



UPPER PENINSULA LAND CONSERVANCY

# Impact Report

2023



# Reflections from Departing Board Members



*It's bitter sweet to say farewell to Board members when they reach their term limits, but it's also a time to reflect on all the projects they have contributed to in that time. We have been so fortunate to learn directly from Robb, Lora, and Brock, as they have guided us through projects both exciting and challenging, as is the nature of land trust work. Thank you for your incredible dedication to UPLC over 9 years!*



## Robb Ferguson

Departing Board President

I've seen UPLC grow the most by growing up. I've said a number of times, UPLC isn't a kid anymore, we're done bumping our heads and stubbing our toes. We're a grown up, nationally accredited Land Conservancy, and we can work with the best of the best. I have no doubt UPLC will continue to mature, grow, and prosper in the future. We have a fabulous, committed Board and we have phenomenal, dedicated employees. I leave the Presidency and the Board absolutely confident UPLC is in very, very good hands.



## Lora Loope

Departing Board Member

UPLC stands on the shoulders of many former committed and hardworking Board members. They did it all: from monitoring the lands, conducting bird surveys, fundraising, and administering the land conservancy. The Michael Dempsey Memorial Preserve in Ontonagon County is a splendid addition, extending the geographic range of UPLC's preserves to the west and offering a place for reflection and peace for people walking the North Country Trail. Michael's family deserves praise for seeding the idea and the funds to acquire the property.



## Brock Robinson

Departing Vice President

I came to UPLC because we had committed our land to a conservation easement years ago, and it seemed like a good place to put some energy when I retired. I have taken inspiration from the young people who put their passion into our organization. I have witnessed the commitment of folks who stepped up and did what needed to be done and kept things going. I have seen us make course corrections when needed. I have seen the benefit of my contributions, fulfilling all of my expectations.

# Financial Review

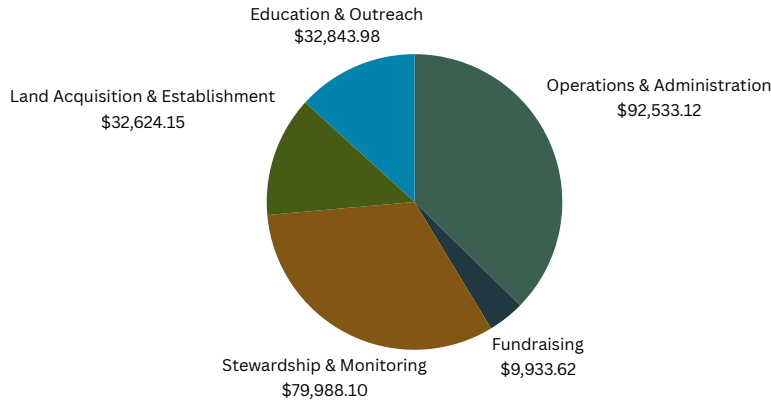
## 2023 by the Numbers



### Programmatic Efficiency

This fiscal year, our notable expenses included several impactful initiatives and necessary operational investments. We invested significantly in Phase One of the Dead River Community Forest (DRCF) project and expanded our stewardship staff to support its establishment. Additionally, UPLC organized educational events to promote environmental engagement among community members.

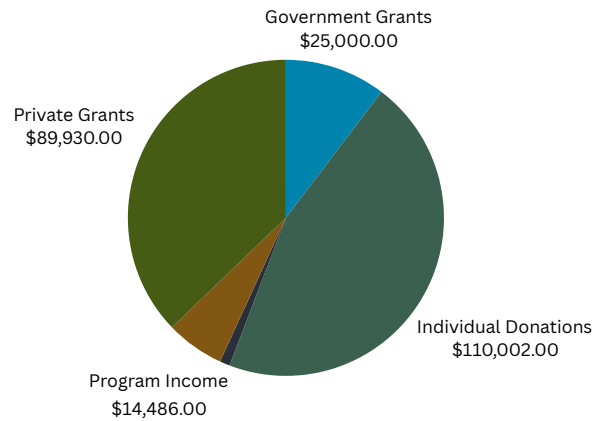
These activities were complemented by our commitment to maintaining a high standard of service and programming, reflected in our investment in the Land Trust Accreditation Commission renewal. These expenditures highlight our dedication to environmental stewardship, community education, and operational excellence.



