

MUSKOKA
CONSERVANCY



2026 Michael Foster Photography Award Winner

‘Fuelling Up’ by Henry Gage

Hummingbird Clearwing Moth

Taken August 8, 2025, Gravenhurst, Lake Muskoka

Annual Report

2025-2026

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WHO WE ARE

Our Vision

Muskoka’s natural spaces protected forever

Our Mission

To conserve nature in Muskoka

We Believe

Achievement of our vision rests on collaboration and creation of lasting relationships with our partners, our members, and Indigenous Peoples.

Our approach to land conservation must be ethically sound, transparent, consultative and fiscally responsible.

Our decision-making should apply credible science, best available information and conservation approaches consistent with best practices.

Our organizational culture must be inclusive, welcoming and respectful of diversity.

MUSKOKA CONSERVANCY TEAM

OFFICERS

Peter Love – Board Chair
Elspeth Wood – Vice Chair
Martine Brouillet – Treasurer

DIRECTORS

Anne Lindsay	Marcie Anderson
Bob Weekes	Stephanie Grant
Dana Richardson	Sue Sedgwick
Derrick Hammond	Stephen Fahner
Helle Tosine	Victor D'Souza
Laura Thomas	

HONOURARY DIRECTORS

Allyn Abbott	Margaret McLaren
Bill Dickinson (dec.)	Peter Goering (dec.)
Eliza Nevin	Rob Purves
Elizabeth Mason	Russ Black (dec.)
George Snider (dec.)	William Clark
John Finley (dec.)	

STAFF

Scott Young – Executive Director
Derek Berkhout – Operations Director
Amanda Porter – Conservation Manager
Tamsen Tillson – Communications, Marketing & Fundraising Coord. (PT)
Reegan Sargent – Conservation Technician
Vanessa Smith – Conservation Technician (Summer 2026)
Jade Walker – Community Animator (Summer 2026)





LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The lands and waters known today as Muskoka are part of the traditional territories of the Anishnaabeg — including the Ojibway, Chippewa, Algonquin and Odawa peoples.

This region remains home to the Wahta Mohawks First Nation, Moose Deer Point First Nation, and the Moon River Métis Council. These lands are covered by the Robinson Huron Treaty (1850), the Williams Treaties (1923), and the J. Collins land purchase (1785).

For thousands of years, Indigenous Peoples have known, cared for, and stewarded these lands and waters.

The Muskoka Conservancy recognizes that our work takes place within this much longer history of relationship with the land. We are committed to listening, learning, and building respectful relationships with Indigenous communities as we care for these lands and waters together.

This acknowledgement reflects not only respect for the past, but our intention to shape how we work and partner into the future.

MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

Outstanding!

There is no better word to describe our progress toward our vision to Protect Muskoka Forever. In the first year of our 2025–2035 Strategic Plan, Muskoka Conservancy made significant strides toward our goal of doubling the lands under our stewardship. We are protecting 1,569 additional acres of land — achieving **31% of our ten-year target** in a single year. Total lands under our stewardship now stand at 6,692 acres (2,708 hectares).

These acquisitions were made possible through generous cash and land donations from **841 donors**, the support of **627 members**, the efforts of more than **100 volunteers**, and the leadership of our **14 volunteer Board members**.

I extend sincere thanks to our dedicated staff, led by Executive Director **Scott Young**, whose leadership continues to elevate the Conservancy's profile and impact. I also commend **Amanda Porter** for her stewardship leadership as Conservation Manager, **Tamsen Tillson**

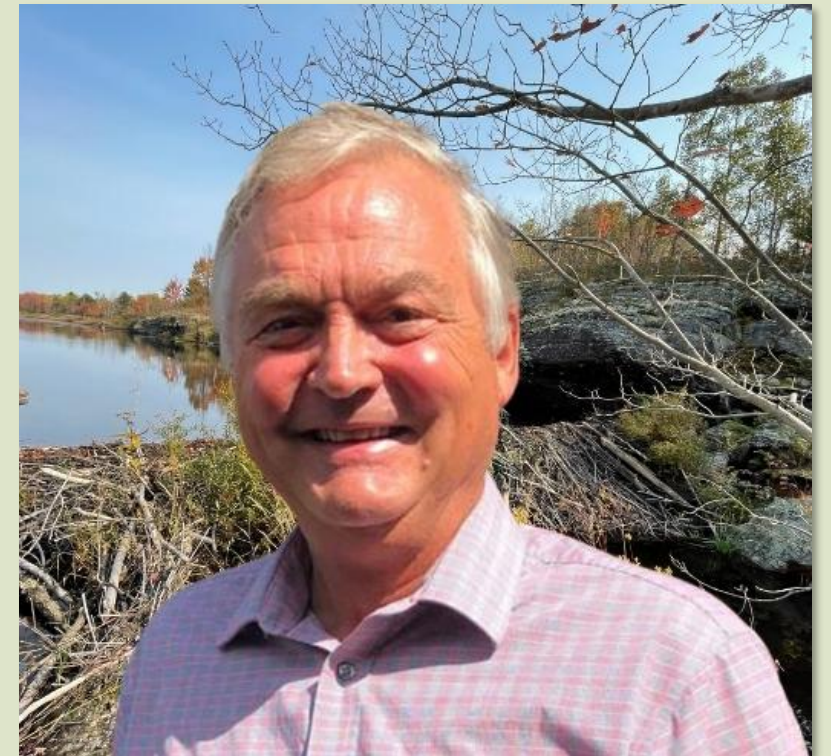
for strengthening communications and fundraising, and **Derek Berkhout**, who as Operations Director has enhanced our operational capacity.

