



2023  
ANNUAL  
REPORT



*Advance  
conservation  
through  
innovation,  
collaboration,  
and stewardship.*

ANNUAL  
REPORT 2023

# *Table of Contents*

<b>06</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Development</b>
<b>07</b>	<b>Board of Directors</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>Marketing</b>
<b>08</b>	<b>Letter from the Board Chair</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>Donor Recognition</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Letter from the CEO</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>Save the Dates</b>





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# Letter from the Board Chair

For the last two years, I've had the privilege of serving as Chair for the Great Outdoors Foundation (GOF) Board of Directors. I was first drawn to GOF because of my love for nature and recreation, but I've stayed engaged because of the organization's commitment to its mission. It's the same reason you choose to support GOF — you know that when we say we're going to do something, we're going to deliver.

If you've been around long, you know that we sometimes, or maybe most times, take an unconventional approach to environmental strategy. Whether it's forming unlikely partnerships or using recreation to cultivate stewardship, our team, like you, remains steadfast in advancing conservation. I believe this is the secret sauce of our success.

During my tenure, we've achieved several notable accomplishments, thanks to all of you:

- Engaged dozens of stakeholders in a multi-faceted water quality task force.
- Secured \$22 million in state funding for ICON Water Trails.
- Increased our annual giving by 38%.
- Completed the \$3 million capital campaign for the Athene Pedestrian Bridge.
- Adopted a new mission statement.
- Hosted a record-breaking Wild Prairie Showdown.
- Launched our Conservation Fund with more than \$2 million in funding.

This is by no means a comprehensive list, but you'll notice a commonality to all of the above. Whether leveraging public dollars, honing our strategic direction, or hosting hundreds of our closest friends for a formal-flannel pseudo-pageant, we're always working to advance conservation. It's not just what we do; it's who we are.

We hope you are inspired by the snapshots of our year in the pages ahead. While my chapter as Chair is coming to a close, my time with GOF is not. Just like you, I've caught the vision of what the future of conservation looks like, and it looks an awful lot like us.

*Joey Taylor-Moon*

Board Chair, Great Outdoors Foundation  
VP of Marketing, Hubbell Realty Company

# Letter from the Chief Executive Officer

In all likelihood, there has been a moment in your life that changed its trajectory forever. Maybe it was a move across the country, the birth of a child, or a serendipitous opportunity. In hindsight, you can now see the point of demarcation and how a single decision sent ripples of transformation into your future. For the Great Outdoors Foundation (GOF), that moment is the launch of our Conservation Fund.

For decades, our organization has developed a foundation of collaboration, innovation, and stewardship. Our values are why we've had proven success in transformational quality of life initiatives such as ICON Water Trails, the Polk County Water & Land Legacy Bond, and the Athene Pedestrian Bridge. Our mission has always been to advance conservation, and now, we're poised to do that in a greater capacity than ever before, all through the genesis of the Conservation Fund.

It's been just about a year since we quietly shared the vision of the Conservation Fund with our closest investors and partners, and already, more than \$2,000,000 in funding has been secured. While this is a formidable accomplishment, it's really just the beginning of what has the potential to be the greatest wave of water quality investment the State of Iowa has ever seen. If you take the engagement, excitement, and expectation that has stirred around the Conservation Fund in the last year, and extrapolate it over the next decade, it becomes very apparent that this is our moment.

Our natural resources are some of our most valuable assets. The Conservation Fund allows us to safeguard them, while still supporting the vital business and industry that is the essence of our economy and community. It's a coalition-building approach that brings all parties to the table, and propels us forward with optimism, rooted in proven tactics and outcome-driven solutions.

Getting to announce the Conservation Fund publicly at our Wild Prairie Showdown with so many of you in the room was incredibly special. It's a poignant reminder that everything we do is empowered by our many dedicated supporters — by you. As we move forward into the time after that moment, the time ahead where we deliver on the promise of the Conservation Fund, I'm so grateful to have our donors, volunteers, and partners, blazing the trail right alongside us. There is so much to be celebrated from 2023, so as you flip through these pages, I invite you to savor what we've accomplished and dream about what lies ahead.

