

Red River Gorge Climbers' Coalition

2023 Annual Report



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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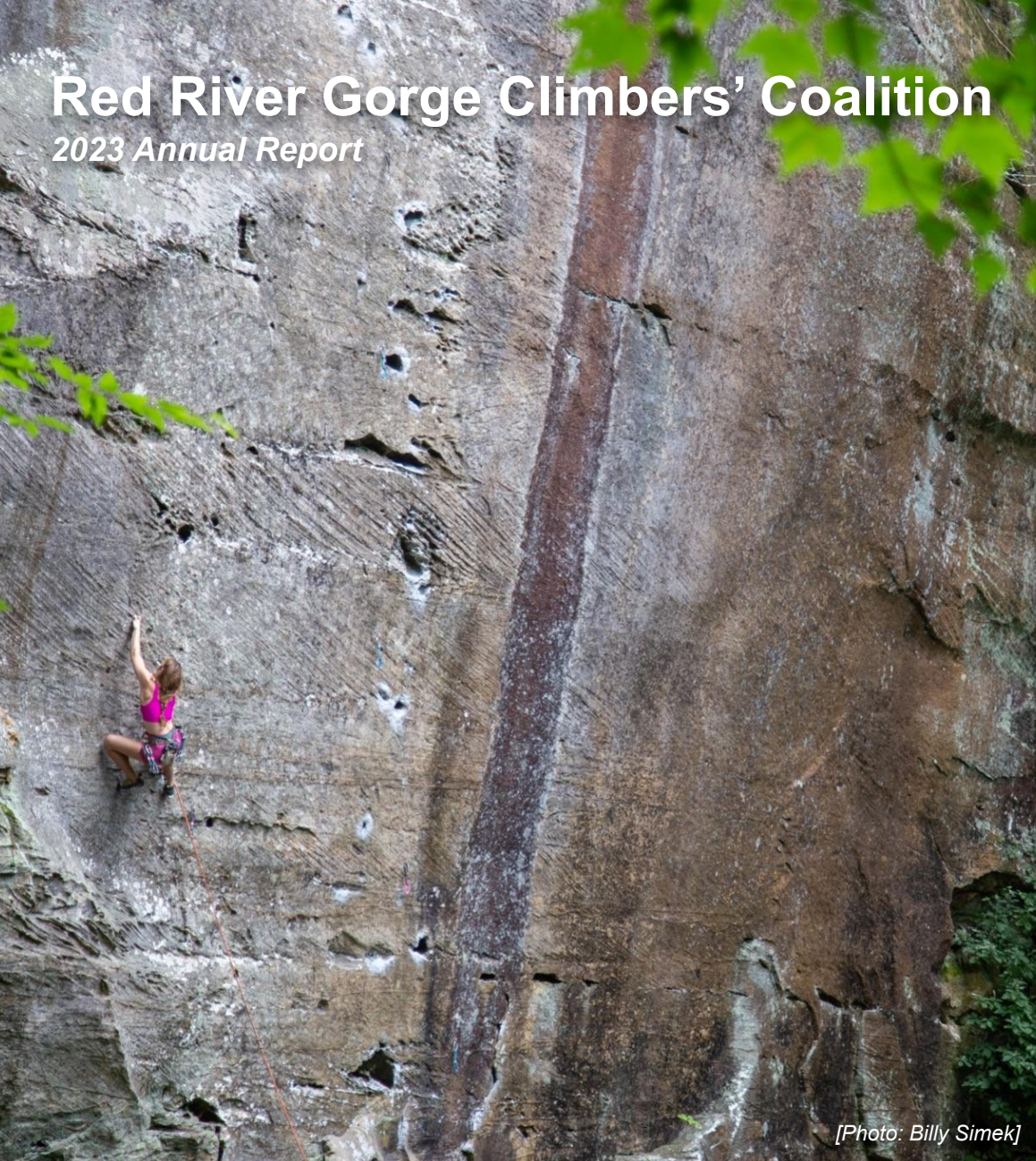
Executive Director

Emily Bruns

Marketing Director

Bill Strachan

Executive Director Emeritus



[Photo: Billy Simek]

Our Mission

We are dedicated to securing and protecting open, public access to rock climbing in Red River Gorge, Kentucky and promoting conservation of the environment on the lands where we climb.