Our Board Committees played a critical role in advancing the Strategic Plan. Under **Dana Richardson's** leadership, the Land Acquisition and Conservation Committee delivered strong results in expanding protected lands, supported by 44 volunteers on the Technical Advisory Committee.

As we began implementing our new Strategic Plan, **Helle Tosine** and the Governance Committee worked to translate our priorities into action.

I also thank **Martine Brouillet** and the Finance and Risk Management Committee for strengthening financial controls and implementing three new internally restricted funds: Land Acquisition, Legacy, and Stewardship.

Engagement and fundraising gained momentum under **Stephanie Grant's**



leadership through events, partnerships, speaking engagements, and our bursary program. The new Fundraising Committee, chaired by **Derrick Hammond**, is building the foundation for long-term financial sustainability. Special thanks to **C.B. Ross** and his daughters, **Jordyn and Taylor**, for another successful Ripple Muskoka.

We enter 2026 with strong momentum, ambitious goals, and a clear path forward. We thank you for supporting our quest to Protect Muskoka Forever.

—Peter Love

MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCOTT YOUNG

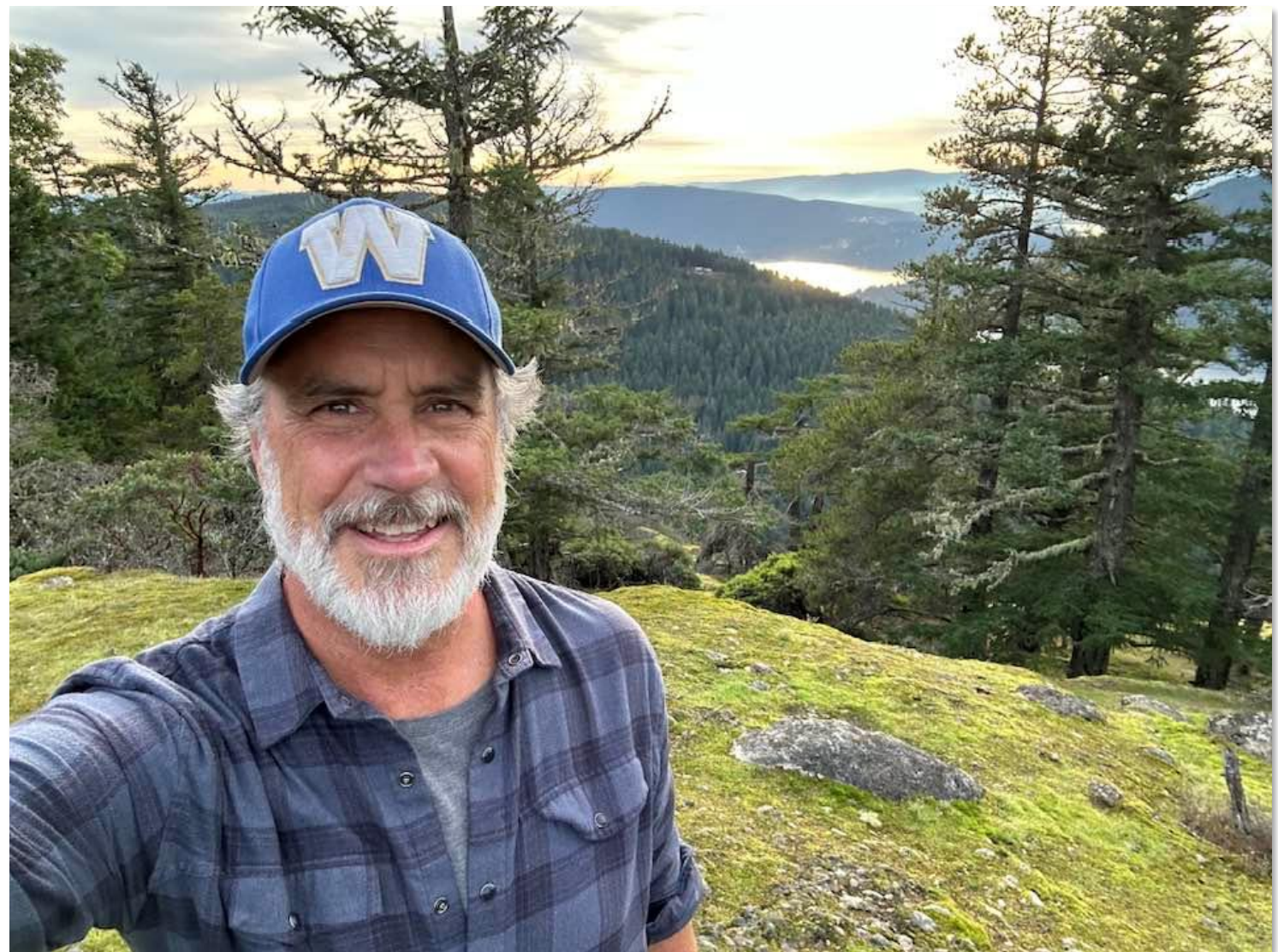
Muskoka is bursting with opportunity for nature conservation

