

Sacred Earth Foundation

Guiding Framework for Emergent Strategies

~or~

Strategic Plan
2024-2029



Mission

To actively love the upper Rock Creek watershed and share in transformative learning, stewardship, and growth with people at every stage of life.

Vision

A world in which the best of our human nature is activated to take radical care of this planet we share, each other, and ourselves.

Throughlines

The common threads that run through all of the work of SEF; land trust, summer camp, cemetery, school field trips, adult retreats, workparties, forestry, animal care, staffing, volunteering, board, extended community ~ ALL of it.

- ❖ **Belonging.** In all we do, at every age and stage, we foster a participatory sense of belonging – belonging to self, to community, to place, to this world.
- ❖ **Multigenerational & Multidimensional.** We engage deeply throughout the lifespan and beyond, in physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual ways, to witness and nourish the best of our humanity.
- ❖ **Intimate Stewardship.** We care for this land and the work, play, and learning that take place on it with close attention, deep listening, reverence for the sacred, and a hearty, humble, joyful work ethic.
- ❖ **Emergence.** We watch and listen for changing needs and opportunities, and use proactive situational awareness to allow the work to evolve and respond.
- ❖ **Reciprocal Generosity.** As the land does for us, we practice generous care for land, animals, and people, and invite non-transactional reciprocity to foster a flow of abundance.
- ❖ **Ripple.** We seek to make an impact in the world beyond the borders of Ekone Ranch, activating and nurturing a desire and ability to build a world that centers belonging and stewardship.
- ❖ **Hope.** We believe hope is an action and a radical stance in this time on earth, and we choose to keep working to build the world we want to live in.

Together, this is our north star; the direction that we orient towards, knowing that we never fully reach it, but we keep walking together

Context for 2024 Plan

The [2018-2023 Strategic Plan](#) guided Sacred Earth Foundation through the monumental Saddle Up! capital campaign; a wildly successful \$2 million investment in the physical infrastructure of Ekone Ranch. Simultaneously, we continued and expanded on our care for the upper Rock Creek watershed, and in all the ways we share this land with children, adults, and families. We also navigated a pandemic, staffing transitions, and the challenges of organizational growth.

We emerge from this period of building and growth as a maturing, resilient organization, ever more clear about our shared purpose and the relevance of SEF's work at this time on earth.

Our board and staff spent the winter of 2023/2024 zooming out and looking ahead, identifying priorities and putting words to the work that continues to emerge from this land. We are following the lead of the land, responding to the social and environmental needs of our time, and holding fast to our nimble, scrappy, opportunistic, hardworking, humble organizational culture to make transformative impacts on this watershed we steward and the people we share it with.

Our concept of strategic planning

There are a lot of “right” ways to do strategic planning. Here are some of the concepts (and limits) we developed in this round.

- This is more of a guiding framework than a “plan”; like the north star, it is a direction we’re headed, not a destination we expect to reach. It’s not a checklist.
- It’s a living document, used regularly by board, staff, youth council, and elders council to orient us in our work and foster shared understanding.
- This document is mostly internal; though it is publicly available, we honestly don’t expect many people to read the whole thing.
- This document does not include detailed, measurable goals, year-by-year plans, detailed financial projections, specific staffing plans, etc. We’ll use this document to set annual workplans; *that* is where SMART goals are created, based in the realities of the moment. We’ll share annual workplan priorities and accomplishments with the wider community.

Overarching Priorities

Sacred Earth Foundation is a complex organization, weaving many interrelated threads. We have three distinct program areas; land trust, camps & programs, and cemetery. Woven into these service areas are our DEI initiatives, our collaboration with horses and animals, and the facilities that hold the work. And then internally, our governance, staffing, financial, and fundraising systems are equally vital focus areas. Each of these threads requires deep thought and planning, which we share in the Thread by Thread section below, with identified goals and strategies for each.

Through this process, five overarching priorities emerged. We intend to focus organizational efforts and resources in these areas in the coming five years.

1. Increase equitable access to Ekone land and programs, with an emphasis on restoring access to this land for the Native people of this place.

Initiatives

- Continue to build the [Camp Scholarship Fund](#) to expand access to summer camp and the Community Support Fund to expand access to the cemetery
- Proactive outreach to schools, organizations, and communities that support diverse and marginalized populations, to build meaningful relationships leading to the co-creation of culturally appropriate programming at accessible pricing
- Increase the physical accessibility of Ekone Ranch and White Eagle infrastructure
- Continue to build authentic relationships in the Native community, through attendance of community events and hosting of the Gatherers program
- Deepen our practice of [Land Acknowledgement](#) and actively foster cultural humility of SEF staff and board

2. Expand stewardship efforts, with habitat outcomes including fire and climate resilience, understory restoration, oak release, diversification, pine beetle mitigation, and invasive species management.