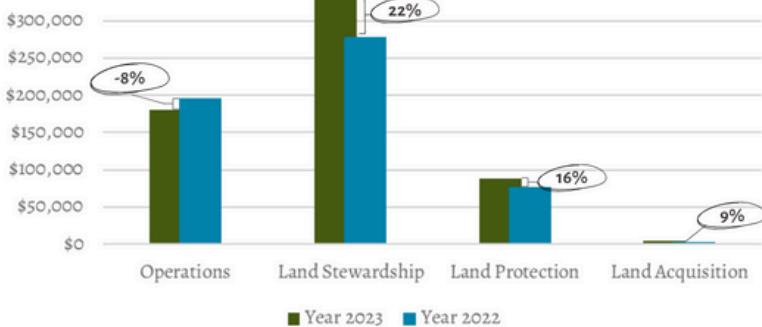
### Grants & Support

UPLC was awarded nearly \$115,000 in grants in 2023. The U.P. Environmental Coalition and Ray & Peg Hirvonen Foundation supported our efforts to improve access at the Dead River Community Forest (DRCF) Bayou parcel. Additional funding from the Land Trust Alliance provided UPLC with the opportunity to strengthen partnerships focused on the DRCF.

Most notably, the majority of support came from individuals like YOU! Through your generosity, and along with the assistance of local grantors, UPLC was able to unlock a \$120,000 matching grant in 2024 from The Carls Foundation to expand operations and accelerate our conservation initiatives.

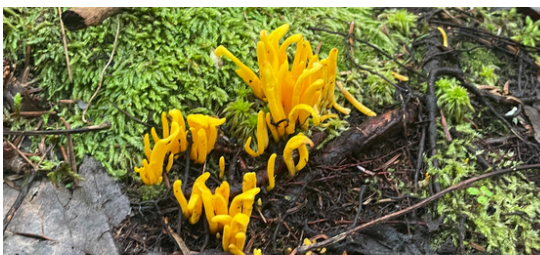


### Investment Fund Growth



### Investments

UPLC has a promise to protect land forever, and in fact it's our mission: *Land Today for Life Tomorrow*. It's a gift and a challenge to steward this incredible landscape for future generations of students, families, and outdoor explorers. UPLC ensures we remain prepared yet adaptable by managing a diverse portfolio of assets which display our commitment to the land. Across all funds, UPLC investments saw a net gain of \$45,930.99 in 2023.



# \$120,000

in matching funds raised  
to unlock the Accelerating Conservation Challenge Grant



# 2023 OVERVIEW

Highlights of the year



## THE CARLS FOUNDATION CHALLENGE GRANT

2023 was a momentous year for fundraising. At the start of the year, we graciously accepted a 3-year challenge grant from The Carls Foundation to support UPLC’s growing operations. The “challenge” of this multi-year grant is that we must match the Foundation’s annual gift with qualifying donations, grants, and other contributions from local community members and visitors. Through your support of the Accelerating Conservation Campaign, UPLC reached our Year One goal of raising \$120,000 by the end of 2023. With the generosity of our community and the conditional matching grant received in Q1 2024, our fundraising totaled \$347,422! Now, we’re striving to outdo ourselves and raise \$130,000 to unlock Year Two’s match and double it once again! Please consider supporting us in 2024 — where every donation, no matter the size, goes towards reaching our goal. THANK YOU for strengthening UPLC’s operations and programming!

## ONTONAGON OUTREACH

During the summer field season, we broadened our outreach efforts westward to Ontonagon. Staff were delighted to connect with local government officials, American Legion Post 92, and members of the public during their lively Copperfest event. We were privileged to engage with this community and share our mission that spans across the Upper Peninsula. In 2021, we proudly safeguarded the Dempsey Preserve with the support of donors near and far, honoring the memory of Michael Dempsey. In 2023, we celebrated the culmination of our efforts to protect this land with a picnic and trail dedication ceremony with the Dempsey Family, a tangible symbol of our enduring commitment to the preservation and enjoyment of nature today and into the future. UPLC is excited to participate in Copperfest again in 2024!