Our Strategy

- First secure the highest quality climbing opportunities, whether on public or private land
- Make climbing sustainable for climbers and the environment
- Provide exemplary stewardship of the natural environment on the lands where we climb
- Educate climbers about access issues, encourage them to take "ownership" for their behavior and its impact on access



A Letter from the Director:

Choo! Choo! This train is still rolling (not so sure about the Boilermakers in March though...) so you better get on board or you're going to miss out. Miss out on what, you say? Let's go back a few months and refresh your memory — 2023, Year of the Rabbit, Taylor Swift, and AI, but from an RRGCC perspective it was more about organizational growth, fundraising, and stewardship. That probably sounds like a bunch of corporate jargon that gets thrown around every year, so I'll dive a little deeper to translate.

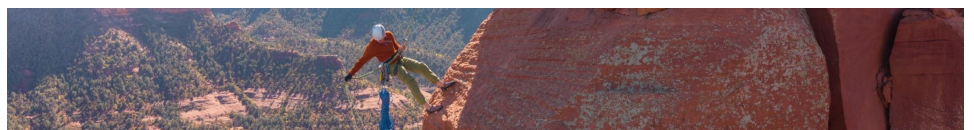
The organizational growth column would be remiss to not start off mentioning the **hiring of our new marketing director, Emily Bruns**. A dedicated supporter for years through her former company, Aclipse Campervans, we are very excited to now have her as part of the team at RRGCC. Emily has been focusing on communications, the RRGCC brand, advertising of events & programs, social media, and membership. We also revamped Red River Reunion by adding **our new mainstay Red in a Day (RIAD) competition**. This brought Miguel's Reunion back to its former glory while creating a fresh, exciting avenue of community engagement and fundraising for RRGCC. Our "Big Three" events are running bigger and badder than ever before, mark them on your calendar now! Lastly, our President and Executive committee have been working tirelessly on the thankless work of **improving and aligning internal processes to increase efficiency** of the organization as it continues to expand. Okay, okay, that last one may be a unavoidably corporate.

Speaking of expansion, we **added Access Fund's Climber Stewards program** to the Gorge last year in partnership with Daniel Boone National Forest and Muir Valley. The program was started by former Stewardship Director, Ty Tyler, in Indian Creek (Utah) and was always a goal of his to bring it here to Kentucky. Spreading the good word on local ethics, Leave No Trace, and more, the Stewards are an integral part of our education work, teaching climbers how to recreate responsibly in the outdoors. This ties into a **much larger conservation initiative** that Access Fund and RRGCC did a massive, multifaceted fundraising push for in 2023 – **funding Climber Stewards for 2023 & 2024, plus 10 weeks of Conservation Team time in 2024**. Be on the lookout for volunteer opportunities with these teams throughout the year, we've got a lot of rocks, wood, and dirt to move!

Other stewardship highlights from 2023 include **another year of building, improving, and replacing outdated trail and crag infrastructure**. I thought we built a lot of bridges the previous year, but somehow smoked that number and put in 11 more in 2023. **Two major trail reroutes on the Miller East and Sore Heel Left** trail systems were completed, redirecting foot traffic off quickly eroding paths and onto more sustainable grades. Our Conservation & Stewardship committee co-chair, Maggie Kaelin, along with MadTree Brewing, also led our first round of **hemlock treatments in Miller Fork** to help protect the trees from the woolly adelgid. I wish we had a tracker on how many pounds of rocks got moved too, but I can EASILY say the crew of Canadians that wanted to do trail work on their "rest day" probably moved 50% of that quota in one day at Hazel Hollow. No need to do the conversion from kilograms, unanimous MVP trail squad right there.

