aspiration and connections to community.



# Growing Our Impact in Key Places



➤ Our day and near-nature experiences for youth, families, and communities grew nationwide. Program reach in established locations expanded to build connections with new audiences. We also teamed up with new partners, including Blue Star Families, to bring outdoor experiences to communities in 11 states, including new locations in Colorado, Florida, and Virginia.

// **FLORIDA** photo: Ashley Stevens

⬇️ A significant moment in 2024 was the move to our new headquarters in Bloomington, MN, providing the perfect base from which to strengthen our organization and position

ourselves for continued growth. Based in the Twin Cities for 47 years, we remain committed to our Midwest roots – embedded in a diverse community neighborhood close to the people we serve – while furthering the national reach of our mission and programs.

// **NEW HEADQUARTERS** photo: Nora West

➡️ Home to our Little Sand Bay base camp, the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore plays an important role in delivering our mission to create accessible outdoor experiences. In 2024, we partnered with the park staff, Friends of the Apostle Islands, National Park Foundation, and several generous donors on construction of an accessible connector trail and to capture the voices, sights, and stories of accessibility in the area.

// **APOSTLE ISLANDS** photo: Sharon Marie Wright for the National Park Foundation



# Investing in Our Community of People



↗ Our new Military Families Outdoors partnership brought thousands of service members and their families into nature for outdoor adventures from Yellowstone to Voyageurs National Park. Across our extended and near-nature trips, 21% of participants were military connected. These adventures provided positive, sustainable pathways to outdoor recreation that strengthen family bonds, build social connections, and reinforce

nature's role in improving overall health, well-being, and belonging.

// **NORTHERN MINNESOTA**  
photo: Andrew Olson

↙ Growing our reach with new audiences also meant growing our team. In 2024, we expanded our fellowship program with the introduction of our American Sign Language Communication Facilitator fellowship – strengthening our partnership with the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities. We also developed a new Outdoor Leader Coordinator role to bridge the trail experience with the administrative pieces of delivering programs and adventures. These opportunities support lifelong engagement in the outdoors and create pathways for deeper career and leadership development.

// **ST. PAUL** photo: Riss Leitzke



# Advancing Our Purpose



⬇ In 2024, we tracked and evaluated our youth programs to measure social-emotional learning (SEL) capacities of participants in our Outdoor Credit Recovery program and extended camping trips. Across both program areas, participants made statistically significant gains in SEL capacities from environmental stewardship to self management. Our innovative approach allows us to focus on research-based best practices that nurture young people to reach their fullest potential and ensure that our outdoor recreation and education experiences provide



measurable and meaningful results for our participants.

// **YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK**  
photo: Matthew Przeslicke

↗ Strong partnerships with key organizations are critical to our success and impact in each community we engage. Longtime partners, as well as those who collaborated with us for the first time, provided valuable insight, expertise, and support that made our work possible. In 2024, we worked alongside a multitude of organizations — from the U.S. Forest Service to Detroit Outdoors — to provide meaningful outdoor experiences for the people we serve.

// **LAKESHORE STATE PARK**  
photo: Willy Tully



# Financial Summary

"Wilderness Inquiry ended 2024 once again 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, 2024." — JOHN HINCK, TREASURER

## CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET

Assets	2024	2023
Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$1,552,557	\$587,527
Short Term Investments	\$1,634,205	\$2,131,116
Other Current Assets	\$2,799,424	\$1,136,869
Property & Equipment & Right of Use Asset	\$6,326,059	\$880,116
Endowments & Investments	\$2,809,031	\$2,722,309
Long Term Investment - WI Foundation	\$3,725,898	\$6,147,856
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$18,847,174</b>	<b>\$13,605,793</b>
<b>Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>		
Current Liabilities		
<i>Accrued Expenses</i>	\$425,994	\$318,114
<i>Deferred Revenue</i>	\$259,480	\$219,900
<i>Lease Liability &amp; Note Payable</i>	\$123,166	\$79,287
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>\$808,640</b>	<b>\$617,301</b>
Total Liabilities	\$3,715,574	\$1,299,979
Net Assets	\$15,131,600	\$12,305,814
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>\$18,847,174</b>	<b>\$13,605,793</b>

"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, 2024 and 2023, 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 2025



# CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

## Support & Revenue

	2024	2023
Grants, Contributions, Gifts	\$4,787,625	\$3,400,108
Government Grants	\$2,915,187	\$1,389,068
Program Fees	\$1,189,013	\$1,359,480
Endowment Payment	\$100,000	\$69,368
Special Event & Miscellaneous Income	\$251,106	\$167,988
Investment Income	\$682,453	\$814,056
<b>Total Support and Revenue</b>	<b>\$9,925,384</b>	<b>\$7,200,068</b>