It's going to be momentous.



Chief Executive Officer  
Great Outdoors Foundation



# Letter from the Development Department

6%

Increase in Donor Retention

\$8M

Invested in Conservation

97%

Increase in Event Revenue

As a fundraising organization, so often our successes are measured in dollars. That makes total sense, and from a progress standpoint, it makes growth easily quantifiable. For example, since 2021, our corporate investments have increased 57%, individual fundraising has increased 126%, and revenue from our Annual Golf Outing has increased 43%. These donations are what empower our organization to act as a leader in conservation and recreation initiatives.

But, beyond the funding we secure both operationally and for our partner projects, the impact of the Great Outdoors Foundation (GOF) can be measured in other, less conventional metrics. For example, feet of trails activated — more than 30,000, thanks to the Athene Pedestrian Bridge — or time spent on our waterways — upwards of 250,000 visits during a single season for ICON Water Trails. We could measure our performance in the smiles of those enjoying a day at the Jester Park Nature Center or in the health of our community that has access to greenspace because of the Polk County Water & Land Legacy Bond. What I'm getting at is that as important as the fundraising is, and it is important, our work and your investment will always be focused on the impact.

You've already learned about the Conservation Fund and its audacious goal of securing \$250 million for water quality improvement initiatives, but what does that funding really mean for you? For your community? For your state? Well, I can't read the future, but here's what we're working toward, with your support: clean water, sustainable business, protected resources. Once our portfolio of expertly-designed projects is implemented, we'll be measuring success in an entirely different way, both in quantifiable data and qualitative anecdotes.

Perhaps our greatest indicator of success will be when Iowa is used as a model for other states working to safeguard their own natural resources.

I think that milestone is closer than we realize.

*Jan Cross*

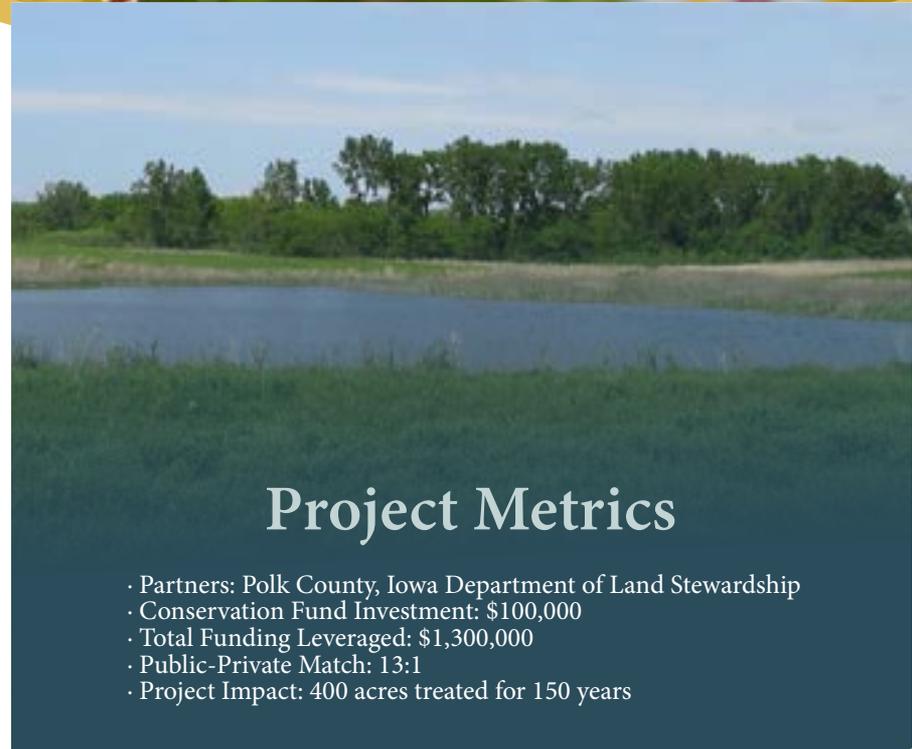
Vice President of Donor Relations  
Great Outdoors Foundation