What did I miss? The **18 Climb L8 events** continuing to break down barriers to rock climbing with record attendance numbers at our gym events, along with another outdoor Rock L8 trip? Rocktoberfest (shoutout Chris Sharma) blasting through the \$100K fundraising mark? Johnny & Alex Trail Day popping off with 135 stellar volunteers and its first "Local's" day? Parking expansions at the Motherlode and Miller Fork lots? Are you feeling the FOMO yet? **Well we're doing it all again in 2024, just better**. See you out there.

Billy Simek, Executive Director



sorry, got my red rocks mixed up

2023 Strategic Focus

Functional Initiatives

Access & Acquisitions

1. Commitment to new climbing access in at least 1 of 3 open opportunities
2. Improved outreach & communication with private landowners
3. Educate the public on bolting & route development issues
4. Implement an improved process for route development and maintenance on RRGCC land.

Conservation and Stewardship

1. Conservation improvements on all RRGCC land
2. Nursery, Bornaugh, and Chaos rehab
3. Continue to build relationships with the Forest Service
4. Create a transition plan for RRGCC land manager

Education, DEI, and Outreach

1. Grow and fundraise for Climb L8 and other DEI initiatives
2. Grow Gym-to-Crag program
3. Nurture relationships with Indigenous communities, local organizations, and people in the RRG area



Operational Initiatives

Governance

1. Improve staff policies
2. Define and develop responsibilities of additional staff members
3. Improve BOD and staff onboarding

Operations

1. Define and measure effort across the organization
2. Continued improvement & documentation of bookkeeping and accounting processes

Fundraising and Membership

1. Increase membership count & revenue by 20%
2. Increase grant application submissions
3. Find and implement merchandising platforms

Events and Sponsorships

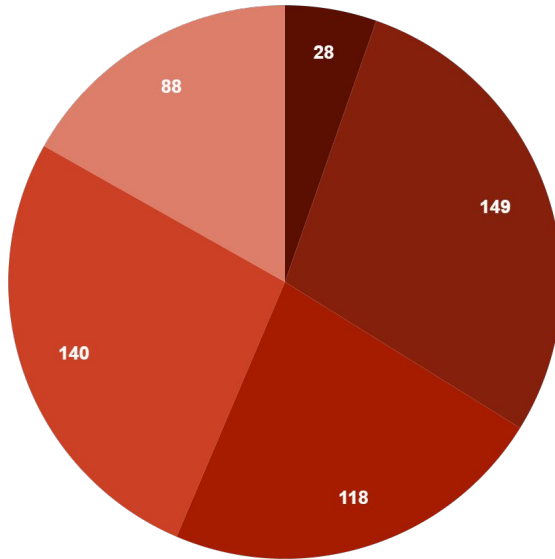
1. Expand RIAD and increase small events
2. Increase Rocktoberfest revenue and improve event operations
3. Incorporate education and DEI during events

Marketing & Communications

1. Promote & advertise RRGCC activities & events
2. Continue to build a unified RRGCC brand
3. Create RRGCC merchandise designs

Membership Program

Member Base (523 total)



● Annual Tier 1 ● Annual Tier 2 ● Annual Tier 3 ● Monthly Tier 2 ● Monthly Tier 3



Membership Tiers & Incentives

Tier 1 (\$35/year)

- Member sticker
- Limited member discounts

Tier 2 (\$65/year or \$5/month)

- Member t-shirt & sticker
- Applicable member discounts

Tier 3 (\$125/year or \$10/month)

- RRGCC member hoody
- Member sticker
- Additional member discounts

Membership Sponsors

- Red River Gorgeous
- Lago Linda Hideaway
- Hoosier Heights Gyms
- Daniel Boone Coffee Shop
- Gnarly Nutrition
- BedRock RRG
- Muir Valley
- Rockquest
- Miguel's Pizza
- RockSport
- One Love Hemp
- Firefly Hills

To find more details and sign up to become a member, follow the link below --
RRGCC Membership Page: <https://rrgcc.org/membership>

Access & Acquisitions

Access & Acquisition Review

Our strategy is to first secure the highest quality climbing opportunities, whether on public or private land, then make climbing sustainable for climbers and the environment, and finally to provide exemplary stewardship of the natural environment on the lands where we climb.

