



# ANNUAL REPORT

## FY 2022-2023



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# OUR VISION

To promote and improve long-lasting and environmentally-friendly practices that protect natural resources such as soil, water, and air.

# OUR MISSION

To meet our vision through outreach, education, help with environmental questions, and financial assistance. We work with a variety of people and groups including farmers, landowners, cities, towns, schools, and others in the community.

The ERICD is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, consisting of five voting directors and several associate directors. These local individuals provide administrative guidance and focus on the actions of the Eastern District, which include the Newport and Bristol Counties.



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Beverly Migliore, Chair, Barrington

Nancy Parker Wilson, Portsmouth

Brenda Mottram, Tiverton

Jessica Cullinan, Tiverton

Robert Carr, Tiverton

Sue Collins, Associate Director

Jen Contreras, Associate Director

# STAFF

Sara Churgin - District Manager

Ryan Brancato - Portsmouth AgInnovation Farm & Stormwater Outreach

Sarah Wilkinson, Julia Vieira - Outreach & Agricultural Technicians

# PORTSMOUTH AGINNOVATION FARM

## PORTSMOUTH, RI



Over the past three years, the Portsmouth AgInnovation Farm has taken root and grown into a vibrant sustainable agriculture program that reaches beyond the students of Portsmouth Schools. The farm is truly a community asset, with new partnerships and programs sprouting up constantly. This year, The University of Rhode Island has been conducting a regional bee study in Rhode Island and The Portsmouth AgInnovation Farm is one of the chosen study sites. The purpose of the study is to monitor wild native bees in Farm Bill conservation plantings in Rhode Island and Connecticut to evaluate the efficacy of existing practices and provide suggestions to improve the program. Casey Johnson is leading the project, with the help of URI students Emma Tondre, Ren Johnson, Kate Perzanowski, Kate Zmich, and Julia Vieira under the direction of University of Rhode Island Professor Steve Alm - they have been studying the bees in the pollinator patch at the farm. The pollinator patch is open to the public and there is a path with educational signage.

We were excited to welcome Middletown students for the first time this year, in addition to the ongoing programming we offer with Portsmouth Schools.

Middletown student, Tyler Hicks, was named a Feinstejn Junior Scholar and generously donated his \$500 'Golden Ticket' winnings to the farm – proving that the kids have cultivated not only the crops in the ground, but also a passion for sustainable agriculture.

Our community farm plots were popular again this year as we welcomed community members to join us and grow their own produce at the farm. Our dedicated team of educators, administrators, funders, and volunteers have grown this program beyond our wildest dreams and we are so thankful to everyone who has made an impact.

Future plans for the farm include a microclover pilot program, connectivity to RI Energy (AgInnovation has operated without electricity for 3 years), and installation of agrivoltaics. Agrivoltaics pairs solar with agriculture, creating energy and providing space for crops, grazing, and native habitats under and between panels. This will also enable the farm to provide electricity to its classroom and seasonal high tunnel.

### SUMMER BY THE NUMBERS

**170 lbs. SUMMER SQUASH**

**71 lbs. CUCUMBERS**

**40 lbs. CHERRY TOMATOES**

**20 lbs. BEETS**

**20 lbs. GREEN BEANS**

**125 lbs. CHICKEN EGGS**

**120 LOCAL YOUTH SERVED!**





# SCENES FROM THE FARM





# EARTH MONTH ACTIVITIES

## BRISTOL & NEWPORT COUNTIES

ERICD once again expanded Earth Day to Earth Month in April 2023. At the third annual Seedling Sale, we distributed over 1,600 seedlings to local residents. These seedlings will grow into resilient allies for Narragansett Bay - absorbing excess stormwater, creating habitat for wildlife, and controlling erosion. Thank you to our volunteers who helped to prep the seedlings, Horus from Hawk & Handsaw Farm for his expertise, to Greenvale Vineyards for hosting us, and in-kind donations from BioBag, Stop & Shop, and Greenhouse Megastore.

We partnered with Rhode Races to pick up trash ('plog') after the Newport marathon, ensuring that the course was free of trash & debris. Plogging is a combination of jogging while picking up trash. Our volunteers picked up 115 pounds of trash! Thank you to Rhode Races, Keep Nature Wild, Revolution Wind, and the Low Impact Alliance.

