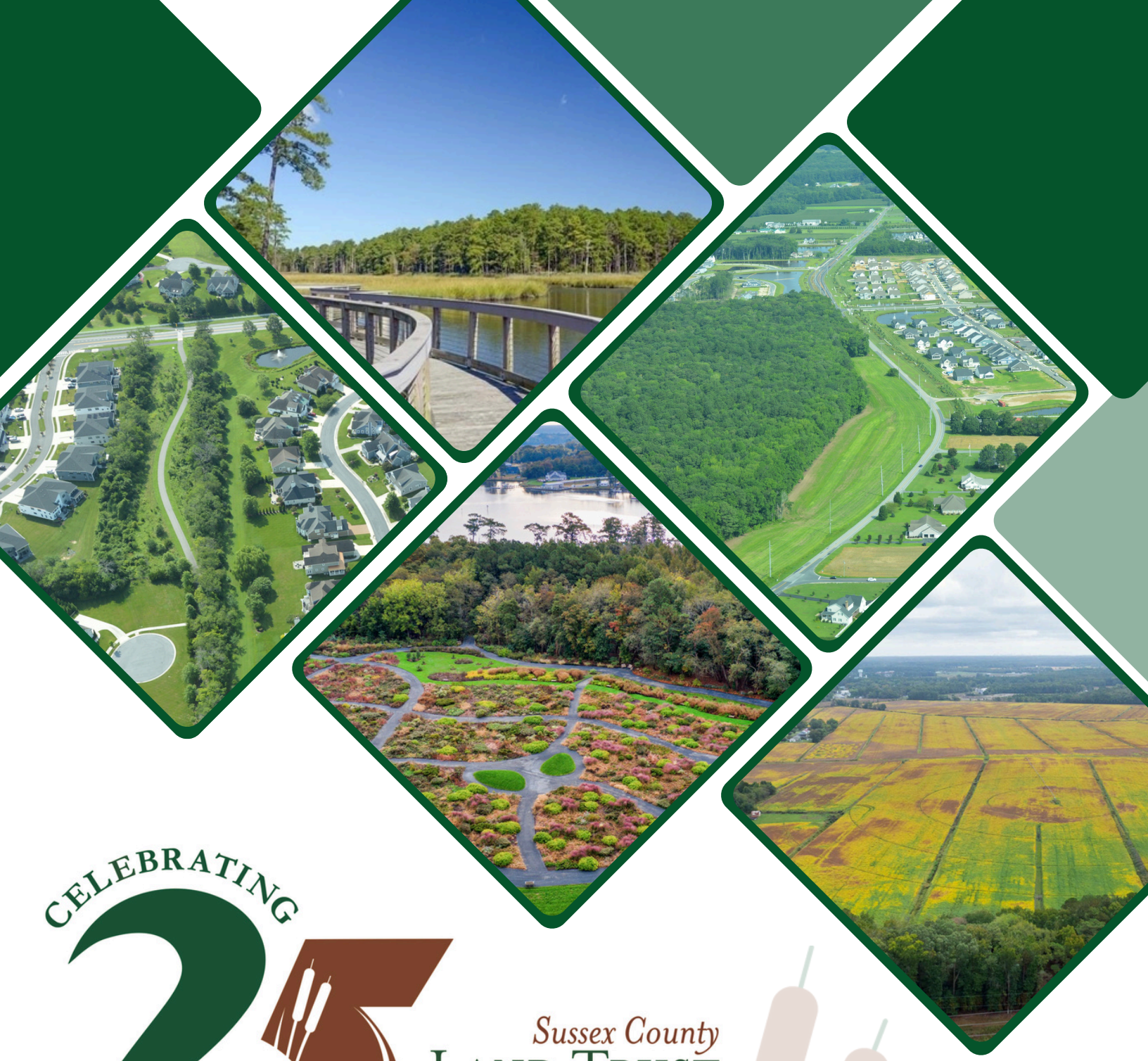


CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

Sussex County
LAND TRUST

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

"Everything we accomplish is... to help safeguard the land and resources that make Sussex County special"

As spring turns to summer, I would like to take a few moments to reflect on all that the Sussex County Land Trust accomplished over the past year. 2025 was a year of growth and momentum for the organization. We began the year with a transition in our fiscal year to better align with our strategic partner, Sussex County, as well as grant and funding cycles. Our Board of Directors continues to grow stronger as we work together to develop a three-year Strategic Plan that will help guide the organization into the future.

