



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN COASTAL CONSERVATION

Dear Friends and Supporters,

I am honored to highlight another successful year of coastal conservation through community-supported education and stewardship programs. The work outlined in this annual report could not have been accomplished without support from our community. You have contributed your time, energy, passion, and hard-earned money towards ensuring that the natural diversity of our coastal environments is conserved for generations to come.

Collaboration is key to our mission, and much of our work revolves around collaborative partnerships. The Humboldt Coastal Dunes Cooperative is a perfect example, as a group that facilitates coordinated ecosystem management of coastal dune environments through collaboration among interested people and organizations. We continue to play an active role in this Dunes Cooperative and hosted the annual public meeting, which featured four short presentations highlighting collaborative conservation efforts in Humboldt's coastal dune environments.

After the landmark return of Digawututklh (formerly the Samoa Dunes & Wetlands Conservation Area) to the Wiyot Tribe at the end of 2024, we have continued to support stewardship efforts on this property and to offer public guided walks in coordination with the Wiyot Tribe. Through this partnership, we worked with the Wiyot Tribe to develop a new exhibit highlighting the Wiyot people's reciprocal relationship with the land and the importance of land return. This exhibit is now on display at the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center.

Education has been a core component of our work since the 1980s, when Friends of the Dunes was founded, because we operate on the belief that you must love something in order to protect it. Throughout the year, we offered an array of educational programs for both school groups and the general public, most of which were free. These programs engaged community members of all ages in exploring Humboldt's coastal dune environments, helping more people to fall in love with these magical places.

This past year, we continued working on the largest continuous ecosystem restoration project at the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center to date. After successfully removing the "first dig" of invasive European beachgrass (*Ammophila arenaria*) in 2024, our efforts in 2025 focused on retreating beachgrass resprouts, conducting controlled burns of beachgrass piles to reduce biomass, planting American dune grass (*Elymus mollis*), and preparing for a larger planting effort in early 2026 to accelerate habitat recovery and revegetation.

One of our most exciting updates for the year came in November, when Friends of the Dunes was approved for funding from the State Coastal Conservancy to purchase 6.52 acres of neighboring property at 150 Stamps Lane. This property is ideally located on our entrance road to the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center, and while it has had a bit of a rough recent history, it has great potential for improving coastal access and protecting coastal habitat. Keep an eye out for more updates and opportunities to provide input as we plan future improvements.

Thank you for your belief in and dedication to our mission. We could not do this work without you.

With gratitude,

Suzie Fortner
Executive Director



SCHOOL EDUCATION



School education programs offered by Friends of the Dunes play a vital role in fostering students' appreciation for the natural world and stewardship of coastal ecosystems. In 2025, Friends of the Dunes offered 2 environmental education programs for school groups: Bay to Dunes and Kids Ocean Day. In total, these programs served 1,379 students ranging from kindergarten through 8th grade.

Bay to Dunes served 679 students from 17 schools, and Kids Ocean Day served 700 students from 12 schools. Overall, 39 volunteers contributed 330 hours towards implementing these school education programs.

Funding for these programs was pieced together from grants, individual donors, business partners, and fundraisers, allowing Friends of the Dunes to waive \$2,760 in field trip fees and award \$8,130 in bus scholarships. If you would like to support the scholarship fund that pays for transportation and waives fees for students to attend field trips, please contact Development Director, Ashley Osia, at 707-444-1397 x 105 or email ashley@friendsofthedunes.org.



This field trip directly supported our classroom studies surrounding ecosystem interactions, invasive species, and environmental stewardship by providing real-world context and hands-on experiences.

Sarah Scarfone Redwood Preparatory Charter School



Kids Ocean Day 2025

Thank You to Our Funders



HUMBOLDT AREA FOUNDATION



Humboldt Bay Recreation Enhancement & Water Quality Fund of the Humboldt Area Foundation + Wild Rivers Community Foundation



This program does an excellent job teaching students about their local environment and community, which matches with the grade level standards. The focus on the plants and animals found in these places and the emphasis on conservation instills a sense of stewardship and understanding for the place they call home.

Adam Crug Morris Elementary



COMMUNITY EDUCATION

In 2025, we continued our mission to conserve the natural diversity of our coastal environments through community-supported education and stewardship, connecting individuals with the unique beauty of our coastal dunes. Through guided experiences across these windswept landscapes, we engaged community members of all ages by creating opportunities to explore these biodiverse habitats, deepen their understanding of local ecology, and enjoy meaningful experiences that foster lasting relationships with these unique coastal ecosystems. Support from the State Coastal Conservancy's Explore the Coast grant, generous community donations, and valued partnerships enabled us to sustain and expand these offerings for individuals and communities that have historically faced barriers to accessing these resources.