Also in Newport, we partnered with Newport Run and Chug to pick up trash with their weekly running group. Across the Sakonnet River in Tiverton, we hosted "Plog Tiverton," where we picked up 128 pounds of trash around Fogland Beach area. Thank you to our ploggers, Tiverton Litter Committee, and Farmcoast Run Club.

Comedian Ashley Gutermuth returned for our "Comedy for Conservation" show. Ashley brought all laughs, no litter to Greenvale Vineyards. She is an avid plogger and ERICD supporter! Thank you to Ashley for joining us, to Helly Hansen Newport for sponsoring, and Greenvale Vineyards for hosting.

Our rain barrel events are always very popular, and this year was no exception. We sold and distributed 75 rain barrels during Earth Month in Middletown, Bristol and Barrington. This year we restructured the program – volunteers prepped the barrels for a pickup event in lieu of a more interactive workshop. These barrels are collecting combined thousands of water each year that would otherwise wash harmful pollutants into the watershed.



# STORMWATER MITIGATION IN NEWPORT'S NORTH END

## NEWPORT, RI

A new green infrastructure installation is collecting polluted stormwater and protecting the Narragansett Bay watershed. The installation at Pell Elementary School in Newport slows down stormwater, allowing it to more naturally absorb into the ground instead of sweeping pollutants into the watershed.

The location of the installation was a community decision led by the Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District (ERICD). Sara Churgin, ERICD District Manager, said, "We are so excited about this project because the location of the installation was decided through community engagement sessions within Newport's North End neighborhood. After hosting stormwater education sessions and engaging the community, they decided that this location at Pell Elementary would be the best spot for this installment."

Water enters the system in two areas. The first opening is a soft opening designed for light rainstorms. It is lined with plants, which absorb the stormwater. The second opening catches water at high velocity rates from the above paved areas. This opening is lined with riprap

stone to slow the water entering the system. Once the water enters the system, it is first stored in a fore bay and then overflows into a second bay. Both bays were dug out four feet and filled with stone and engineered soil. The second bay was then planted to help suck up water using the plants.

Combined, the bays treat 11,700 gallons of water per one-quarter inch rain event. Once the system is filled up (11,700 gallons) the water is still treated by slowing it down enough using riprap. Prior to this system being installed, the water would run quickly over the drains, causing flooding and allowing polluted water to enter our watersheds.

Partners for the project include ERICD, Rhode Island Department of Transportation, the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank, the City of Newport, the Women's Resource Center, the Newport Health Equity Zone and North End residents, with funding provided by The Funders Network, van Beuren Charitable Foundation, Prince Charitable Trusts and the Rhode Island Foundation. Installation was done by Groundwork Rhode Island.



# USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)

## NEWPORT & BRISTOL COUNTIES



Natural Resources Conservation Service

Through our partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), we provide financial and technical assistance to farmers and landowners to address natural resource concerns through an array of conservation practices and outreach efforts.

In Fiscal Year 2023 (October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023) NRCS obligated a grand total of \$2,026,562.96 in new conservation contracts. In Bristol County it obligated \$184,565.32 in new programs and in Newport County a total of \$1,841,997.64 was spent on new contracts including \$1,000,000 in easement programs. In addition to new contract obligations, NRCS has also certified the completion of \$348,929.24 worth of conservation practices.

NRCS Programs:

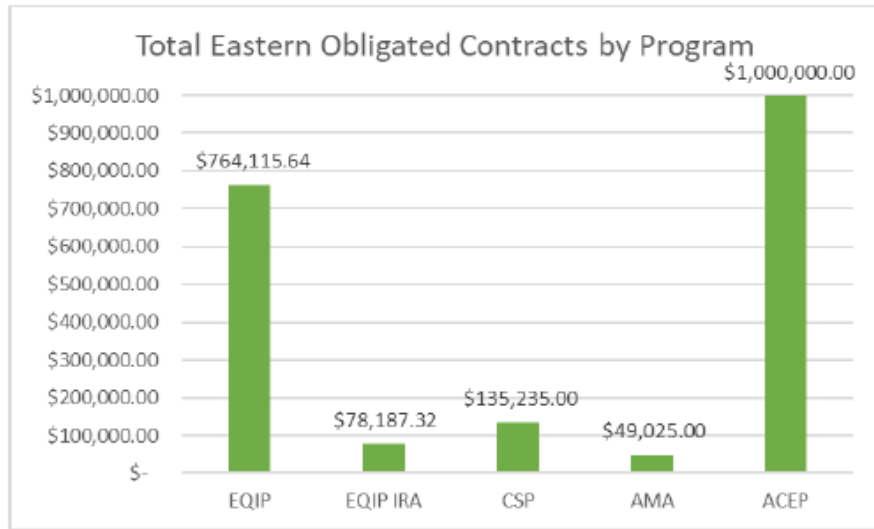
- **EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program)** - NRCS' flagship conservation program that helps farmers, ranchers and forest landowners integrate conservation into working lands.
- **EQIP IRA (Environmental Quality Incentives Program)** – Helps farmers, ranchers, forestland owners, and Tribes with the application of conservation measures that focus on carbon sequestration, greenhouse gas emissions, reduced energy, and soil health.
- **CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program)** – Helps landowners build on existing conservation efforts while strengthening operations.
- **AMA (Agricultural Management Assistance)** – Helps agricultural producers manage financial risk through diversification, marketing, or natural resource conservation practices.
- **ACEP (Agricultural Conservation Easement Program)** – Helps landowners, land trusts, and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands or protect working farms and ranches through conservation easements.



# NRCS FINANCIAL SUMMARIES

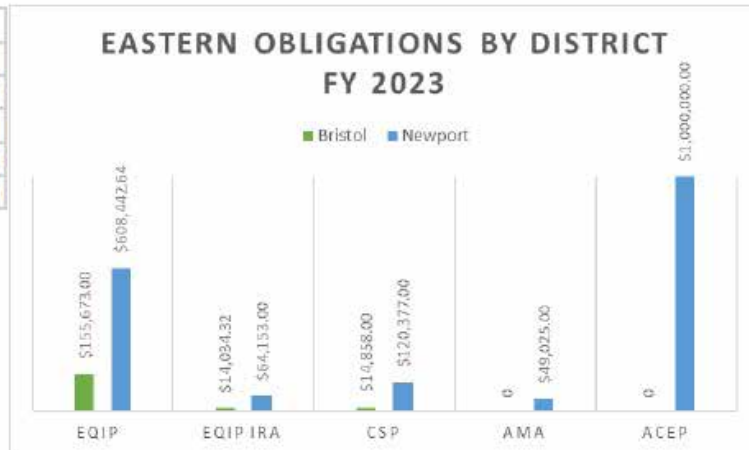
Obligations of new contracts overall summary by Program:

EQIP	\$ 764,115.64
EQIP IRA	\$ 78,187.32
CSP	\$ 135,235.00
AMA	\$ 49,025.00
ACEP	\$ 1,000,000.00



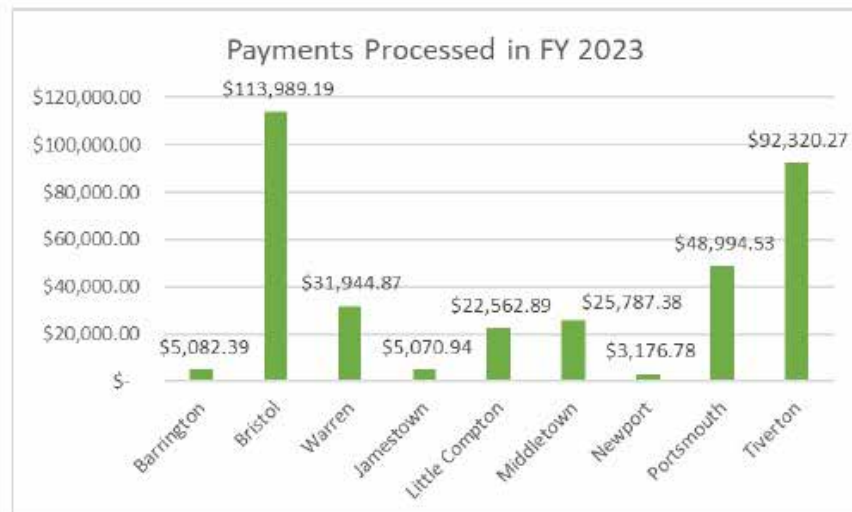
Obligations of new contracts by Program per district:

	Bristol	Newport
EQIP	\$ 155,673.00	\$ 608,442.64
EQIP IRA	\$ 14,034.32	\$ 64,153.00
CSP	\$ 14,858.00	\$ 120,377.00
AMA	0	\$ 49,025.00
ACEP	0	\$ 1,000,000.00



Payments Processed by Town:

Barrington	\$ 5,082.39
Bristol	\$113,989.19
Warren	\$ 31,944.87
Jamestown	\$ 5,070.94
Little Compton	\$ 22,562.89
Middletown	\$ 25,787.38
Newport	\$ 3,176.78
Portsmouth	\$ 48,994.53
Tiverton	\$ 92,320.27



## NRCS OUTREACH

We engage in a wide range of outreach opportunities throughout the year to raise awareness about the importance of conservation to the community. Through this outreach we build relationships with landowners with the goal of engaging them in conservation practices through NRCS. To reach the community and farmers we attend farmers markets, provide farm tours of current farms, and use social media.

## “SOIL YOUR UNDIES” CHALLENGE

ERICD & Portsmouth AgInnovation Farm have completed the “Soil” Your Undies Challenge! Undies, what!?! This challenge is designed to test the microbial activity in soil. How it works - you bury a pair of new 100% cotton underwear in your yard, crop, pasture, or forestland and leave it for 60 days. Dig it up after 60 days and the more the underwear is deteriorated - the

healthier your soil! Here you can see the remnants of the underwear that were buried at the Portsmouth AgInnovation Farm – just the elastic bands are left which means the microbes in the soil broke down all the cotton. This is a testament to the health of the soil and the healthy ecosystem of worms and microbes that live in the soil. Soil isn't just dirt, it's alive!





# RHODE ISLAND STATE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE (RISCC)

ERICD is a member of the Rhode Island Conservation Committee (RISCC) – an organization comprised of Rhode Island’s three conservation districts. The Committee works with state and federal agencies to promote the districts’ missions on both the state and national level, while still providing administrative and program support.

For the third year, ERICD engaged the community through the People’s Garden Program – this project is funded by an agreement between RISCC and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA NRCS). Each year, ERICD seeks three organizations in urban, suburban, or rural areas to install community gardens or high tunnels and maintain them for a minimum of 18 months (gardens) or 36 months (high tunnels). Funding around \$8,000 is available to fund each proposed project; funding can be spent on items such as tools, soil, seed, fertilizer, soil additives, irrigation materials, garden materials, lumber, high tunnels, pollinator plants, etc. Although funding cannot be used to maintain existing gardens, it may be used to create new garden beds at a site where other gardens already exist.

We were excited to fund three new community gardens this year with partner organizations.





# LEGISLATIVE MEET & GREET WITH RHODE ISLAND STATE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE (RISCC)

In September 2023, ERICD and its counterparts Northern and Southern Conservation Districts hosted Rhode Island State Legislators to meet conservation district staff and board members and learn about conservation programming. The event was hosted at Greenvale Vineyards in Portsmouth.



# NEWS CLIPPINGS

**WUN**  
WHAT'S UP NEWS

Home ▾ City & Government ▾ Columns ▾ Food & Drink ▾ Opinions ▾ People & Profiles ▾ Real Estate ▾ Sports ▾ Things To Do ▾ What's Clipping ▾

**The signed First Editions Club**

## Senator Reed visits Norman Bird Sanctuary, plants a Cherry Tree

*U.S. Senator Jack Reed today visited Norman Bird Sanctuary to celebrate the important work being done to engage Rhode Island around preserving, protecting, and enjoying nature, and to applaud a recent grant award from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) People's Garden Initiative.*

By Ryan Belmont  
May 3, 2023

**CKO**  
Quinn Studios

**Obituary: Ros Frances Carr**  
October 15, 1939 - Sep 28, 2023

**Preservation: Host 18th Arts Festival at Mt House on Sep**  
Artists will include at Chester (see opening performance by the all-Pe and just about 100 musicians and party right next to the main building. Don't miss it!

**Obituary: Paul Gellman**  
June 14, 1932 - Sept 28, 2023

**Obituary: Ann Garnett Boen**

## How agricultural education programs are reshaping kids' learning

Student gardens across Rhode Island teach youth the importance of local food and sustainability at a time when local farms are disappearing

By Annie Sherman Globe Correspondent, Updated September 1, 2023, 6:00 a.m.