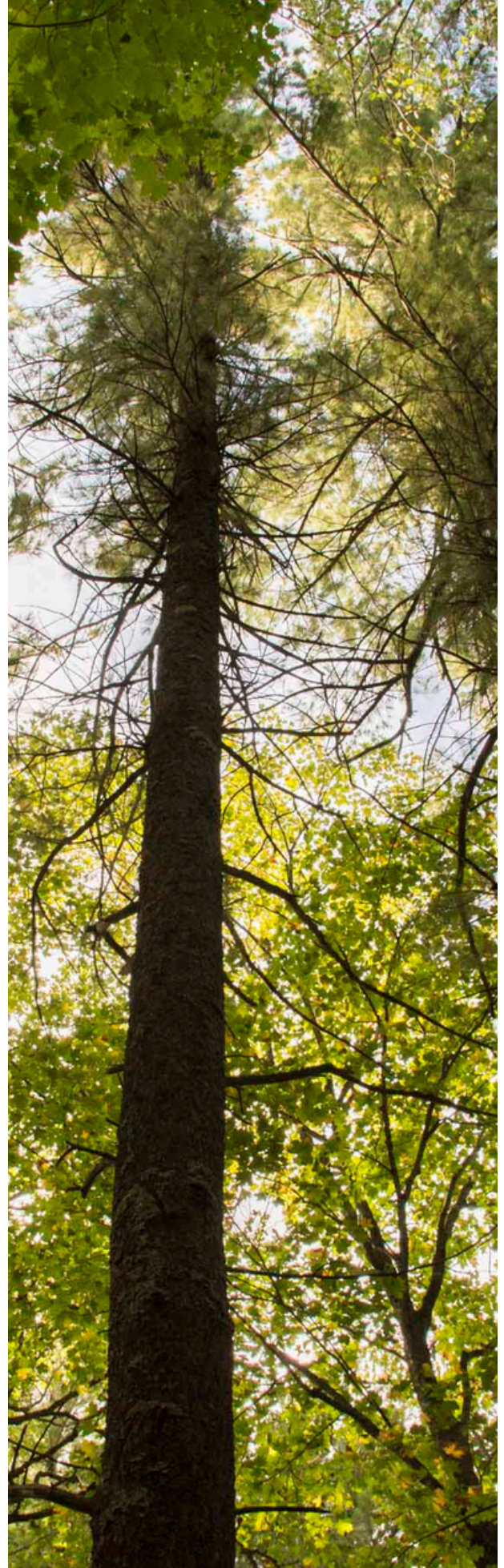
## LTAC ACCREDITATION RENEWAL

In 2023, the staff and Board combined forces to submit our application for accreditation renewal through the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. This comprehensive process is a voluntary review where we demonstrate how closely we are abiding by nationally adopted Land Trust Standards and Practices. Our materials and procedures are subjected to a rigorous external review, where we are scored on various performance measures and advised of any adjustments. This renewal happens every 5 years, where the frequency allows us to make and practice meaningful changes. We hope that by demonstrating a high level of fiscal control, donors and grantors have an even greater level of trust in supporting our work. We are excited to report we were awarded the status of re-accreditation! With this distinction and the support of the Land Trust Alliance, we look forward to the next 5 years of growth and development.

## NEW INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

2023 saw the creation of a new internship position – the Land and Community Steward. Our monitoring intern, Casey Stevens, inspired us to develop the position through her passions for partnerships and communications. With this pilot program, we focused on the Dead River Community Forest and created an engagement plan to foster new community connections while continuing to build upon past work with our existing partners. The internship also focused on storytelling in person and the virtual space.

Casey did an amazing job setting up the framework for this new position, and we are excited for its return in 2024. We look forward to seeing how this position will grow our community relations through the addition of new ideas and visions for outreach.





# Community Programs

## Events, Outings, & Education

With incredible partners, volunteers, and an involved community, UPLC hosted over 20 events in 2023; including mushroom hikes, volunteer stewardship days, the Chocolay Bayou Art Walk, and library programs.



**> 20 EVENTS  
HOSTED**



**463  
PARTICIPANTS**



**18 UNIQUE  
PROGRAMS**

## New Opportunities to Explore

With the help of volunteer and mental health professional, Sean Fitzpatrick, LPC, UPLC introduced a new program — Wellness in the Woods. Through guided walks, participants are encouraged to find moments and space to reconnect with nature, reducing mental health stressors along the way. Kindling these relationships with the land helps people bond with nature, as we protect what we love and we love what we feel connected to.

In 2023, UPLC also collaborated with outdoor educator and volunteer, Holli Langlieb, to enhance our program offerings and strengthen our connections with members of the Northern Center for Lifelong Learning as well as local youth at North Star Montessori Academy.



Art Walk jam at the Chocolay Bayou Preserve, 2023





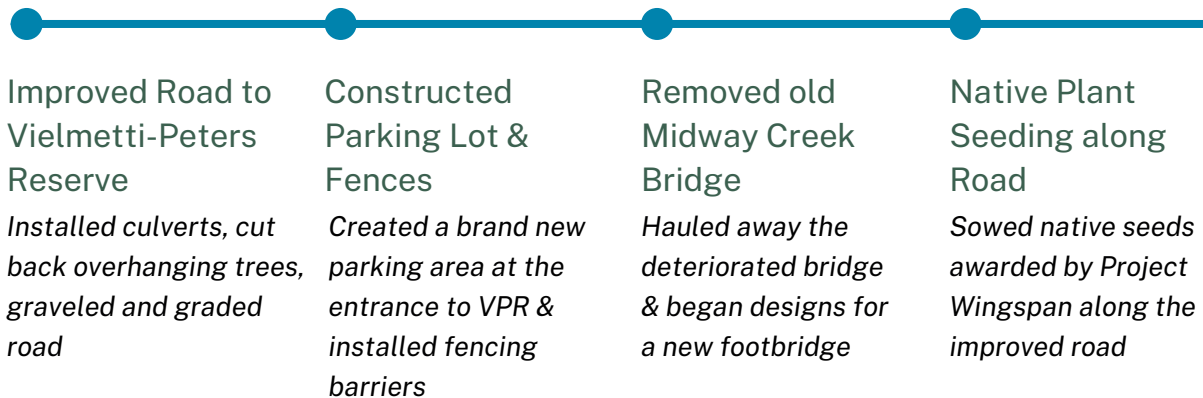
UPLC Staff and community members at Vielmetti-Peters Reserve share ideas for the bridge replacement over Midway Creek.