Muskoka Conservancy is growing by leaps and bounds, protecting more land than ever. We have topped 6,700 acres and we're rapidly heading higher. In 2025 alone we added five new holdings totalling 1,565 acres (633 hectares).

Our 2025 projects are valued at over \$8.75 million — which I mention only to illustrate that all this takes considerable effort. We aren't messing around.

We've been on a growth spurt since 2020 and we do not see a slowdown coming anytime soon. We are working on projects in 2026 that could meet or exceed the success of 2025, and the hopper is already full for 2027. Our inboxes are overflowing with landowners who want to work with us to protect more of Muskoka's natural beauty.

Truth is, we've been flying so fast it has been tough to keep up. In 2025, it became clear that it is past time to invest in our operational capacity. It's urgent. We need a transformation to sustain what we've accomplished and to take advantage of the enormous opportunity that lays before us over the



next 10 years.

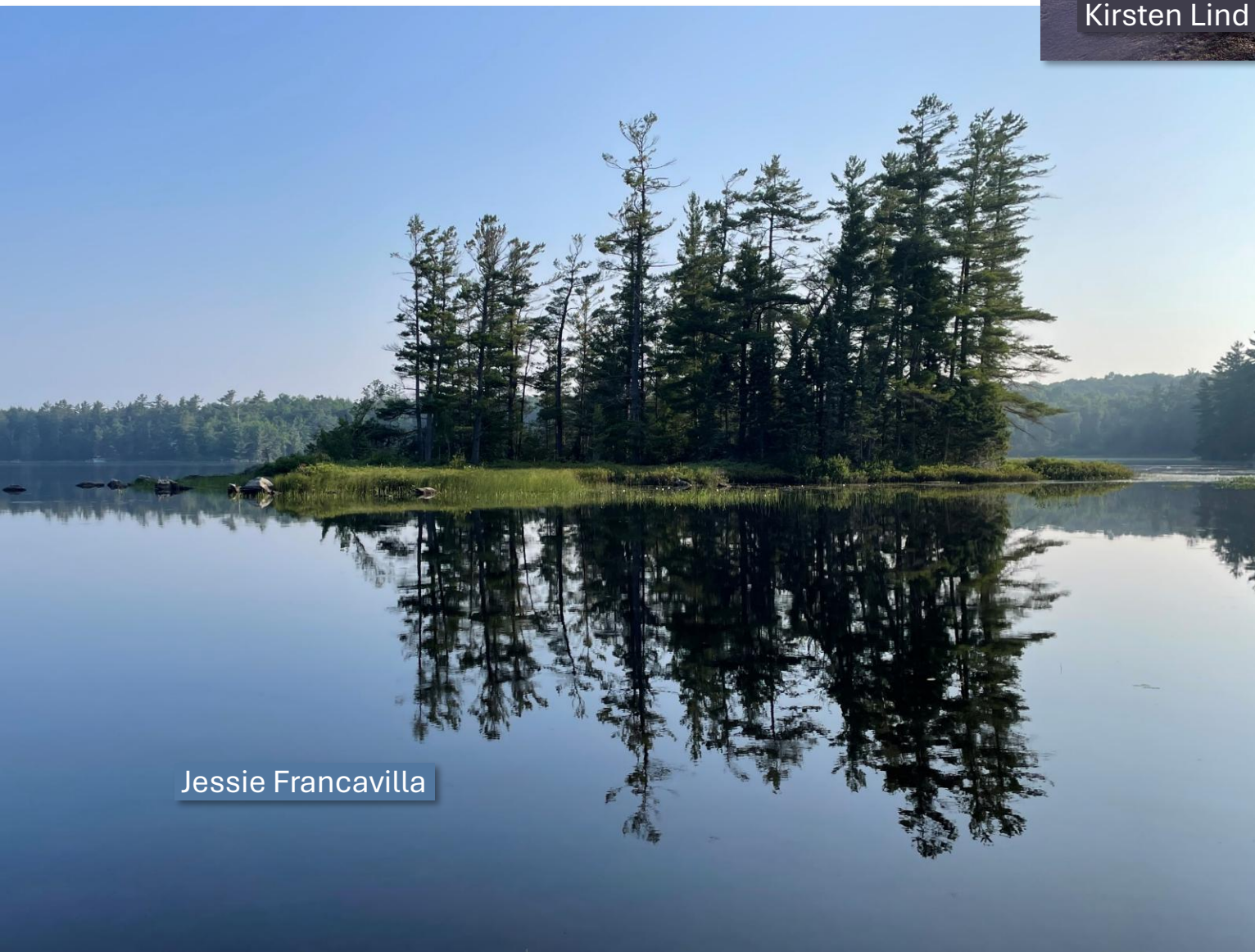
The good news is there is no reason Muskoka should struggle to properly support its own local land trust.