Students from the Raymond C. LaPerche Elementary School in Smithfield, R.I., work in the garden. JULIE DORSEY

A cloudy afternoon at Portsmouth's AgInnovation Farm finds 75 middle school students harvesting vegetables, collecting eggs, and fixing fencing around the garden beds. These youth are involved in every aspect of the farm — they even drew the garden irrigation system, and com

JULIE

## Tyler Hicks, Feinstein Jr. Scholar & Gaudet Middle School Student, Donates Golden Ticket Winnings To Portsmouth Aginnovation Farm

Middletown, RI — Gaudet Middle School student, Tyler Hicks, was recently recognized as a Feinstein Jr. Scholar by the Feinstein Foundation. As part of his Golden Ticket package, Tyler had the opportunity to win a \$500 grant to an organization of his choice. He generously chose the Portsmouth Aginnovation Farm.

The Portsmouth Aginnovation Farm is a student-driven community farm education program where students problem solve during authentic learning and community collaboration, so they become productive citizens in our community. Tyler didn't hesitate when he said he wanted to donate the funding to Aginnovation based upon his experience this Spring at the farm during the Middletown afterschool program, led by Ryan Brancato and assisted by 180 fellow Western Falmouth. This was the first time Middletown has joined the afterschool program at Aginnovation.

Tyler presented the grant award to the farm on June 28, 2023. Ryan Brancato received the gift on behalf of the farm, saying "Thank you so much to Tyler for his leadership. We loved having him in our after-school program this Spring. This gift will be used to support programming on the farm, but it will also inspire other students to work hard so they might one day receive their own Golden Ticket." When asked what his favorite thing to do on the farm was, Tyler said, "planting the sunflowers." Tyler also has an uncanny ability to spot a 4-leaf clover at the farm within minutes of his arrival. In addition to the grant gifted to the farm, Gaudet Middle School received a \$5,000 grant from the Feinstein Foundation.



**EastBayRI** | **EastBay**  
HOME OUR TOWNS NEWS EAST BAY LIFE OBITS OPINION CLASSIFIEDS HOMES SEARCH

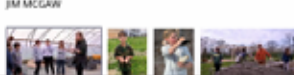
## Portsmouth: AgInnovation Farm grows by leaps and bounds

75 students now getting their hands dirty as they learn about food production, problem-solving

View fullscreen



Margie Brennan, the school district's K-8 science coach, meets with students inside the high tunnel at the AgInnovation Farm and goes over their tasks for that afternoon.



**April Lawre**  
RI Broker  
CBR, GRI, SRES

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## Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District seeks to fund new community garden projects

Funding is available through ERICD and the People's Garden Program to install and maintain community gardens and high tunnels in Newport or Bristol Counties.

By Ryan Belmont  
January 15, 2023



Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District seeks three organizations in urban, suburban, or rural areas to install community gardens or high tunnels and maintain them for a minimum of 48 months (gardens) or 36 months (high tunnels).

Apple Podcasts Preview

**ENVIRONMENTALLY SPEAKING**  
with Maria Desautel and Clance Parsons

**Ep: 045 - Making Agricultural Fun For The Youth**  
ENVIRONMENTALLY SPEAKING  
Management

[Listen on Apple Podcasts](#)

This week we are talking with some special guests, Sarah and Monica and we are going to discuss the Portsmouth AgInnovation. The Portsmouth AgInnovation has put together a student driven farm project. The program has been a huge success and together and

May 9

## Exploration Zone at The Ocean Race Newport Stoper

The race around the world in the sport of sailing's toughest contest visits the City-by-the-Sea for nine days of celebration, public activities, and fun for the entire family at the Ocean Live Park in Fort Adams State Park.

We are excited to be part of the event! We will be hosting a table at the Exploration Zone at Fort Adams State Park from May 13-21. Saturdays and Sundays are open to the public. [Click here for the full calendar of events.](#)

The Exploration Zone—presented by BankNewport, is uniquely created to inspire and inform all ages on the sport of sailing and the many facets of sustaining a clean ocean. The exhibit will showcase local nonprofits and mission-oriented organizations. We will be there together with our partners — the Northern & Southern Conservation Districts and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Join us Saturdays and Sundays the next two weeks to learn about soil health in our community!