## Development Spotlight

Thanks to our partners at Athene, the Great Outdoors Foundation (GOF) invested \$100,000 from its Conservation Fund into an urban wetland in Ankeny, led by John Swanson, Water Resources Supervisor for Polk County Public Works. This private funding activated more than \$1.3 million in public dollars, equating

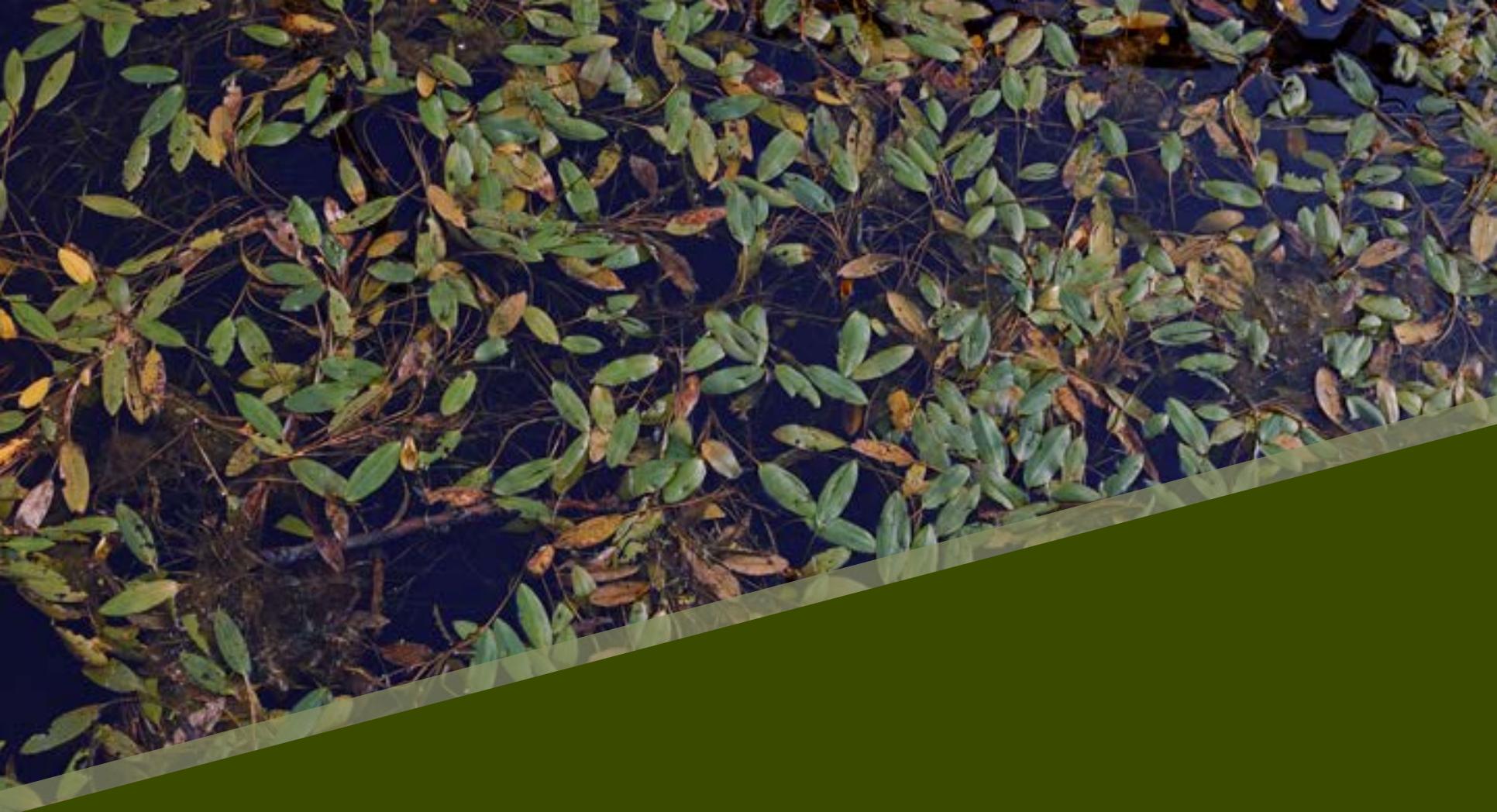
to a 13:1 public-private match. The permanent infrastructure involved with this project will treat stormwater, reduce erosion, and create flood storage, ultimately managing more than 400 acres of untreated urban drainage for the next century and a half. In just this one example, you can see how the Conservation Fund acts as a multiplier,