Friends of the Dunes were integral partners for the 2025 UC Environmental Stewards Regional Rendezvous in Arcata, which featured in-person gatherings, field-based learning, keynote speakers, and networking opportunities for 125 certified California Naturalists from across the state.

In 2025, we hosted 80 events reaching over 1,100 people, including:

- 15 free guided walks with 119 participants.
- 15 Nature Newbies with 297 participants. This program introduced curious but hesitant “newbies” to the outdoors and featured our popular Wellness and Art in Nature series.
- 3 Family Nature Events with 86 participants: Pollinator Party, Family Movie Night, and the Spooky Dunes Tour.
- 11 Explorando Juntos (Exploring Together) outings, with a total of 143 attendees. These family-friendly programs in Spanish are designed for Spanish-speaking community members.
- A California Naturalist Course, certifying 16 members of the public as California Naturalists in partnership with the University of California Environmental Stewards.
- Partnered with Road Scholars to lead 7 lectures for 226 participants.
- Nature Story Time 10 weeks in the fall (1 community member & 1 Cal Poly Humboldt student volunteered to lead) & 10 weeks in the spring (2 Cal Poly Humboldt students volunteered to lead), total participants: 131
- The Humboldt Coastal Dunes Cooperative Public Meeting, *Coastal Conversations: Updates from the Humboldt Coastal Dunes Cooperative*. 26 people attended this series of short presentations, available on our YouTube channel, which highlighted local collaborative restoration projects and species updates.

Thank You to Our Partners & Supporters



Redwood Coast Regional Center



UC Environmental Stewards
University of California
Agriculture & Natural Resources



**Community Education
Volunteers contributed a
total of 603 hours, equating
to \$21,792!***

*According to Independent Sector and the Do Good Institute, the value of a volunteer hour in the United States is estimated to be \$36.14 in 2025



LAND STEWARDSHIP & RESTORATION

In 2025, Friends of the Dunes advanced an extensive, multi-year effort to complete the restoration of the entire foredune at the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center. Following the initial removal of invasive European beachgrass (*Ammophila arenaria*) by Redwood Community Action Agency crews in 2024, the focus in 2025 shifted to intensive follow-up management. Hired work crews and our Dune Ecosystem Restoration Team (DERT) volunteers worked collaboratively throughout the year to locate and treat resprouts, ensuring steady progress toward long-term restoration goals. Supporting this effort, two College Corps fellows conducted regular monitoring of the foredune site, helping identify and address any new resprouts early and consistently.

A major component of this work was the harvest and transplant of thousands of plugs of native American Dunegrass (*Elymus mollis*) from the Wadulh Unit to the restoration area. These transplants are helping rebuild native foredune structure and accelerate the return of resilient coastal habitat. Restoration outcomes have been especially encouraging, with a remarkable amount of native dune vegetation naturally recolonizing treated areas. While supplemental native planting was included in the original restoration plan, natural recruitment has exceeded expectations. Native dune mat species have returned quickly and densely across the restoration footprint, demonstrating both the resilience of the dune system and the effectiveness of restoration treatments.

In addition to work accomplished by hired crews, we trained, mobilized, and empowered 354 individual volunteers to contribute to habitat restoration efforts at the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center and the Bureau of Land Management's Ma-le'l Dunes South. We hosted 31 DERT workdays, contributing 1,062 volunteer hours. Five highly trained and dedicated Volunteer Restoration Technicians contributed an additional 210 hours towards our dune restoration outside of DERT workdays. We also assisted with the 48th Annual Lupine Bash, which attracted 70 volunteers. This event was a partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Land Management at the BLM Ma-le'l Dunes South property.

Friends of the Dunes is continuing to move forward with the acquisition of 6.52 acres at 150 Stamps Lane and has already begun initial baseline monitoring to better understand existing site conditions and inform future planning. We are excited about the long-term potential of this property and the opportunities it presents for restoration, stewardship, and public benefit. While specific plans are still being developed, the site will likely include an ecosystem restoration component alongside thoughtful improvements to support community use. Early discussions have explored the potential for adapting the existing developed footprint into a group camp and outdoor gathering space that aligns with Friends of the Dunes' mission of conservation, education, and responsible public access.