[Learn more](#)

**THE EXPLORATION ZONE**  
MAY 13-21  
LEARN ABOUT SOIL HEALTH!

## JOIN US AT FORT ADAMS FOR THE VOLVO OCEAN RACE NEWPORT STOPOVER!

BankNewport Rhode Island Conservation District

Dec 5

## BankNewport Grows Opportunity for STEAM Learning at Portsmouth AgInnovation Farm

Portsmouth, RI – BankNewport has provided funding to support a sun shade at the Portsmouth AgInnovation Farm and Portsmouth School District funding for the sun shade for the school about a plants, p

Dec 7

## Thank you to Gruben Charitable Foundation for Supporting Environmental Awareness

Newport, RI – The Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District (ERICD) is excited to announce a \$15,000 grant for general operating support from the Gruben Charitable Foundation. This grant will support ongoing efforts for ERICD's mission to "promote and improve long-lasting and environmentally-friendly practices that protect natural resources such as soil, water, and air."

Among other projects, this grant will support ERICD's Earth Month programming. For the past few years, ERICD has grown its efforts around Earth Day into an entire month of programming each April. Planning for Earth Month 2023 is already in the works, with plans for a third annual seedling sale, rain barrel workshops, plogging (jogging while picking up trash), among other events.

January 12, 2023 • Staff

## Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District holds Plogging event with World CleanUp Day

The Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District was a bustling hub of activity on World CleanUp Day. The air was crisp and clear, and a sense of excitement and determination permeated the global cleanup.

In celebration of World CleanUp Day (ERICD) recently partnered with Newport Run and Chug from Newport streets. This wind project powered by energy and economic development.

Plogging, the word for jogging began in Sweden in 2016. Chug worked together for

## 80 Pounds of Trash Picked Up in Newport with Newport Run and Chug!

Newport, RI – In celebration of World Clean Up Day, Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District (ERICD) recently partnered with Newport Run and Chug to remove 80 pounds of trash from Newport streets. The evening was sponsored by Revolution Wind, an offshore wind project powered by Orsted and Eversource, that will bring clean, renewable energy and economic development to Rhode Island and Connecticut.



**EASTERN RHODE ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

**Statements of Financial Position**

**June 30, 2023 and 2022**

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>Current Assets:</b>		
Cash	\$ 401,104	\$ 271,333
Grants Receivable	80,285	80,551
Property, Plant & Equipment, net	44,431	51,383
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<u>525,820</u>	<u>403,267</u>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<u>\$ 525,820</u>	<u>\$ 403,267</u>
 <b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
<b>Current Liabilities:</b>		
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	\$ 12,302	\$ 6,970
Deferred Grant Revenue	<u>162,241</u>	<u>127,970</u>
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<u>174,543</u>	<u>134,940</u>
 <b>Net Assets:</b>		
Without Donor Restrictions	<u>351,277</u>	<u>268,327</u>
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<u>351,277</u>	<u>268,327</u>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<u>\$ 525,820</u>	<u>\$ 403,267</u>

**EASTERN RHODE ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
**Statements of Activities and Changes in Net Assets**  
**Years Ended June 30, 2023 and 2022**

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
<b>Changes in Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions:</b>		
<b>Revenue and Support:</b>		
Governmental Grants	\$ 341,148	\$ 258,390
Private Grants and Contributions	165,955	119,115
Other Fees for Services	800	1,500
Other Income	<u>2,315</u>	<u>13</u>
<b>Total Revenue and Support Without Donor Restrictions         and Net Assets Released from Restrictions</b>	<u>510,218</u>	<u>379,018</u>
<b>Expenses:</b>		
<b>Program Expenses:</b>		
Conservation Program Expenses	365,929	204,094
<b>Total Program Expenses</b>	<u>365,929</u>	<u>204,094</u>
<b>Supporting Service Expenses:</b>		
Management and General	52,522	55,571
Fundraising Expenses	8,817	8,289
<b>Total Supporting Service Expenses</b>	<u>61,339</u>	<u>63,860</u>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<u>427,268</u>	<u>267,954</u>
<b>Increase in Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions</b>	82,950	111,064
<b>Net Assets, Beginning</b>	<u>268,327</u>	<u>157,263</u>
<b>Net Assets, Ending</b>	<u>\$ 351,277</u>	<u>\$ 268,327</u>