Current Opportunities:

- Ashland, Inc. (Medium)
- Land Swap (High)
- Access Easement (High)



Bolting & Route Development

The RRGCC has created a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for use between RRGCC and route developers to establish improved route development framework. Additionally, a route submission form has been create to track new routes developed on RRGCC property.

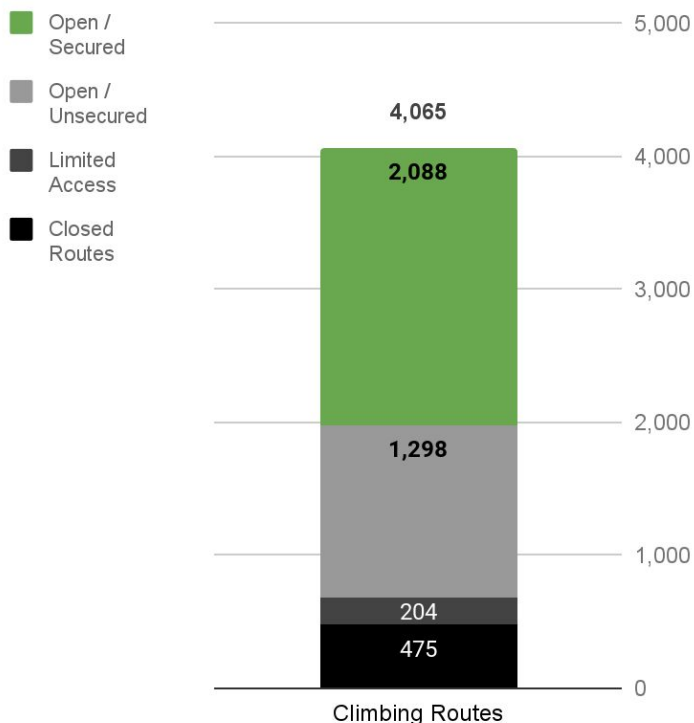
Visit: <https://rrgcc.org/bolting/>

2024 Objectives

1. Commitment to new climbing access in at least 1 of 3 open opportunities
2. Improved outreach & communication with private landowners
3. Educate the public on bolting & route development issues
4. Implement an improved process for route development and maintenance on RRGCC land.
5. Work with Kentucky senators to discuss adding climbing specific language in the recreational use statute.

Climbing in the Red

Routes By Access

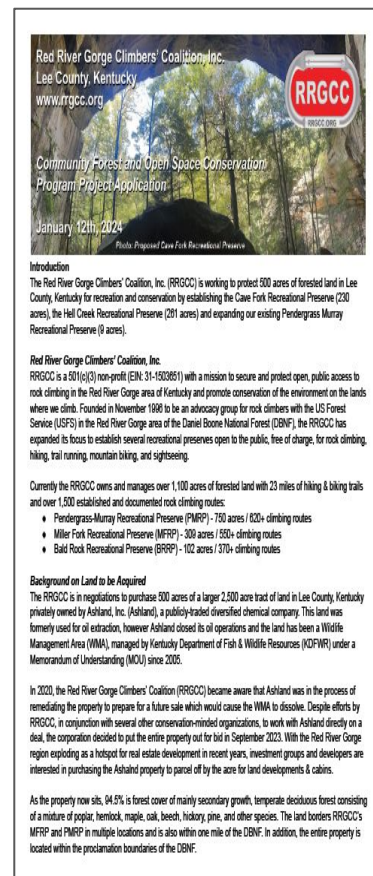


Access & Acquisitions

Ashland Update

- **Strategy**
 - Bid on select tracts with existing climbing and highest conservation value
 - Work with committed partners where partners get target land and RRGCC gets target land.
 - Create investor group where RRGCC and investor cash is used for down payment and bank loan is secured for gap.
- **Social Media Campaign**
 - Reach 64,505 – Likes/Reactions 4,074, 435 Comments, and 1,223 shares
 - Power Company Climbing Podcast
- **Offers Made**
 - Four offers by the RRGCC for select tracts
 - One offer with partner for select tracts
 - One offer with investor group & partner for the entire listing
- **Status**
 - No offers have been selected at this time
 - Property is still listed for sale
- **Next Steps**
 - Continue dialogue with realtor and Ashland
 - If our offers are not selected, work with new owners on purchase/access.