Progress continued at Ickford Park in Seaford, including ongoing restoration work at the historic Cannon-Maston House. We also completed renovations to the Litchford House and continued furnishing the home with period-appropriate pieces from the 1930s, including a replica telephone that even rings. At Hopkins Preserve, we celebrated the groundbreaking for entrance improvements in partnership with the neighboring Jefferson Lodge #15. We were also proud to once again be named a beneficiary of the 2025 Dogfish Dash. Being selected for a second consecutive year is both an honor and a testament to the incredible partnership and support we have received from Dogfish Head over the years.

In November, we officially kicked off the Land Trust's 25th Anniversary with a special event at the Delaware Botanic Gardens, a property protected through land trust efforts. The celebration will continue throughout 2026 with additional community events and activities. Land conservation efforts also continued throughout the year, including the addition of new protected properties such as Milton Crossing, a two-acre parcel along Route 1 near Milton, and Chase Oaks Preserve in Lewes. As we look ahead, we remain focused on continuing improvements at Hopkins Preserve and advancing future public access opportunities at the Forest of the Broadkill Preserve.

Everything we accomplish is made possible by a dedicated group of Board Members, volunteers, partners, and supporters who generously give their time and talents to help safeguard the land and resources that make Sussex County special. We are always looking for volunteers to assist with stewardship, fundraising, and community engagement efforts as we continue building a sustainable network of protected open spaces throughout Sussex County. Thank you for your continued support of the Sussex County Land Trust.



With gratitude,
Ring W. Lardner, *Board Chair*

A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

"The Land Trust continues to serve as a connector — bringing people together around a common purpose."

Dear Friends,

2025 marked a defining year for the Sussex County Land Trust — and a personally meaningful one for me as I stepped into the role of Executive Director. As the organization's first full-time Executive Director, this year was both a time of learning and a time of momentum. I had the privilege of working alongside a deeply committed Board of Directors and a growing network of partners who care about preserving the places that make Sussex County special.

Throughout the year, we advanced projects that protect working lands, expand access to nature, and strengthen connections between people and the outdoors. From trail development and park planning to land conservation and stewardship, our work reflects a shared vision for a more connected and resilient Sussex County.

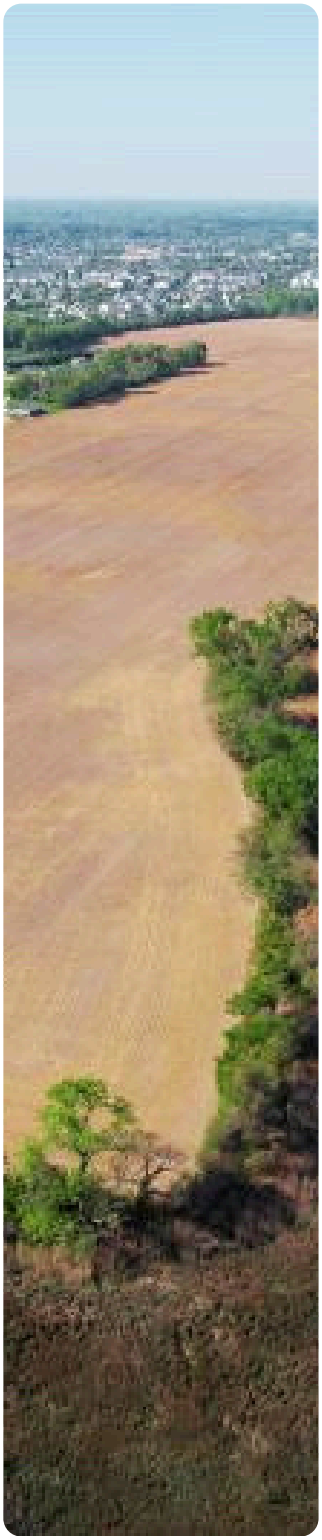
What stands out most is how much of this work is made possible through collaboration. The Land Trust continues to serve as a connector — bringing people together around a common purpose.

At the same time, 2025 laid important groundwork for the future. As Sussex County continues to grow, the need to protect our natural resources and open spaces has never been more urgent. We are building the capacity, partnerships. and strategy needed to meet that moment. I am incredibly grateful for the support, encouragement, and trust I received in my first year.

Thank you for being part of this work and for helping us safeguard the land and resources that make Sussex County special.



With gratitude,
Sara M. Bluhm
Executive Director



2025 IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

Sussex County Land Trust
EST. 2001

Safeguarding the land and resources that make Sussex County special

In 2025, the Sussex County Land Trust managed $1.78 million in total revenue, supporting land conservation, stewardship, and organizational operations. The organization invested $904,308 in expenses, with the majority directed toward conservation projects and land stewardship. This strong financial position reflects both strategic project funding and continued growth in community support.