DERT Volunteers clearing European beachgrass and transplant from the foredune at the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center



HUMBOLDT COASTAL NATURE CENTER

The Humboldt Coastal Nature Center (HCNC), located in Manila, California, serves as a gateway to nearly 2,000 acres of conserved coastal lands. This allows thousands of visitors to explore the rich, biodiverse habitats found within Humboldt County's dunes. The Nature Center features interpretive exhibits, trails, and programs designed to connect individuals with nature. Stop on by when you have some time to explore the dunes!

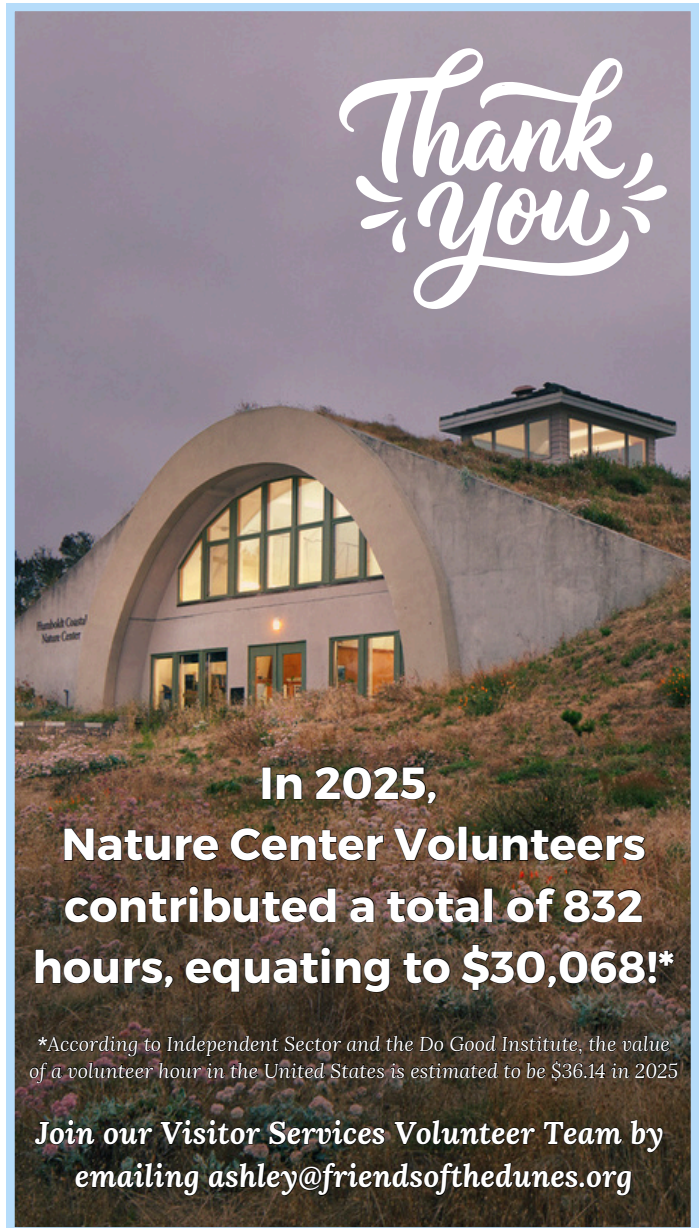
Visiting Information

- Summer Hours:
 - Wednesday to Sunday, from 10 AM to 4 PM
- Winter Hours:
 - Wednesday to Saturday, from 10 AM to 4 PM

Owned and managed by nonprofit and land trust Friends of the Dunes, the Nature Center provides office space for our team and often serves as a community hub. The HCNC showcases sustainable designs, including a living roof and eco-friendly building elements. Need a venue for your next event? We've got you covered for meetings, parties, weddings, and more! Contact ashley@friendsofthedunes.org to inquire about renting the Nature Center. *Special Member Discounts!* In 2025, the HCNC hosted 42 rentals, and we designed a unique experience for each group.

Originally transformed from the historic Stamps Dune House, the Nature Center was made possible through community support. Visitors are invited to enjoy the trails, engage in conservation efforts, and learn about our unique local environment.

The Humboldt Coastal Nature Center relies entirely on donations for its funding, and we extend our gratitude to our members, donors, and volunteers for sustaining this vital resource for our community. For more information, visit friendsofthedunes.org.