- **Funding Options**
 - \$210,000 RRGCC Contribution
 - \$350,000 USFWS Commitment
 - \$600,000 USDA Community Forest Grant
 - \$850,000 Private Loan Offers
 - \$350,000 Access Fund Loan Program
- **Letters of Support**
 - USFWS
 - UK Department of Forestry
 - Beattyville/Lee County Tourism
 - USFS DBNF (Pending)



Conservation & Stewardship



1,074
Hours
of Work

1.6
Miles of
Road

1,161
Acres

23
Miles of
Trails

Update from the Land Manager:

It's no secret that the Red River Gorge is one of the most popular climbing areas in the country, and we are seeing the direct impacts of that visitation on our climbing areas. Our land management team spent much of 2023 improving and replacing outdated infrastructure that was failing to support this increased traffic. 11 new footbridges were installed, major trail re-routes were completed, parking lots were expanded, and several belay bases were reinforced with stone terracing across our properties. We also kicked off the Climber Stewards program last fall with Access Fund to help educate folks on the importance of recreating responsibly in the Gorge.

*A major fundraising push through Access Fund last year set a **massive conservation initiative in motion to continue these expanded stewardship efforts** for years to come. Thank you to all of our very generous donors who have helped fund this campaign... now calling all trail volunteers!*

2023 Highlights

- Miller East and Sore Heel Left trail reroutes
- Erosion control projects at Bronaugh wall, Infirmary, Secret Garden, Hazel Hollow, & South Park.
- Bridges everywhere (Neverland, Sore Heel Connector, Flat Hollow Connector, Hole in the Wall, Bear's Den right, & Lumber Yard)
- Climber Stewards program launched
- MFRP and Motherlode parking lot expansions
- Hemlock treatments for woolly adelgid in MFRP



Education, DEI, & Outreach

18
Climb
L8s

3
Scholar
-ships

1
Outdoor
Trip

1
Outdoor
Clinic

1,846
items
donated

7 Gym
to
Crag



Our Values

*We value the world class rock climbing opportunities found in and around the Red River Gorge as a national treasure deserving of our best efforts to preserve for **all climbers** to enjoy, experience, and appreciate.*

Our Vision

We exist to further the mission of securing and protecting open, public access to rock climbing in the Red River Gorge area by fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community of climbers who value, respect, and uplift each other, and the lands that we climb on. We do this through education, empowerment, proactive outreach, and positive change at our events, with our online presence, and within the community on our properties.

Our Commitment

The Red River Gorge Climbers' Coalition is committed to promoting diversity in all facets of climbing. We are dedicated to creating safer spaces in the outdoors and want everyone to feel welcome on our property.

The outdoors are for everyone.

2023 Highlights

- 18 Climb L8s were hosted across Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana.
- 3 Rocktoberfest scholarships were offered to the community.
- 1 outdoor trip was facilitated for new climbers.
- 1 free clinic was offered at Rocktoberfest.
- 1,846 items were donated to the community.
- 7 Gym to Crag events were hosted.
- Over 2,000 people were served in 2023.



Fundraising & Events

Red in a Day (RIAD) // Red River Reunion

Red River Reunion came with a fresh, new twist this year – our inaugural RIAD competition. 44 teams racked up to do their best Hans Florine impression and compete for a year-long Miguel's sponsorship.