# Dead River Community Forest

## *Step by Step: Crafting Trails with Nature's Pace in Mind*

Before we developed trails at the DRCF, we planned out thoughtful steps regarding the land we walk on; the surrounding ecology, the communities needs, our capacity, and the sustainability of our actions. In our first field season since acquiring DRCF, we made great progress through our Phase One access project.

Here are some steps we took to get there...



### **Looking Ahead**

There is still a lot of work ahead of us before we can formally invite the public onto the trails at Dead River Community Forest. We are currently setting up biological and cultural surveys to identify sensitive areas, working with the American Bird Conservancy to restore forest & bird habitat, and planning boardwalks by the river to keep the public and waters safe.

# 2024 Organizational Goals

## Adapting and Growing

### Hiring an Executive Director

The Board and Staff invested considerable time in finding UPLC's next Executive Director, seeking someone with conservation related experience, community relations, and a passion for UP ecology. After a lengthy recruitment cycle, the hiring team met with John Frye in late December, where that conversation ultimately led to multiple interviews and his hiring. John brings a lot of land trust experience to our organization and looks forward to meeting all of our supporters and partners in 2024.

### Refining Recordkeeping

As part of our reaccreditation process, staff scoured past meeting minutes and all property documentation. Through this intensive process, we gained an invaluable understanding of our history. Ultimately, we decided that a full documentation audit was needed to ensure that we proceed as a stronger organization. We are conducting an internal audit and reorganization of our physical and digital files so that we can secure all originals material offsite and effectively access all of our electronic documentation remotely.

### Complete Annual Monitoring

Monitoring is our absolute promise to land donors, supporters, the public we serve, and the land itself. Every year, we are required to monitor and defend all of our conservation easements, preserves and reserves. This task requires a visit to each property, where staff review all activity and uses, such as — inspecting approved timber harvests, looking for signs of trespass, or checking for the presence of invasive species. We are happy to report that we successfully monitored all of our lands in 2023, where we connected with landowners and neighbors while collecting data that guides our stewardship efforts. We look forward to 2024 where we will do it all again!

### Celebrating Our 25th Year

UPLC officially turned 25 years old on April 23, 2024! We've certainly had quite the journey to get where we are today. Stay tuned for extra celebrations and events as we look back to our roots and forward to our future.





# 2023 Donors

## Thank you Grantors & Businesses

Anonymous Family Foundation  
Beth Millner Jewelry  
The Carls Foundation  
Community Foundation of Marquette County  
Crum & Forster Insurance  
Ray and Peg Hirvonen Foundation  
Huron Mountain Club  
Ishpeming Carnegie Public Library  
Land Trust Alliance, Midwest Program  
Leonard & Helen Saari Family Fund  
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Pledgeling Foundation  
Superiorland Duplicate Bridge Club  
Tadych's Marketplace Foods  
Takeda Pharmaceuticals  
Tish Osborn Interiors  
Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition  
Upper Peninsula Supply Company  
Upper Peninsula Productions

## Thank you Donors

Jane Adams  
Antonio Adan & Kristina Behrens  
Sarah Alberti  
Katherine Alberti  
Ruth Almen  
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Rudy Ziehl  
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Aurora Zimmer



# Let's stay in touch!

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Robb Ferguson  
*President- (departing)*
- Brock Robinson  
*Vice President- (departing)*
- Mark Ehlert  
*Treasurer*
- Craig Wiseman  
*Secretary*
- Lora Loope - *(departing)*
- Marc LaBeau
- Sam Kapp
- Adam Jones
- Adam Berger
- Mike O'Sullivan
- Logan Hawley

## STAFF

- John Frye  
*Executive Director*
- Clare Fastiggi  
*Lands Program Manager*
- Hannah Boyd  
*Administrative Manager*
- Em Staat  
*Lands Program Assistant*
- Will Sharp  
*Seasonal Land & Community Steward*
- Bradon Kowalski  
*Seasonal Stewardship Intern*

[www.uplandconservancy.org](http://www.uplandconservancy.org)  
[uplc@uplandconservancy.org](mailto:uplc@uplandconservancy.org)  
 (906) 225-8067



Sign up for our e-newsletter!



Read our Strategic Plan



Apply to our Board of Directors



Protect the UP you love.  
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 your impact  
 Help us meet our challenge grant goal in 2024 to unlock a \$130,000 grant from The Carls Foundation!



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