Initiatives

- Reintroduce healthy fire to the landscape, along with an expanded and evolving program of manual thinning and restoration
- Increase participation in the local and regional conservation community for learning and collaboration
- Increase our knowledge of the animals, birds, and plants that depend on this land and are affected by our stewardship
- Create a comprehensive land management plan to thoughtfully guide future stewardship efforts

3. Facilitate more connections, deeper relationships, and fun between animals and humans that are safe and positive for all involved.

Initiatives

- Develop curriculum & teaching methods that simultaneously support well-being for horses and fun & connection for people
- Improve the physical spaces for riding, training, teaching, and practicing with more variety, interest, creativity, games, and good safe footing
- Expand the presence of Ekone's chickens, pigs, ducks, and any other livestock in programs

4. Articulate Ekone's programmatic pedagogy with more clarity, and infuse it into all programs.

Initiatives

- Clarify, formalize, and write curricula and supporting materials for program areas, including summer camp, school field trips, adult programs, cemetery, forestry, horsekeeping & horsemanship, garden, kitchen, workparties, and all, to foster internal and external clarity about Why and How we do this work

5. Recruit, support, and retain amazing staff.

Initiatives

- Increase compensation from the current fraction of market-based wages to fully competitive rates, based on market research and independent review
- Develop equitable and competitive health and retirement benefits for SEF staff

- Create a sabbatical policy for the restoration and sustainability of long-term staff, and to foster organizational resilience
- Build towards adequate staffing levels to ensure the work is well-supported and to prevent overwhelm and burnout

Thread by Thread

While the five Overarching Priorities above will receive the most focus from board and staff, every part of the organization has identified additional goals and strategies for the coming years, as well as million-dollar wishlists to inspire big dreams!

Land Trust

Shared vision of success: SEF is an increasingly effective protector and steward of the most populated stretch of Rock Creek watershed, taking action on opportunities to protect land and providing excellent, innovative, and intimate stewardship of all of the land in our care.

Goals

1. Habitat outcomes include fire resilience, understory restoration, oak release, diversification, pine beetle mitigation, and invasive species management (*Elevated to an Overarching Priority*)
2. Foster relationships with other entities that care about Rock Creek
3. Develop capacity to take action when opportunities arise to protect priority properties
4. Become a stronger Land Trust with institutional capacity to better serve the land

Strategies

- Reintroduce healthy fire to the landscape, along with an expanded and evolving program of manual thinning and restoration
- Participate in the local and regional conservation community for learning and collaboration
- Create a comprehensive Stewardship Plan for all of SEF land
- Grow our pool of Conservation donors
- Develop “bridge buying” relationships
- Foster “friendly neighbor” relationships

→ Make progress toward Land Trust Alliance accreditation

Million-Dollar Dreams

- ★ Permanent protection for more of the Ekone Creek and Rock Creek watershed
- ★ New staff position of Stewardship Manager
- ★ Hire seasonal forestry crew
- ★ Mini-excavator and brush mulcher

Camps & Programs

Shared Vision of Success: Ekone's programs offer varied opportunities and multiple access points to meaningful and transformative experiences of belonging, participatory service, and connection to place.

Goals

1. Increase programmatic sustainability
2. Increase equitable access to Ekone's programs.
3. Articulate programmatic pedagogy and infuse it into all programs (*Elevated to an Overarching Priority*)

Strategies

- Recruit, support, and retain amazing program staff and volunteers
- Increase attraction and retention of program participants
- Build and develop relationships with diverse groups and partner organizations
- Increase robust scholarship program along rubric for goals of increasing equity
- Build partnerships with public schools for state-funded outdoor school programs
- Provide intergenerational connection points for program participants
- Clarify, formalize, and write curricula and materials for program areas

Million-Dollar Dreams

- ★ Significantly improved swimming pond
- ★ New staff positions: Volunteer Coordinator, Garden Manager
- ★ Transportation for field trips (van/bus)
- ★ Updated zip line, professionally installed

Cemetery

Shared vision of success: Natural burial is a meaningful ecological option for all people, and White Eagle beautifully meets the needs of people who choose to be buried here. We are not trying to be everything for everybody, but we are able to help a wide audience to feel welcome and supported during their experience, and to bridge a connection to SEF more generally.