rapidly increasing the resources dedicated to water quality improvement initiatives. The Conservation Fund truly embodies the mission of GOF — to advance conservation through innovation, collaboration, and stewardship. With creative strategies, expert partners, and targeted investments, we can do more, faster.



### Project Metrics

- Partners: Polk County, Iowa Department of Land Stewardship
- Conservation Fund Investment: \$100,000
- Total Funding Leveraged: \$1,300,000
- Public-Private Match: 13:1
- Project Impact: 400 acres treated for 150 years



# 2400

Newsletter Subscribers

# 3K+

Public Interactions

# 23K

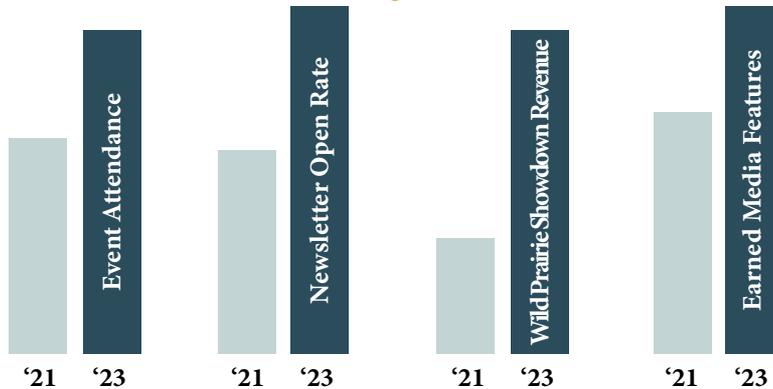
Organic Social Reach

# 400+

Event Attendees

## Marketing Spotlight

+ 47%   + 70%   + 180%   + 43%



As we prepared for an upcoming strategic planning session in summer of 2023, we wanted to hear from those closest to the Great Outdoors Foundation (GOF). So, we sent a survey out to dozens and dozens of our stakeholders — staff, board members, donors, volunteers, and partners — and asked. What defines our organization? What sets us apart? What values do we convey?

Here are a few of your responses:

*“Collaborative, proactive, and stewards.”*

*“Happy disrupters connecting people and organizations to solve complex issues.”*

*“Thinking about how to solve a problem instead of accepting no as no.”*

We took your feedback and operationalized it, implementing new organizational values and adopting a new mission statement: Advance conservation through innovation collaboration, and stewardship. All this to say, thank you! There was so much consistency of thought across all of our responders, acting as a proof point for what we’ve known all along. You are deeply connected to the heart of GOF and deeply supportive of the work we do. All of this is laying the groundwork for a very exciting announcement which we’ll be sharing later this year.