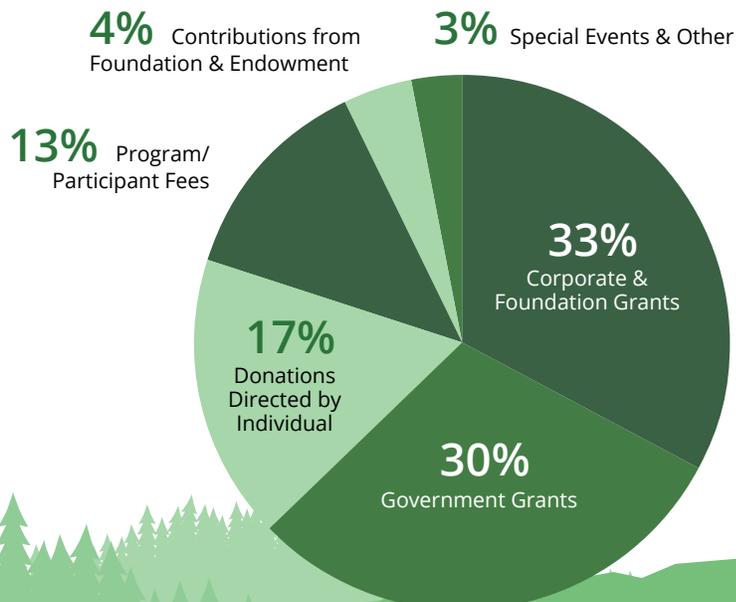
## Expenses

Program Services	\$5,595,874	\$4,384,917
<i>Day and Multi-Day</i>	\$3,681,067	\$2,641,527
<i>Extended Adventures</i>	\$1,624,862	\$1,515,794
<i>Training, Learning, &amp; Career Pathways</i>	\$289,945	\$227,596
Management & General	\$1,276,395	\$702,325
Fundraising	\$323,045	\$239,104
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$7,195,314</b>	<b>\$5,326,346</b>

## Financial Adjustments

Change in Value of Endowment	\$193,266	\$187,245
Less: Endowment Payout for Operations	-\$100,000	-\$69,368
Endowment Contributions	\$2,450	\$1,300
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$2,825,786</b>	<b>\$1,992,899</b>
Net Assets - Beginning of Year	\$12,305,814	\$10,312,915
Net Assets - End of year	\$15,131,600	\$12,305,814

## 2024 EARNED REVENUE AND CONTRIBUTIONS



# Financial Supporters

Our generous community of donors, partners, and volunteers help power our people-centered mission. Thank you to the many individuals, families, and corporate, foundation, and government partners who support our work.



LAKE NOKOMIS PARK photo: Nora West

Every effort is made to ensure accurate listings. If we did not attribute your donation correctly, or if you have other questions or comments, please contact our Development Director, Sheila Swift at 612-286-0763 or [development@wildernessinquiry.org](mailto:development@wildernessinquiry.org)

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**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 48,500 youth from across Minnesota have explored local ecosystems and the species that depend on healthy watersheds in our headquarters state.



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**FEDERAL PARTNERS: Meaningful partnerships make outdoor connections possible.** Thank you to our federal partners, agencies, and their staff for paddling alongside us in 2024. Through these valued partnerships, Wilderness Inquiry is able to scale our programs to serve thousands of youth and adults, provide adventures from coast to coast, and ensure that our nation's public lands, waterways, and national parks and forests are accessible for all.



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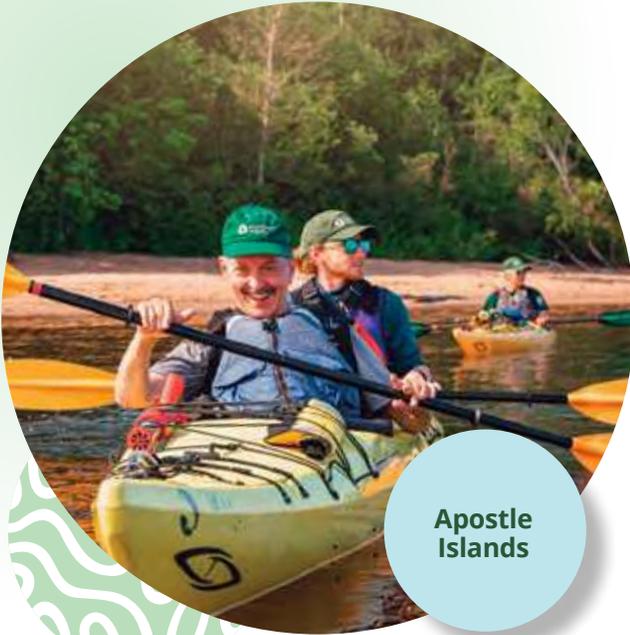
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Olympic National Park



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ASL Day  
on the  
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**Mississippi River**

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Costa Rica



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