1,257 acres protected across Sussex County

2,000+ people engaged through programs & events

8 properties owned

5 conservation easements held

Our Organization

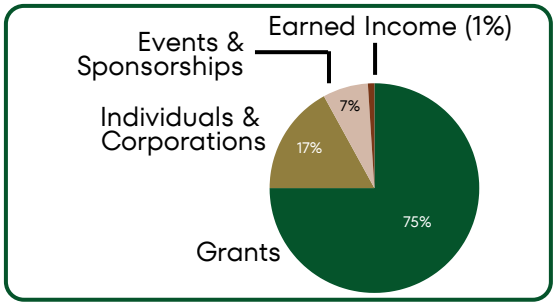
1 full time staff member

12 board members

181 supporters

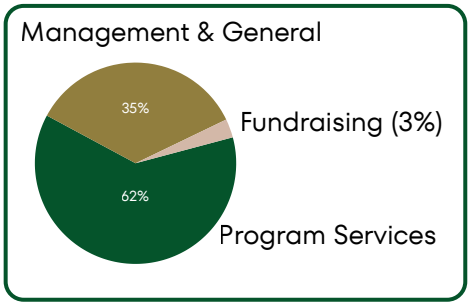
Revenues

A significant portion of 2025 funding reflects grant support for land conservation and related projects, complemented by strong community support through individual giving, partnerships, and events.

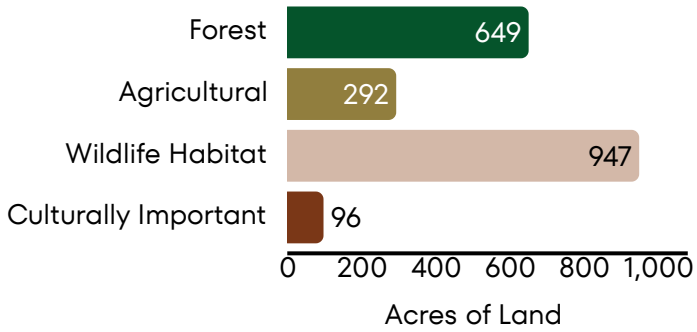


Expenses

Over 60% of expenses directly supported conservation, land stewardship, and mission-driven programs.

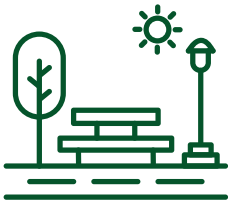


Land Types Protected

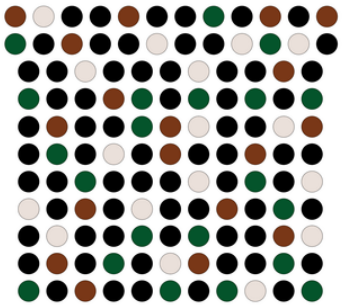


Total acreage exceeds 1,257 because a single parcel can serve multiple purposes

Public Engagement



5 public access properties



113 acres open to the public

34 NEWLY PROTECTED ACRES IN 2025

The Land Trust acquired two new properties in 2025

01 CHASE OAKS PRESERVE
LEWES, DELAWARE

+32 ACRES



Chase Oaks Preserve represents a significant addition to the Land Trust's growing network of protected lands in eastern Sussex County. Donated by Chase Oaks DE, LLC with support from DRB Homes, this property preserves valuable open space within a developing area while ensuring long-term stewardship and community benefit.

The preserve contributes to local conservation goals by protecting natural habitat and maintaining green space in a rapidly growing corridor, demonstrating how thoughtful collaboration with developers and builder can lead to meaningful conservation outcomes.

02 MILTON CROSSING
MILTON, DELAWARE

+2 ACRES



Milton Crossing, located along Route 1 in Milton, was generously donated by the National Christian Charitable Foundation and Pret Dyer. While smaller in size, this highly visible property plays an important role in expanding awareness of the Land Trust's mission.

The site serves as an entry point for community engagement and education, helping connect residents and visitors to the importance of land conservation in Sussex County.

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO PLACE



Bringing the community together through events that celebrate conservation, strengthen partnerships, and inspire support for our mission.