We have supporters with both the interest and capability to help transform Muskoka Conservancy. We are calling on you now. This is a moment of tremendous opportunity: we need to grow, and we need everyone who cares about nature in Muskoka to deepen their support.

Land conservation is simple. The more you invest in Muskoka Conservancy, the more forests, wetlands, and natural shorelines we can protect. And when we



Kirsten Lind



Jessie Francavilla

protect nature, nature protects us — from flooding on our big lakes, for example. Love to swim?

Water quality depends on a healthy natural environment. And yes, views are prettier with nature in them.

So yes, we are asking you to invest in clean swimming water, magnificent views, and a healthier future for your grandchildren. And along the way we will protect plenty of moose and other wildlife too.

It is time to transform Muskoka Conservancy. We need it, we need it now, and we need your support to make it happen. There has never been a better opportunity to protect nature in Muskoka.

—Scott Young

BY THE NUMBERS



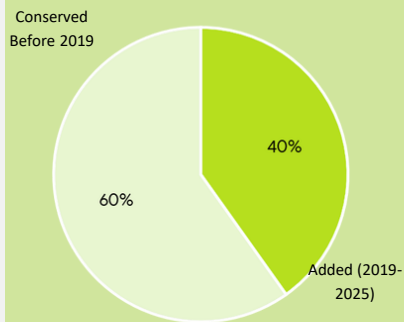
SHORELINE

2019
51,481 feet

2025-2026
86,038 feet

Increase of
34,556.7 feet
(+67%)

Shoreline (ft) Growth
Contribution



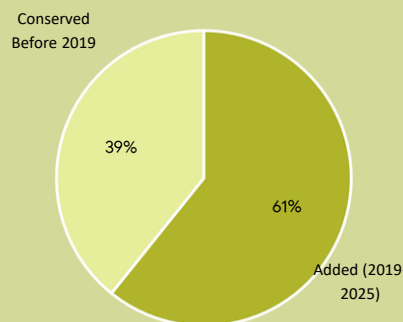
LAND

2019
2,624.8 acres

2025-2026
6,692.1 acres

Increase of
4,067.3 acres
(+155%)