FISCALLY SPONSORED PROJECTS

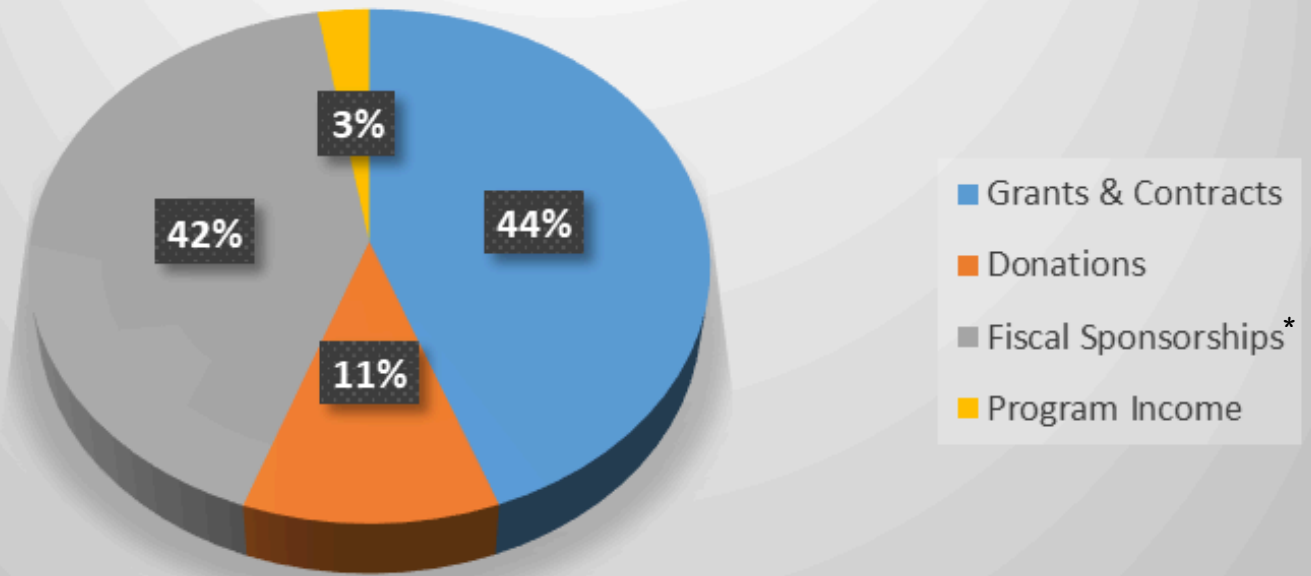
Friends of the Dunes continues to support a variety of ambitious allied projects on the North Coast as a fiscal sponsor. These fiscally sponsored projects include:

- **Tolowa Dunes Stewards** is a community-based organization in Del Norte County, dedicated to coastal conservation, education, and restoration in the extensive Tolowa Dunes, located north of Crescent City. Their current grant work, supported by Friends of the Dunes, includes a restoration project at Lake Earl Wildlife Area, monitoring of endangered species such as the western snowy plover, and educational programs in collaboration with the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation.
- **Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Wadulh Unit Restoration:** We have continued our longstanding collaborative partnership with the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge by serving as the fiscal sponsor of several grants that fund dune ecosystem restoration at Wadulh Unit. The Wadulh Unit is the newest addition to the refuge, consisting of 160 acres of degraded dune habitat north of Lanphere Dunes. Wadulh, pronounced Wa-DUSH, is the word for dunes in Soulatluk, the Wiyot language.