# Donor Recognition

Kevin & Yvonne Abbas  
Greg Abel  
Elisa Abner-Taschwer  
Thomas Ackerman  
Anne Adam  
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# Donor Recognition

# Donor Recognition

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Lisa Thai  
The Graham Group, Inc.  
The Kelinson Charitable Fund  
The Weitz Company  
The Wellmark Foundation

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Nathan Unsworth  
Tim & Toni Urban  
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Sarah VanBeck  
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Ted Weaver  
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Wells Fargo Foundation  
Aaron Wendel  
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Ann Wieck  
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Emily Williams-Bouska  
Willis Auto Sales  
Trelen Wilson  
Wittern Family Charitable Foundation  
Lynley Wolfe  
San Wong  
Chris Wood  
Andrea & Grant Woodard  
Rachel Woodhouse  
Jeff Woods  
Michael Wormley  
Micky Wright  
Alan Wunner  
Amanda Young  
Eric Tabor & Mike Youngstrom  
Michael Yun  
Larry & Kathi Zimpleman

# Save the Dates

## Annual Golf Outing

**Wednesday, August 28, 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.**

Jester Park Golf Course

Swing for a cause at the beautiful Jester Park Golf Course! Foursomes, individual registrations, and sponsorships available.

## Wild Prairie Showdown

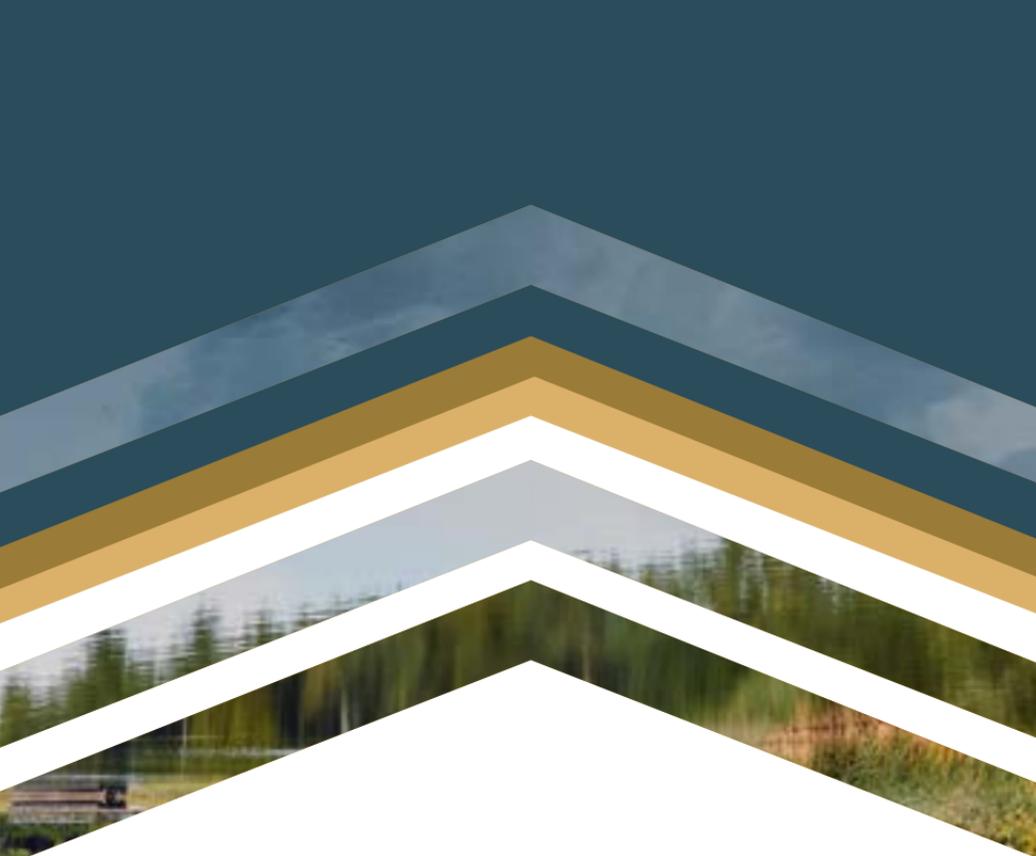
**Thursday, October 10, 6 p.m. – 10 p.m.**

TBD

Join us for the Wild Prairie Showdown, a competition to name the MVP — Most Valuable Philanthropist. Proceeds benefit the Great Outdoors Foundation and ICON Water Trails. It's fashion meets advocacy, meets fundraising, and you don't want to miss it.

Donate





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FOUNDATION

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