Land Acreage (ac)
Growth Contribution



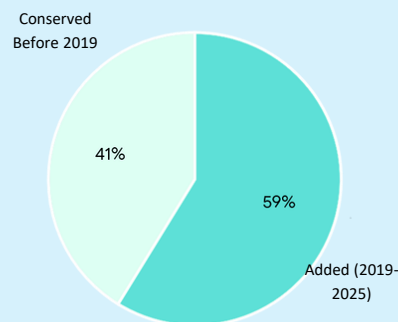
WETLANDS

2019
464.9 acres

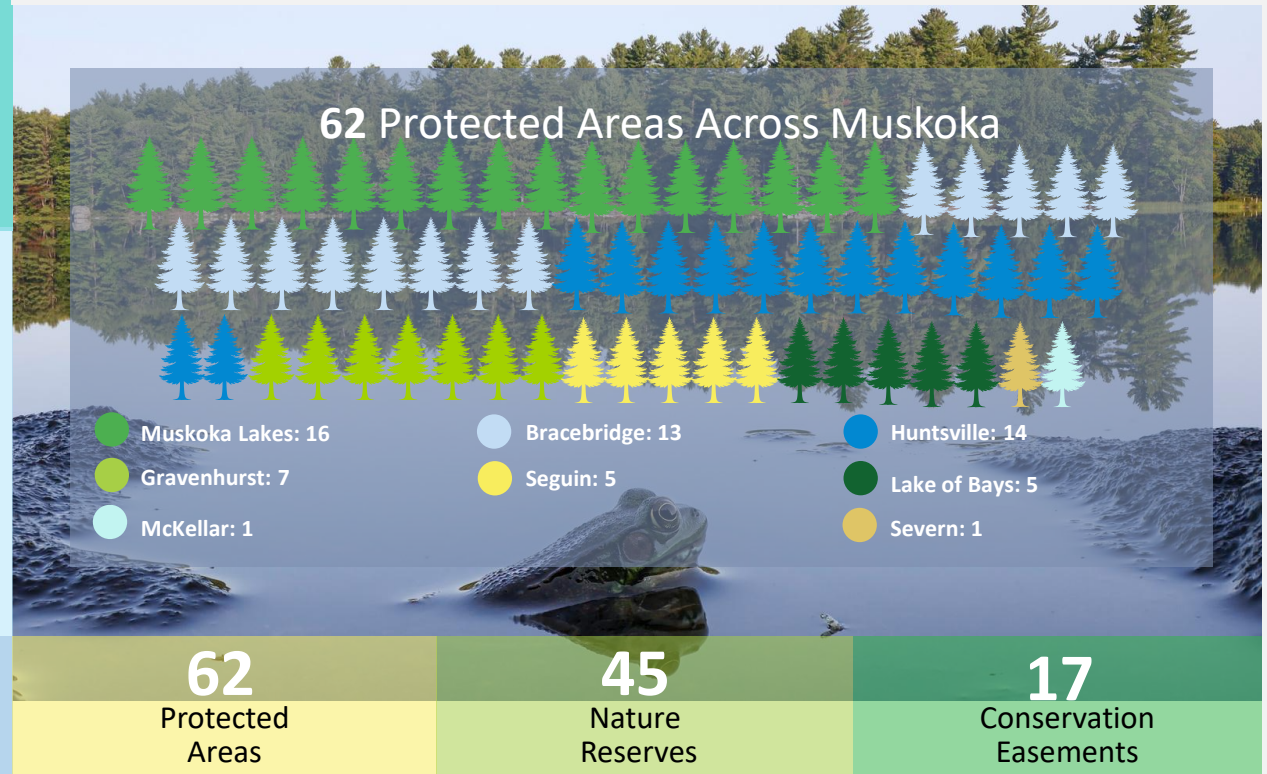
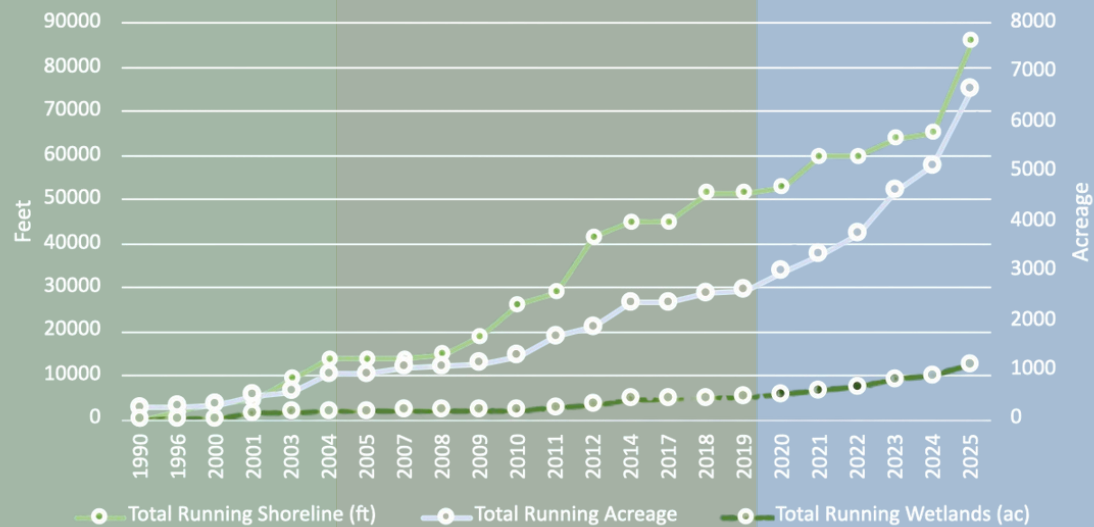
2025-2026
1,128.2 acres

Increase of
663.3 acres
(+143%)

Wetland Acreage (ac)
Growth Contribution



Our Growing Footprint: 1990 - 2025/2026



OUR IMPACT IN PERSPECTIVE

Momentum Shift

More than **60%** of Muskoka Conservancy's protected land and nearly **60%** of wetlands were secured just since 2019.

The Scale of our Impact

The **6,692 acres** of land currently under permanent protection is the equivalent of more than **5,000 football fields** of unbroken forest, wild terrain, and natural canopy.