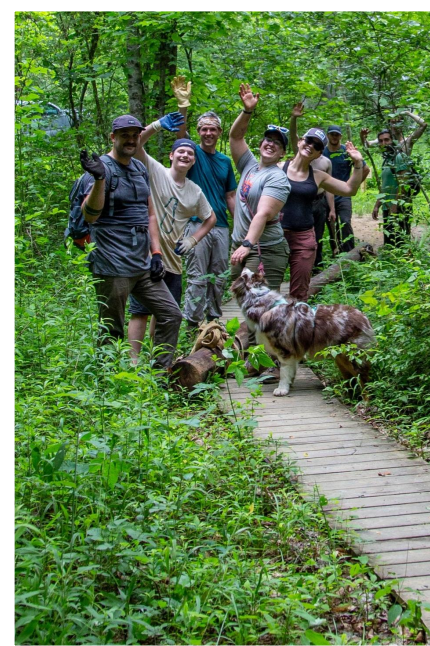
- **Second annual RIAD competition– April 12-13, 2024.**



Johnny & Alex Trail Day

A huge thanks to Lago Linda Hideaway for hosting us again this year, Miguel's Pizza & Red River Rockhouse for providing food, West Sixth Brewing & Ale-8-One for quenching our thirst, and all of our volunteers for putting in the hard work!

- **Record attendance – 135 volunteers!**
- **14 projects completed**
- **Our 1st “Local’s” Day at South Park**



Rocktoberfest

2023 was our most successful year yet! Quantrell Subaru led the event as our title sponsor and we were lucky enough to have Chris Sharma join us for a showing of his new film, followed by a Q&A!

We would like to thank all of those that showed support and attended the event. We hope to see you next year!

- **Gross revenue over \$100k!**
- **Over 1,500 attendees**
- **14 Clinics with Pro Climbers & Guides**

Films and presentations:

- *Tools of Ascension, presented by YETI*
- *Sleeping Lion with Chris Sharma, presented by Tenaya*
- *The Illness (Festival Cut), presented by Wilkinson Visual*
- *RRGCC Legacy Awards*