Goals

1. Increase safe accessibility for all cemetery guests, physically and infrastructurally
2. A wider and more diverse clientele feel welcomed and supported during their experience
3. Continue to provide meaningful and inclusive well-supported burial experiences
4. Build more bridges between cemetery guests/clients and the rest of the organization
5. Remain involved on a national level in conservation burial and community-led deathcare education

Strategies

- Develop infrastructure (walking paths, back roads) to support safe access to more remote areas in the cemetery
- Increase communication around managing expectations of the experience
- Marketing, outreach, and thoughtful relationship building efforts towards a more diverse clientele
- Communications and staffing fluidity between the cemetery and all other parts of the organization
- Continue Washington Funeral website work, leadership within the Conservation Burial Alliance, and outreach and education efforts as opportunities present

Million-Dollar Dreams

- ★ New staff position: Cemetery Assistant/Groundskeeper
- ★ Improved infrastructure in the parking area (Gazebo? Charming portapotties?)
- ★ Film made about the work
- ★ Ritual space - labyrinth?
- ★ Conveyance for guests - all terrain electric vehicle
- ★ Another natural play element somewhere in the cemetery... a swing?!

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Justice

Shared Vision of Success: SEF prioritizes ongoing learning, humility, and responsibility, fostering a sense of belonging for all, while actively promoting DEIJ initiatives and strengthening ties with indigenous communities. We're committed to enhancing accessibility and inclusivity for diverse individuals, ensuring they feel valued and welcomed.

Goals

1. Increase equitable access to Ekone land and programs (*Elevated to an Overarching Priority*)
2. Continue to develop authentic relationships with The Confederated Tribes & Bands of the Yakama Nation and other PNW Native communities
3. Utilize Ekone's programs and platform to build awareness and allyship with vulnerable and marginalized communities in our region

Strategies

- Use Scholarship Fund and Community Support Fund to expand access
- Outreach to existing organizations that support diverse populations
- Continue to develop infrastructure and access for physically disabled guests (valley and cemetery)
- Prioritize attendance at Native events and initiatives
- Continue hosting annual Native gatherer's program
- Partner with other programs to share expertise, resources, and programmatic initiatives
- Hire diverse educators, trainers, storytellers for staff and board, and for programs
- Foster cultural humility of SEF staff and board
- Continue to refine and practice [Land Acknowledgement](#)

Million-Dollar Dreams

- ★ Adequate staff time and support for the relationship-building required to support this work
- ★ Compensation levels that adequately support diverse hiring practices
- ★ Collaborative content creation with partner groups/orgs
- ★ Open access to SEF lands for Yakama / Kah-milt-pah people, supported by Ekone staff
- ★ Sponsor diverse groups to host programs at Ekone
- ★ Conduct assessment/acknowledgement of the name Ekone

Horses & Animals

Shared Vision of Success: All animals are physically and mentally healthy and resilient, finding positive emotions in their lives and work, and have the appropriate care and training to successfully teach children and adults about husbandry, connection, and riding. We are able to offer many points of interaction, education, and connection between animals and youth & adult guests. All Ekone animals live an ever-increasingly species-appropriate lifestyle.

Goals

1. Continue to improve species-appropriate lifestyle for all animals
2. Educate all our guests about species-appropriate lifestyles and care for animals
3. Facilitate connections, deeper relationships, and fun between animals and humans that are safe and positive for all involved (*Elevated to an Overarching Priority*)

Strategies

- Research and document what that species-appropriate lifestyle means for each species, and implement new upgrades towards that lifestyle for all Ekone animals
- Employ training and horsemanship methods and modalities that prioritize the horses' emotional well-being, relaxation, strength, agility, and willingness for the work we do together
- Develop curriculum & teaching methods that support our goals for the horses and involvement of other Ekone animals

Million-Dollar Dreams

- ★ Covered, enclosed arena to enable a wider variety of year-round horse work
- ★ Buy a fleet of strong, well-adjusted and well-prepared expensive horses
- ★ Additional animals: mini horses, goats for forestry, milk, and cute babies, small cow for milk and education, more chickens
- ★ New staff position: Ranch Hand/Animal Assistant
- ★ Pasture rehabilitation and mud management

Facilities & Infrastructure

Shared vision of success: Durable, enjoyable, and Ekone-style facilities and infrastructure that continue to put the “funk” in “functional” while appropriately supporting the day-to-day work of the organization, requiring only reasonable routine maintenance and minimal disruptions due to wear/tear, failure, etc.