The **86,037 feet** of protected shoreline stretches across 26 kilometers of waterfront. That is long enough to span the **entire length of Lake Muskoka from end to end.**

The **1,128 acres** of strictly guarded wetlands equals over **850 football fields** of pristine, living water-filtration systems keeping our lakes clean and resilient.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

December 31	2025	2024	Note *
Assets			
Current Assets	\$ 630,301	\$ 179,319	
Restricted cash & investments	\$ 818,770	\$ 849,327	2 & 6
Internally restricted investments	\$ 1,866,396	\$ 2,217,097	3
Tangible capital assets	\$ -	\$ -	
Nature Reserves	\$ 25,822,920	\$ 22,845,481	4
Conservation easements	\$ 14,866,778	\$ 9,010,094	5
Total Assets	\$ 44,005,165	\$ 35,101,318	
Liabilities			
Current liabilities	\$ 925,001	\$ 1,028,646	2 & 6
Net Assets			
Nature Reserves and Easements	\$ 40,689,698	\$ 31,855,576	
Internally restricted - Legacy Fund	\$ 600,000	\$ 800,000	7
Internally restricted - Stewardship Fund	\$ 600,000	\$ 400,000	8
Internally restricted - Land Acquisition Fund	\$ 666,396	\$ 1,017,096	9
Unrestricted	\$ 524,070	\$ -	
Total Liabilities + Net Assets	\$ 43,080,164	\$ 34,072,672	
	\$ 44,005,165	\$ 35,101,318	
<i>*See Audited Financial Statements</i>			
	2025	2024	
Nature Reserves	\$ 25,822,920	\$ 22,845,481	
Conservation Easements	\$ 14,866,778	\$ 9,010,094	
	\$ 40,689,698	\$ 31,855,575	

2025 OPERATING HIGHLIGHTS

	2025	2024
Donations and Membership	\$ 472	\$ 257
Donations - Stewardship	\$ 250	\$ -
Fundraising	\$ 64	\$ 69
Grants	\$ 11	\$ 4
Sales of Products	\$ 15	\$ 10
Other	\$ 153	\$ 210
Deferred Contributions	\$ 63	\$ 83
Total Revenue	\$ 1,029	\$ 634
Total Expenses	\$ 505	\$ 461
Surplus/Deficit	\$ 524	\$ 173

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Moved to dedicated Accounts Payable provider to streamline payments, improve expense management and reduce operational expenses.
- Initiated the hire of a dedicated Operations Director to oversee operational activities and improve operational procedures.
- Completed review of IT Framework to improve operational efficiency and data security.
- Approved land acquisition and closing policy to streamline financial activities related to property acquisition.
- Improved month-end reconciliation processes to improve quality and timeliness of financial reporting.



Len Stemmler

LAND ACQUISITION GUIDELINE

To identify and prioritize appropriate properties for acquisition, in 2025 Muskoka Conservancy adopted a Land Acquisition Guideline. The Guideline covers lands acquired by way of full ownership (fee simple) as well as lands acquired through a Conservation Easement. The Conservancy may purchase these lands with funds raised from donations by individuals, foundations and government programs as well as receive land donations.

Criteria were developed for the types of lands being acquired with the attributes of natural habitat, wetlands and shoreline preservation being the highest priorities. Other important considerations include water resources, size of the land parcel and diversity of the habitats. Many areas with priority attributes are expected to also include secondary attributes. For example, a wetland area providing habitat for Blandings Turtles will also assist in groundwater recharge and flooding.

CRITERIA

- Biological/ecological such as wetlands that are provincially significant and other wetlands, habitats for rare and endangered species and species at risk, and the shorelines of lakes and rivers
- Water resources such as source water protection areas, floodplains and erosion-prone areas
- Proximity to other lands with environmentally significant features
- Size
- Adjacent intervening lands
- Education opportunities
- Developmental Pressure

Enforcement of this Guideline is not intended to be rigid, as this may be an impediment to landowners donating land to the Conservancy. The Guideline is expected to be of most use when there is considerable funding available and the Conservancy is seeking appropriate properties, or when there are multiple properties available and limited funding.

The Guideline is consulted each time a property becomes available for acquisition to ensure that the Vision and Mission of the Conservancy are being met in acquiring lands.

NEW LANDS PROTECTED FOREVER

June 2025 – June 2026

Wood Lake Wetland Nature Reserve was acquired by Muskoka Conservancy in July, 2025. Located within the Town of Bracebridge, the 100-acre property contains approximately 85% wetland habitat and forms part of a much larger wetland and stream complex. The property provides excellent habitat for a variety of species at risk and is already home to the Midland painted turtle. Also found on the protected area is the sedge wren, a relatively uncommon bird species here in the Muskoka Region that enjoys sedge-dominated wetlands.

Homeboy Turner and Earl Nature Reserve was generously donated to Muskoka Conservancy in October, 2025 by Sylvia and Earl Ross. Spanning 712.4 acres within the Town of Huntsville and Township of Muskoka Lakes, this is now Muskoka Conservancy's largest nature reserve. The protected area contains portions of mixed-wood upland forest and wetland habitat well suited to species at risk, including the Eastern wood-pewee, the Midland painted turtle, and the distinctive sandhill crane, a large wading bird that breeds in Muskoka's wetlands and open grasslands.