25TH ANNIVERSARY KICKOFF

AT THE DELAWARE BOTANIC GARDENS

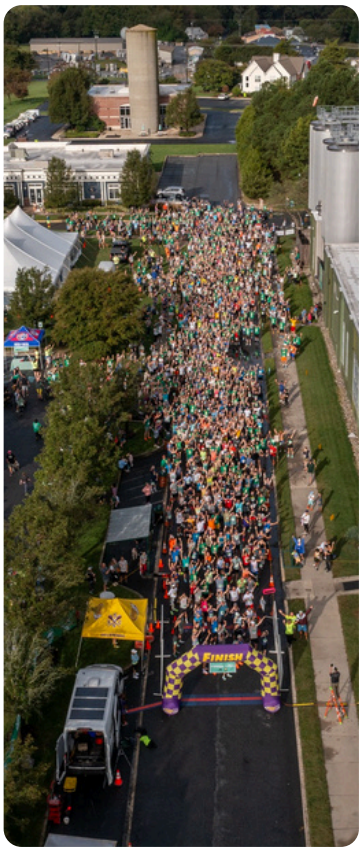
The Land Trust launched its 25th anniversary year with a special kickoff celebration at the Delaware Botanic Gardens in November. The event brought together board members, partners, and supporters to reflect on 25 years of conservation impact while looking ahead to the future of land protection in Sussex County. This milestone moment set the tone for a year of celebration, storytelling, and renewed commitment to safeguarding the landscapes that define our community.











ANNUAL DOGFISH DASH

This continues to be a cornerstone fundraising event for the Land Trust. In 2025, the event raised more than **$109,000** in support of land conservation, stewardship, and public access initiatives. Through our ongoing partnership with Dogfish Head, this event brings together runners, volunteers, and supporters from across the region in a shared commitment to protecting Sussex County's open spaces.





LOOKING AHEAD: OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

Strengthening our commitments to the environment, society, and each other

01 BUILD SUSTAINABLE REVENUE & PARTNERSHIPS

Develop a diversified, reliable revenue base and strong partnerships to support SCLT's mission and core operations through FY2029.



02 STRENGTHEN SYSTEMS, PROCESSES, & STAFFING

Build and implement the next phase of SCLT's organizational capacity, including staffing, systems, and internal processes, to support sustainable growth and effective operations through FY2029.



03 OPEN & OPERATE PRIORITY LANDS FOR PUBLIC ACCESS

Open and actively operate priority SCLT properties to provide safe, welcoming, and well-maintained public access consistent with the organization's mission and values through FY2029.

04 GROW VOLUNTEER & AMBASSADOR NETWORKS

Build and sustain a volunteer and ambassador network that supports property stewardship, enhances public access, and increases community engagement with SCLT through FY2029.



MISSION ENABLER: STRATEGIC LAND ACQUISITION & CAPACITY BALANCE

Safeguarding the land and resources that make Sussex County special requires maintaining the flexibility, readiness, and capacity to pursue high-value conservation opportunities as they arise.







BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Ring W. Lardner
BOARD CHAIR

Michael D. Dickinson
VICE CHAIR

Casey H. Kenton
SECRETARY

Blake W. Carey
TREASURER

Harold L. Carmean, II
TRUSTEE

Councilwoman
Jane Gruenebaum
TRUSTEE

Jason D. King
TRUSTEE

Trisha Newcomer
TRUSTEE

Councilman John L. Rieley
TRUSTEE

Mackenzie Sindelar
TRUSTEE

Judy A. Schwartz
TRUSTEE

Kelly R. Stevenson
TRUSTEE

Dennis N. Forney
TRUSTEE EMERITUS

C. Russell McCabe
TRUSTEE EMERITUS

Sussex County
LAND TRUST
EST. 2001

SUPPORT OUR MISSION

01 GET INVOLVED

Protecting Sussex County's open spaces is a community effort—and there are many ways to be part of it.

02 MAKE A GIFT

Support land conservation, stewardship, and public access by making a donation. Every contribution helps protect the places that make Sussex County special.

03 VOLUNTEER

Join us in caring for our preserves through trail work, clean-ups, and community events. It's a hands-on way to make a lasting impact.

04 STAY CONNECTED

Sign up for our e-newsletter to receive updates on projects, events, and opportunities to get involved.

05 FOLLOW & SHARE

Help us grow our impact by following Sussex County Land Trust on social media and sharing our work with your network.

06 PARTNER WITH US

We collaborate with businesses, organizations, and community leaders to advance conservation across Sussex County. Let's work together.

Together, we can ensure that Sussex County's natural landscapes are protected and enjoyed for generations to come. Visit our website at **www.sclandtrust.org** to learn more.