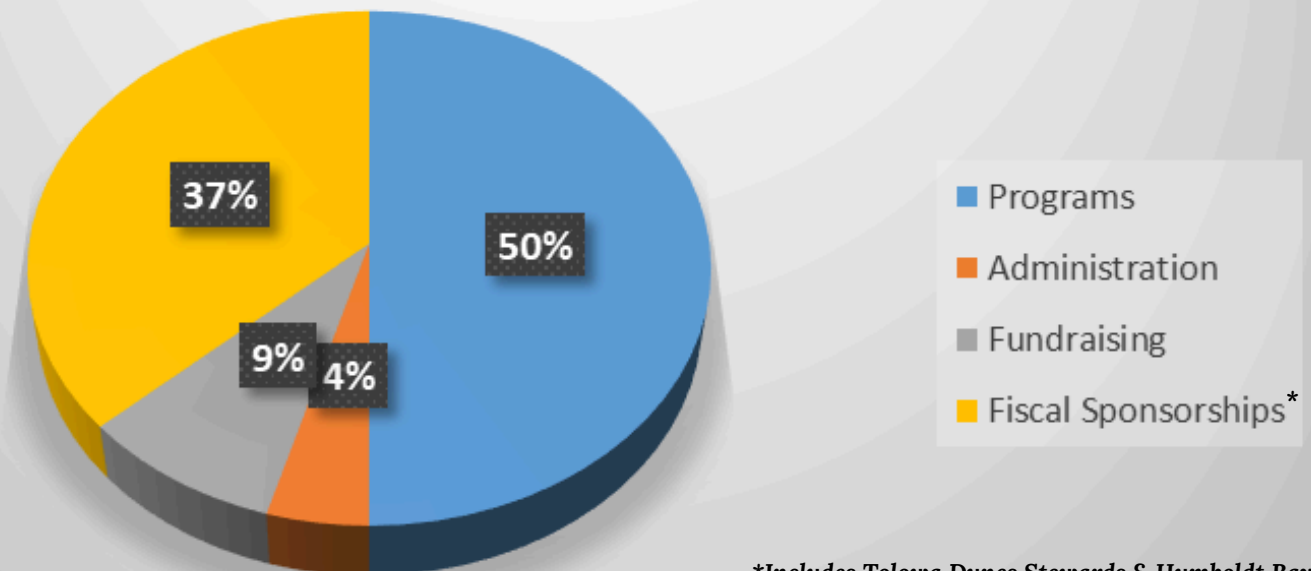
FINANCIALS: PROGRAMS & OPERATIONS

Friends of the Dunes is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization (Tax-ID #68-0373871) dedicated to conserving the natural diversity of coastal environments in northern California through community supported education and stewardship programs. These numbers reflect our fiscal year January 1 through December 31, 2025.

Total Income: 2025 \$1,157,236



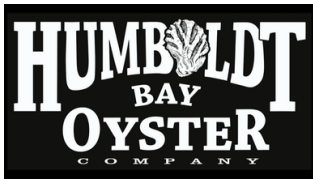
Total Expenses: 2025 \$1,178,082



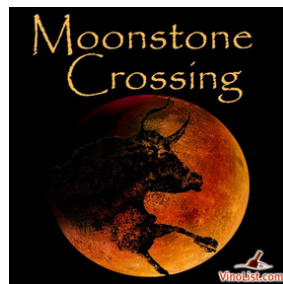
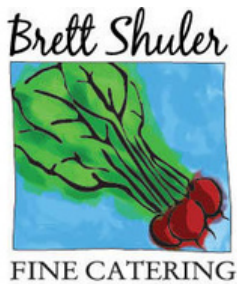
*Includes Tolowa Dunes Stewards & Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge Wadulh Unit Restoration

THANK YOU 2025 BUSINESS PARTNERS!

Support us by supporting our Business Partners



KELLY-O'HERN ASSOCIATES



Business Partnerships are a valuable way businesses can support our mission and help us continue to provide free stewardship and education programs to the public. For more information or to join as a Business Partner, scan QR Code to the right.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

We couldn't do it without you!



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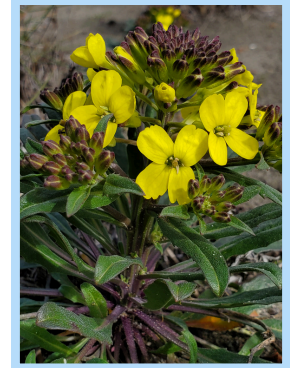
BOOKKEEPER

Brenda Pease

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Friends of the Dunes offers several ways for individuals, families or businesses to contribute and support our mission. Every contribution, whether financial or through volunteer work, plays a crucial role in conserving this unique natural environment.

- Volunteer!
- Become a Member or Sustaining Member
- Planned Giving Options
- Through Humboldt Area Foundation: *Friends of the Dunes Coastal Conservation and Environmental Education Endowment Fund*
- Attend an Event!
- Donate Stocks, Vehicles, etc.
- Business Partnership
- In-Kind Donations
- And more!



SCAN ME!

Consider becoming a **Sustaining Member!** Give as frequently as you wish. Your steady support helps us meet ongoing needs and plan for the future. Scan the QR Code at left to join! Thank you for your support!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

As a non-profit organization, we are dependent on and are forever thankful for the volunteers who provide essential support with their valuable time! We have many ways to get involved. Visit friendsofthedunes.org/volunteer or email info@friendsofthedunes.org to learn more.

Dune Ecosystem Restoration Team (DERT) meets two times per month:

- Every 2nd Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the HCNC
- Every 3rd Sunday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Ma-le'l Dunes South

Native Landscaping: Remove easy-to-pull annual grasses and other non-native plants in the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center's native plant garden. After a brief training, volunteer schedules are flexible.

Environmental Education: Share nature with elementary school students by leading field trips in the dunes! Field trips take place on Thursdays and Fridays, and training is offered twice a year.

Visitor Services: Greet visitors at the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center and provide much-needed office support to our staff.

Special Events: We always need plenty of help during fundraising events such as the Get Outside Gear Sale and Tunes in the Dunes! Come make new friends!