MapleCross–Fraserburg Nature Reserve was acquired in December, 2025. The Conservancy's second-largest nature reserve to date, it spans 601.6 acres within the hamlet of Fraserburg, just east of Bracebridge. Historically used as a hunting camp, the protected area is comprised of upland forest interspersed with a variety of wetland ecosystems. It serves as an important refuge for species at risk, including the Midland painted turtle, snapping turtle, Eastern wood-pewee, and the beautiful black ash tree. As part of the long-term plan, Muskoka Conservancy intends to create trails to welcome the public.

Seeley Bay Conservation Easement was generously donated to Muskoka Conservancy by Miles and Patricia Langstaff in December, 2025. Spanning 134.5 acres, the easement protects 1,250 feet of shoreline on Lake Joseph and contains a mix of upland forested area and swamp wetlands. This conservation easement is a privately protected area providing suitable habitat for a variety of unique species and species at risk.



THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

Visionary — \$5,000+

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Brenda Lee Binnington
Brian C. Trussler
Capstone Ventures Inc.
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Chisholm Thomson Family Foundation
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Dr. Jan Oudenes and Dr. Isobel Ralston
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Susanne Collins
Suzanne Ivey Cook
Sylvia and Ross Earl
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Wildlife Habitat Canada - Land Trust
Conservation Fund

Guardian — \$2,000+

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Conservator \$1,000+

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Rosemary Morton
Stephen & Mary Anne Leeder
Stephen Macphail
Stephens Bay Association
Suellen Wiles
Theresa Pupulin
The Weppler Family Foundation
Waisberg/Bellwood Charitable Fund at
Toronto Foundation
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Protector \$500+

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Ted Jr. & Andrea Witzel
Victor D'souza
Victoria Steele
Vreni Gurd
Wendy Hill

MAJOR SUPPORTERS

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Peter & Catherine Clark
Family Foundation



UNIQUE
Muskoka

RIPPLE 2025 SPONSORS



TRIBUTE TO JAN McDONNELL

Beyond protecting land, Muskoka Conservancy's best-known and most enduring activity is its annual **Native Plant Sale**, started in the early aughts and spearheaded all these years by uber-volunteer **Jan McDonnell**.

This year Jan has decided that it is time to step back. **Jan, we can't thank you enough for all you have done for Muskoka Conservancy.** We are hopeful that the Native Plant Sale will continue. Big shoes to fill, though.



STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH

Muskoka Conservancy hosted 13 **Nature Quest** guided hikes last year, welcoming dozens of community members to our Nature Reserves to learn more about the natural world around them. They covered topics like tree identification, benthic invertebrate explorations and forest bathing. We were thrilled to have several guest hike leaders over the last year, including Whata Mohawk First Nation Elder **Christopher Stock** and **Laurie Lamont** from Wandering Muskoka.



Laurie Lamont
Wandering Muskoka

VOLUNTEERS ARE THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO

The work we do at Muskoka Conservancy would not be possible without the support of our dedicated volunteers.

Over the 2025 field season, members from the Invasive Species Squad, Trail Team, and Technical Advisory Group put in over **515 hours of work across 28 days**. They supported the removal of invasive Phragmites, the maintenance of existing trails, and the assessments and inventories of numerous protected areas and potential acquisitions, and much more. This is just three of our **nine available volunteer opportunities**. Interested in becoming a Muskoka Conservancy volunteer? Get details about joining us for the 2027 season at www.muskokaconservancy.org.



TURTLES IN MUSKOKA

Muskoka is home to six of Ontario's eight turtle species, all of which are listed as at risk due to threats like habitat loss and fragmentation, road mortality, and nest predation. The good news is, there are many amazing organizations working to protect Ontario's turtles and their habitats – including Muskoka Conservancy.

These slow-moving creatures are important members of our ecosystems; living in the bottoms of rivers, ponds, wetlands, and lakes, they keep our waterways clean by feeding on decomposing plant and animal matter. Muskoka Conservancy is proud to protect over 85,000 feet of sensitive riparian and shoreline habitats and over 1,100 acres of wetland habitats in perpetuity, conserving sensitive habitats for Muskoka's turtles.

***NEW* TURTLE NEST BOX LOAN PROGRAM**

This summer we are introducing a new Turtle Nest Box Loan program. We have 12 turtle nest covers available, created in partnership with the **District of Muskoka's Senior Programs** and **Muskoka Community Builders (shoutout to both!)**. If you find a turtle nesting on or near your property, sign out a nest cover – free of charge – so you can do your part to protect turtles in your neighbourhood. When the young hatchlings emerge, please return the cover so it can be reused next year. Visit our website or call the office at 705-645-7393 for details.