Goals

1. Facilities and infrastructure are not constantly on the verge of collapse, so that we can focus on effective mission delivery
2. Be a role model for guests of what thoughtful, minimally-impactful, situationally-aware human habitat can be like
3. Minimize our own “footprint” on the world in terms of fossil fuel use, creation of landfill material, harmful impact on the land of Ekone, and use of limited natural resources
4. Improve the natural areas of human habitat, like fields, pasture, paddocks, landscaping, garden, etc, with a focus on efficiency and beauty in a way that expresses the uniqueness of this place

Strategies

- Continue to reduce and reuse– choose to repair/maintain, to reuse/repurpose materials wherever possible, and to buy used/repurposed whenever possible
- Create educational curriculum around situationally-aware and climate-change-conscious human habitat, as well as around our off-grid systems
- Do one natural-building-based educational workshop in the next 5 years
- Ensure appropriate staffing with appropriate training and support
- Complete a systematic assessment/inventory of all facilities and infrastructure, and implement a rubric for prioritizing projects

Million-Dollar Dreams

- ★ Fill full-time Facilities Assistant position
- ★ Bring the Shop, Cabin, and Lodge up to code
- ★ New barn at Heavenly Heights
- ★ More fruit trees and edible landscaping
- ★ First aid facilities– area for kids to rest/quarantine

- ★ Insulated housing and/or community space for seasonal summer staff to escape heat, smoke, yellowjackets, etc

Governance

Shared vision of success: SEF has an effective and values-aligned leadership structure, engaging people at all ages and from all parts of the organization, and where everybody knows their role and feels empowered to support the organization in effective and meaningful ways.

Goals

1. Be a role model of innovative and effective governance
2. Expand opportunities for multi-generational involvement
3. Increase diversity and representation in SEF leadership

Strategies

- Articulate and educate the wider world about our organizational structure
- Continue and expand the roles of Elders and Youth Councils
 - ◆ See [Youth Council Strategic Plan](#)
- Create a BIPOC Affinity Council/Circle
- Continually recruit and train an awesome and full Board of Directors

Million-Dollar Dreams

- ★ Increased marketing budget
- ★ Childcare and mileage budget for board members to be able to attend board & committee meetings & do board homework

Staffing

Shared vision of success: SEF has qualified, capable, and inspired staff who deliver consistently on this mission, vision, and guiding framework and infuse the Throughlines into every aspect of the organization.

Goals

1. Recruit, support, and retain amazing staff (*Elevated to an Overarching Priority*)

2. Work towards a more diverse and representative staff team, both seasonal and year-round
3. Promote and achieve a standard of practice that full-time year-round staff average 40 hours per week, not more, and actively use their paid time off

Strategies

- Increase compensation and benefits from the current fraction of market-based wages to fully competitive wage and benefit packages, based on market research and independent review
- Create a sabbatical policy for the restoration and sustainability of long-term staff, and to foster organizational resilience
- Build towards adequate staffing levels to ensure the work is well-supported and to prevent overwhelm and burnout
- Foster diversity and accessibility throughout the organization, and create clear pathways to leadership for marginalized participants

Million-Dollar Dreams

- ★ Improve housing for staff required to live on-site
- ★ Potential new staff positions (some also mentioned elsewhere):
 - Full-time Facilities Assistant to free up Liz and Shawn's time so they can implement prescribed fire and other projects
 - Ranch Hand/Animal Assistant to free up Jenna's time so she can create excellent, fun, connective horse programming
 - Year-round Program Assistant to free up Michelle's time so she can lead the land management plan project and foster a diversity of programming
 - Administrative Manager to free up Shonie's time so she can focus on leadership, strategy, and relationships instead of bureaucracies
 - Volunteer Coordinator to expand access to Ekone and support the work and staff throughout the organization
 - Cemetery Groundskeeper to provide on-site support for Jodie, reduce her cross-state trips, and support our growing cemetery community
 - Conservation Director to lead land trust initiatives including priority acquisitions, stewardship efforts, and tending relationships

Finance & Fundraising

Shared vision of success: SEF has the resources to fully implement this mission, vision, guiding framework, and even many of the million-dollar dreams. Fundraising is done in a community-centric manner as a manifestation of the mission, vision, and throughlines.

