



2020 ANNUAL REPORT

2020 was a strange year for all of us. The Covid-19 pandemic fundamentally changed the way we interacted with each other, the activities we could engage in, even our work, health, and living situations. This was the 38th year that Friends of the Dunes has been serving northern California's diverse communities and coastal environments. In 2020, we had to dramatically rethink how to approach our coastal conservation, education, and stewardship work and adjust to changing conditions in real time.

Since our founding in 1982, Friends of the Dunes has accomplished a lot of our work by bringing groups of people together, which is something that just couldn't happen for much of the pandemic. We adjusted by convening people online or in a distanced way, including in our Solitary Bee Art Contest, our Jr Naturalist video series for Humboldt County students, and our Dispersed Sand Sculpture Festival. We also worked with Humboldt County Public Health to develop safe guidelines for resuming in-person naturalist walks and volunteer habitat restoration activities.

At the same time, we worked for months with partners at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Humboldt Bay Harbor District, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Wiyot Tribe, and Humboldt County, and with funding partners at California's State Coastal Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Board, and Natural Resources Agency to complete the largest conservation project in our history: the acquisition of the remarkable 357-acre Samoa Dunes and Wetlands Conservation Area.

LAND CONSERVATION: SAMOA DUNES & WETLANDS

Friends of the Dunes worked behind the scenes for the difficult months of the pandemic, building partnerships, raising a stewardship fund, negotiating with the landowner of the property formerly known as the Dog Ranch, and collaborating with our many partners to advance the conservation acquisition of the Samoa Dunes and Wetlands Conservation Area. On October 15, 2020, we and our partners closed the deal--making Friends of the Dunes the interim conservation landowner of this ecologically important 357-acre coastal dune and bayfront property.

These stunning dunes include 139 acres of Sitka spruce and shore pine forest-- the furthest southern extent of this forest type in the world, and a biodiverse wonderland studded with more than 81 acres of wetlands, which our community can now explore on existing routes and trails. The Samoa Dunes and Wetlands Conservation Area abuts the Manila Dunes Recreation Area, which connects to the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center, Ma-le'l Dunes, and the Lanphere Dunes, connecting a protected area of more than 1,600 acres of coastal dunes.



COMMUNITY EDUCATION

We love connecting our community to the wonders of coastal environments, and in 2020 we had to reimagine how this could be accomplished while keeping our community safe. In March, all in-person programs were put on hold and we transitioned to offering online and distance-learning resources. Later in the year, we worked with Humboldt County's Public Health Department to design a safe reopening plan so that our in-person hikes could resume at a limited capacity with strict safety precautions in place. In 2020 we:

- Coordinated **10 free guided walks**, with **118 participants**.
- Offered **3 Family Events** including 2 Nature Story Time programs and a Valentine's-themed I Love Wetlands event, with a total of **50 people attended**.
- Created a **Solitary Bee Art Contest** for all ages which engaged **19 participants** in learning about and creatively depicting native, solitary bee species.
- Adapted our annual **Sand Sculpture Festival** to be a dispersed event, with a total of **46 households** competing and creatively sharing their love of the coast.
- Organized a hybrid online and outdoor, in-person **Coastal Naturalist Training** in collaboration with Trinidad Coastal Land Trust that **trained 13 new Coastal Naturalists**.
- Coordinated a Virtual **Humboldt Coastal Dunes Cooperative Public Meeting**, 23 community members participated live and the YouTube video has since had 89 views.



SCHOOL EDUCATION

In 2020, Friends of the Dunes was planning to offer **4 field-based environmental education programs** for school groups: Bay to Dunes, Coastal Stewards, Intertidal Exploration, and Kids Ocean Day. Unfortunately, we were only able to provide 2 Bay to Dunes field trips before schools transitioned to distance learning. We served **42 students from 2 different schools**. Early in 2020, we offered an Environmental Education Training for **8 volunteers**, who contributed over **140 hours** to our school education programs.

We adapted to the pandemic by launching our Jr. Naturalist Videos on YouTube and Instagram TV where children learned to explore the natural world in their own backyard and important ecological concepts. We've had a total of **970 views**.



"I teach Forest Kindergarten, an outdoor program, and the Bay to Dunes field trip helped my students learn the names of flora and fauna living in the dunes. It also helped them be more aware of conservation. I really appreciate that the trip was modified for the younger students in my group. Thank you to everyone at Friends of the Dunes!"
– Violet Hales, Forest Kindergarten Teacher at Laurel Tree Charter School

LAND STEWARDSHIP

In 2020, despite the pandemic, in total we trained, mobilized, and empowered **74 individual participants** to contribute **445 hours of service accomplishing coastal dune habitat restoration**. We hosted 5 Dune Ecosystem Restoration Team (DERT) workdays that contributed 192 volunteer hours, and our dedicated Volunteer Restoration Technicians contributed 253 volunteer hours. We assisted our partners with restoration workdays at the BLM's Ma-le'l Dunes South, and at the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge's Lanphere Dunes, we helped facilitate an engaging Lupine Bash in early 2020.