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

Al Sinclair
Alan Scott (Oviinbyrd)
Alice Overbeek
Alisa Drouillard
Allie Mason
Allison Dawes
Allyn Abbott
Alyson Karson
Alyssa Cirtwill
Amanda Charland
Amanda Vincent
Andrea Alldred
Andrew Farncomb
Andrew Scott
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Kirsten Otis
Kristin Legge

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Maggie Dechert
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Paula Jackson
Peter Clark

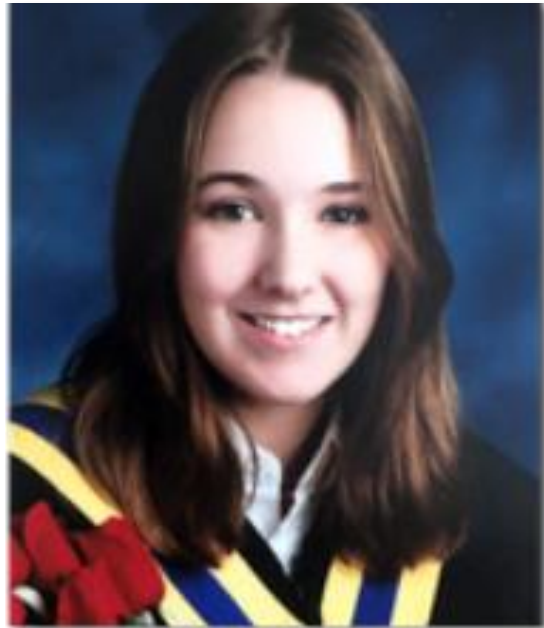
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Sheryl Manolakos
Steph Rickard Chadda
Stephanie Cloutier
Stephanie Horsfield
Stuart Paul
Sue Sedgwick
Susan Shaw
Susannah Benattar
Tammy Edgerton
Tatum Hodge
Taylor Ross
Tia Pearse
Tia vom Scheidt
Tianna Burke
Tiffany Monk
Tom Clark
Tom Forbes
Tom Newman
Tom Schepp
William H Powlesland
Willow Robinson

Jessie Francavilla

MUSKOKA CONSERVANCY BURSARY 2026

The Muskoka Conservancy Bursary (formerly Charlie Esson Bursary) is a \$2,000 award presented annually to a local student pursuing post-secondary education in the natural sciences or environmental sector.

Previous recipients



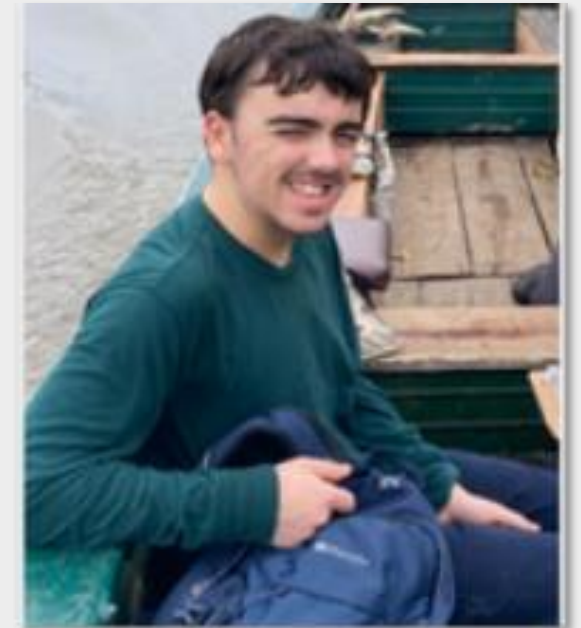
Dale Graham



Jaylene Stewart



Ayden Veitch



Cameron Smith



Kaylyn Moore



Will Lockhart



Zachary Caplan



2026 RECIPIENT — JONAH GONTHIER



Kirsten Lind



Jessie Francavilla



Henry Gage



Laurel Turansky

MICHAEL FOSTER PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST 2026



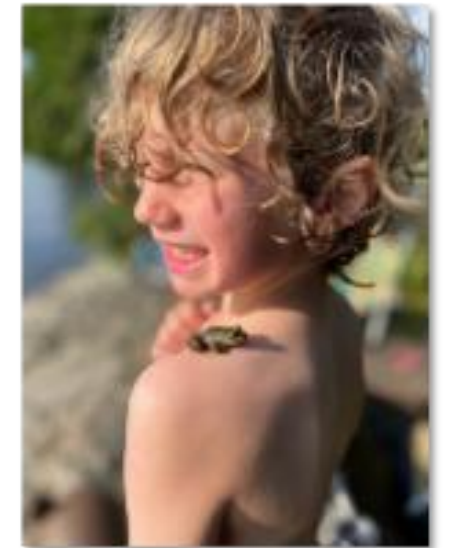
Len Stemmler



Kathleen May



Michael Foster Photography Award Recipient — Henry Gage



Jessie Francavilla

WINNER AND HONOURABLE MENTIONS



Kayley Amo



Tom Dibblee



Kayley Amo



Kayley Amo