Goals

1. Routinely pass and meet net-positive annual budgets
2. Build a 6-month operating reserve
3. Grow our donor pool, loyalty, and support for all the work of the organization

Strategies

- Increase donor communications to build knowledge of and investment in SEF's work
- Continue building the Legacy Circle as a source of long-term support
- Expand public and private grant support
- Continue to balance earned income with philanthropic support, approximately 50/50

Million-Dollar Dreams

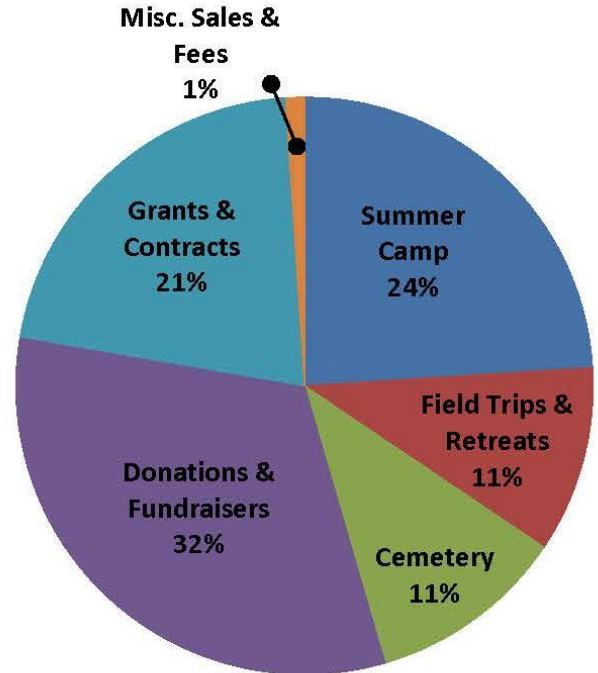
- ★ [Multi-Year General Operating Dollars](#)
- ★ New staff position: Administrative Manager, to free up Shonie & Susan's time to focus on communications, relationship building, and fund development

Sacred Earth Foundation - Ekone Ranch

2024 OPERATING BUDGET

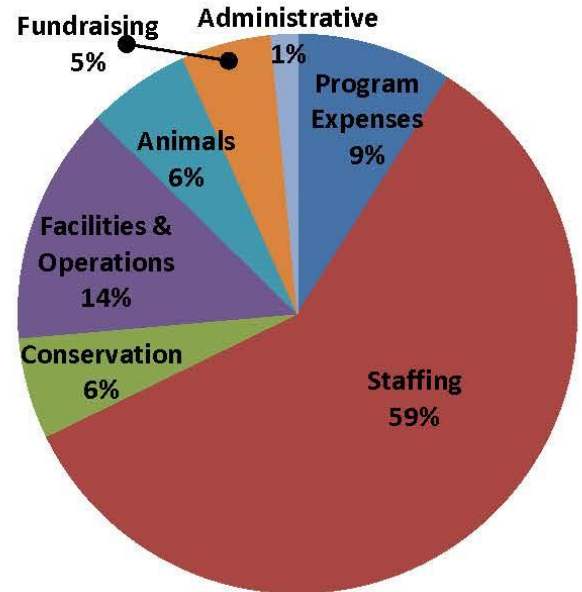
REVENUE

Summer Camp	195,000
Field Trips & Retreats	85,000
Cemetery	90,000
Donations & Fundraisers	262,000
Grants & Contracts	172,600
Misc. Sales & Fees	8,600
TOTAL	\$813,200



EXPENSE

Program Expenses	83,200
Staffing	541,100
Conservation	53,800
Facilities & Operations	126,500
Animals	54,800
Fundraising	47,800
Administrative	14,000
TOTAL	\$921,200



Note: Our expected deficit of \$108,000 is due to the timing of a significant federal reimbursement-based grant, which we will begin implementing in 2024 but not receive until 2025. We have sufficient cash reserves to cover the expense.

Sacred Earth Foundation, more commonly known as Ekone Ranch, is committed to conserving, stewarding, and sharing the upper Rock Creek watershed.

The **Land Trust** stewards 1,263 acres of habitat in the most heavily-developed section of a vital watershed connecting the Columbia River with the Simcoe Mountains and Yakama Nation.

Ekone Summer Camps provide children with a powerful, life-changing sense of belonging, importance, connection to place, and life skills.

White Eagle Memorial Preserve offers a simple, natural way to return our loved ones to the earth.

School field trips, programs for adults and families, community events, and workparties bring the total number of people inspired by Ekone land to roughly **2,000** each year.

Our team currently includes 8 year-round staff (6.5 FTE), 10 board members, 32 seasonal and short-term staff, ~200 volunteers, 313 donors, 2,328 households on our mailing list, 16 horses, myriad farm animals, and uncountable wild things.

You are invited.

Sacred Earth Foundation

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We focus on the work. Not on the graphic design.