In 2020, Friends of the Dunes successfully completed a 3-year mitigation project with PG&E to restore 2 acres of backdune habitat. This project focused on increasing populations of the listed dark-eyed gilia (*Gilia millefoliata*) by removing annual grass and spreading gilia seed. Distancing staff were able to work on this project outdoors, even in the middle of the pandemic. This past fall, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife found that the project had met its habitat restoration goals.

Once Friends of the Dunes took ownership of the Samoa Dunes and Wetlands, we mapped its existing trails and trash piles and began systematically removing the trash, with assistance from our partners at CDFW. Together, we removed more than 1,000 pounds of trash in 2020. We also trained a cohort of Volunteer Trail Stewards to assist with managing this remarkable conservation property.



"We're deeply grateful to our partners and volunteers for their incredible support as we've taken on the responsibility of managing the ecological jewel that is the Samoa Dunes and Wetlands Conservation Area. You realize what an incredible community we have when everyone pulls together for the common goal of conservation. This project embodies community conservation at its very best, and the inspiring results are written in the health of the land."

– Mike Cipra, Executive Director

SPONSORED PROGRAMS

Friends of the Dunes continues to support a variety of ambitious allied projects on the North Coast, serving as a fiscal sponsor for these projects. One of these sponsored programs is the Humboldt Coastal Resilience Project, a multi-year dune habitat and geomorphology study that is looking at the potential impacts of sea level rise and climate change to coastal dune habitats and examining the role of restoration in creating resilience for dune ecosystems. In 2020, project partners completed the fifth year of data collection to monitor foredune height and movement along the entire 32-mile littoral cell, established a second adaptation site within the Lanphere Dunes to monitor sand movement based on vegetation type, began modeling responses to sea-level rise and extreme weather events, and continued ongoing outreach efforts to share preliminary findings.

Another prominent sponsored program is the Tolowa Dunes Stewards, who work on coastal education and stewardship programs in Del Norte County. Tolowa Dunes Stewards were very active in 2020, continuing their amazing work restoring habitat in the Tolowa Dunes near Lake Earl and engaging diverse northern California communities in environmental education and stewardship programs. We are proud to continue to support their work as a fiscal sponsor!

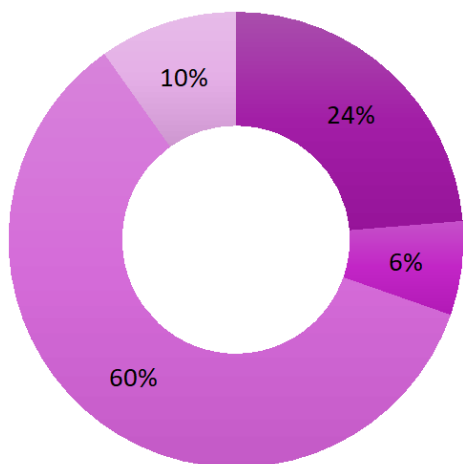
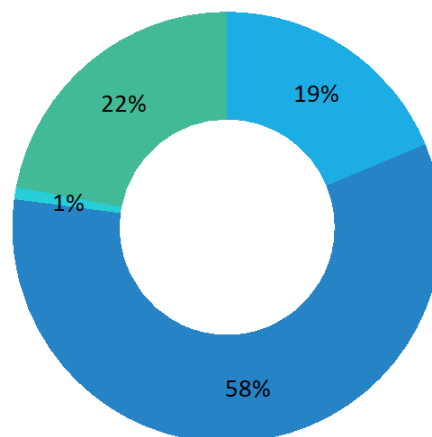
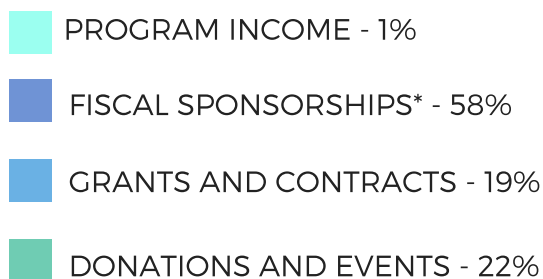
HUMBOLDT COASTAL NATURE CENTER

The Humboldt Coastal Nature Center closed to the public on March 15, 2020, due to health restrictions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. However, we kept the parking lot and the property's trails open to the public every day throughout the year. We realized that people needed to find comfort, solace, joy, and inspiration in nature during a difficult time for all of us. We plan to open the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center when it is safe to do so in 2021.

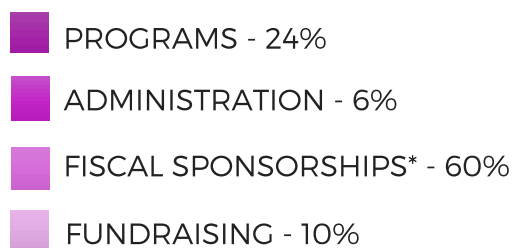


2020 PROGRAMS & OPERATIONS

INCOME: \$496,086 TOTAL



EXPENSES: \$424,919 TOTAL



*INCLUDES HUMBOLDT COASTAL RESILIENCE PROJECT & TOLOWA DUNES STEWARDS

THANK YOU 2020 BUSINESS PARTNERS!

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