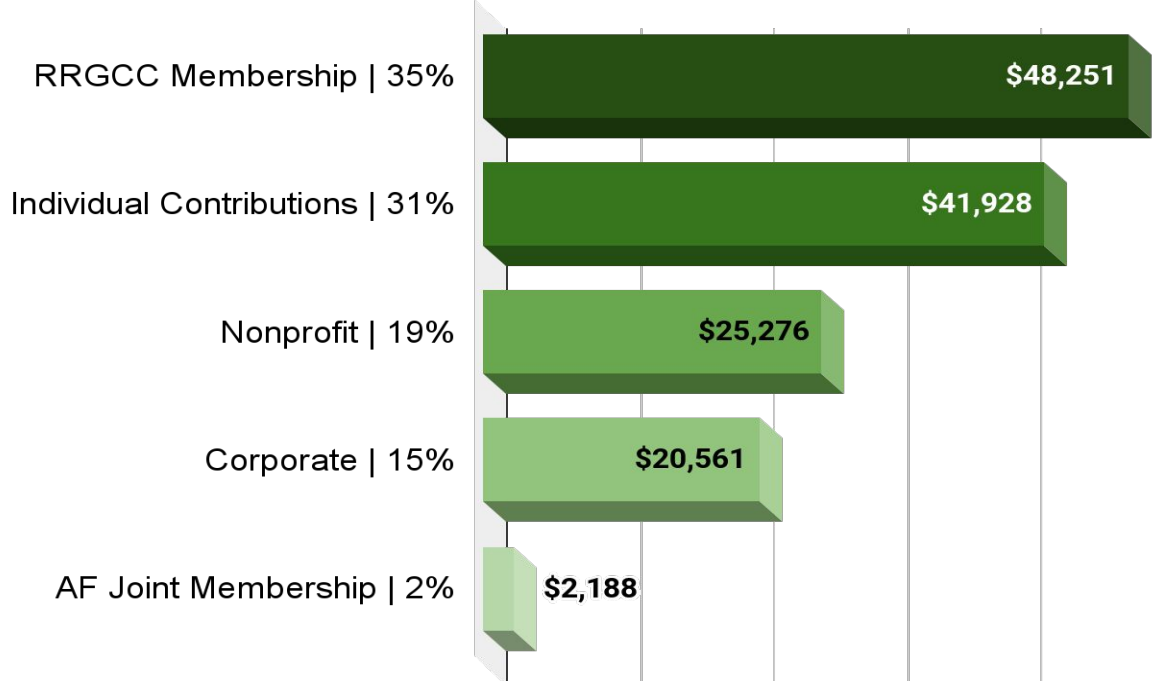


Finances: Support

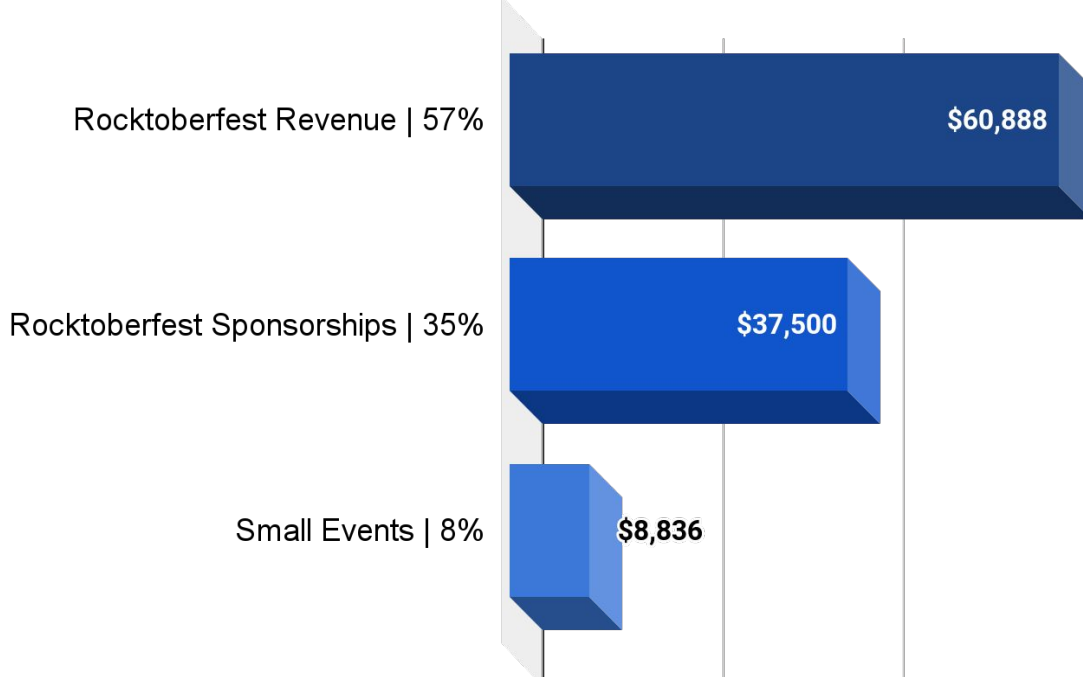
Total 2023 Support: \$247,728



Total 2023 Donations: \$138,204

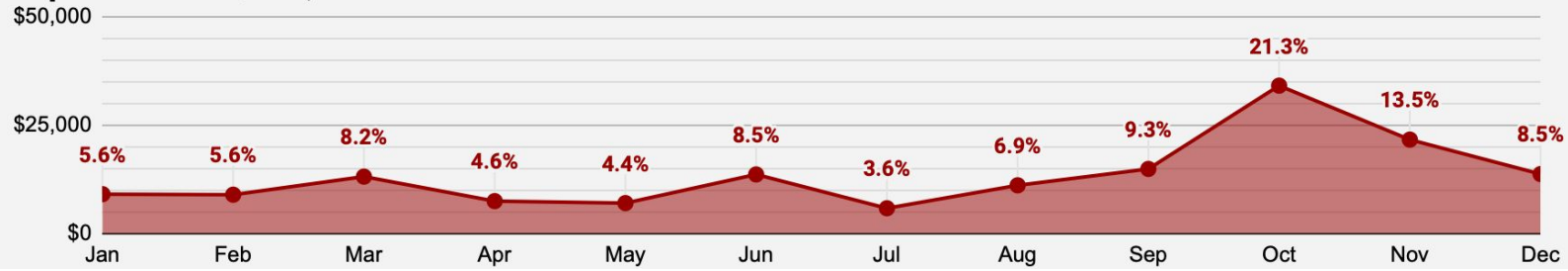


Total 2023 Events: \$107,224



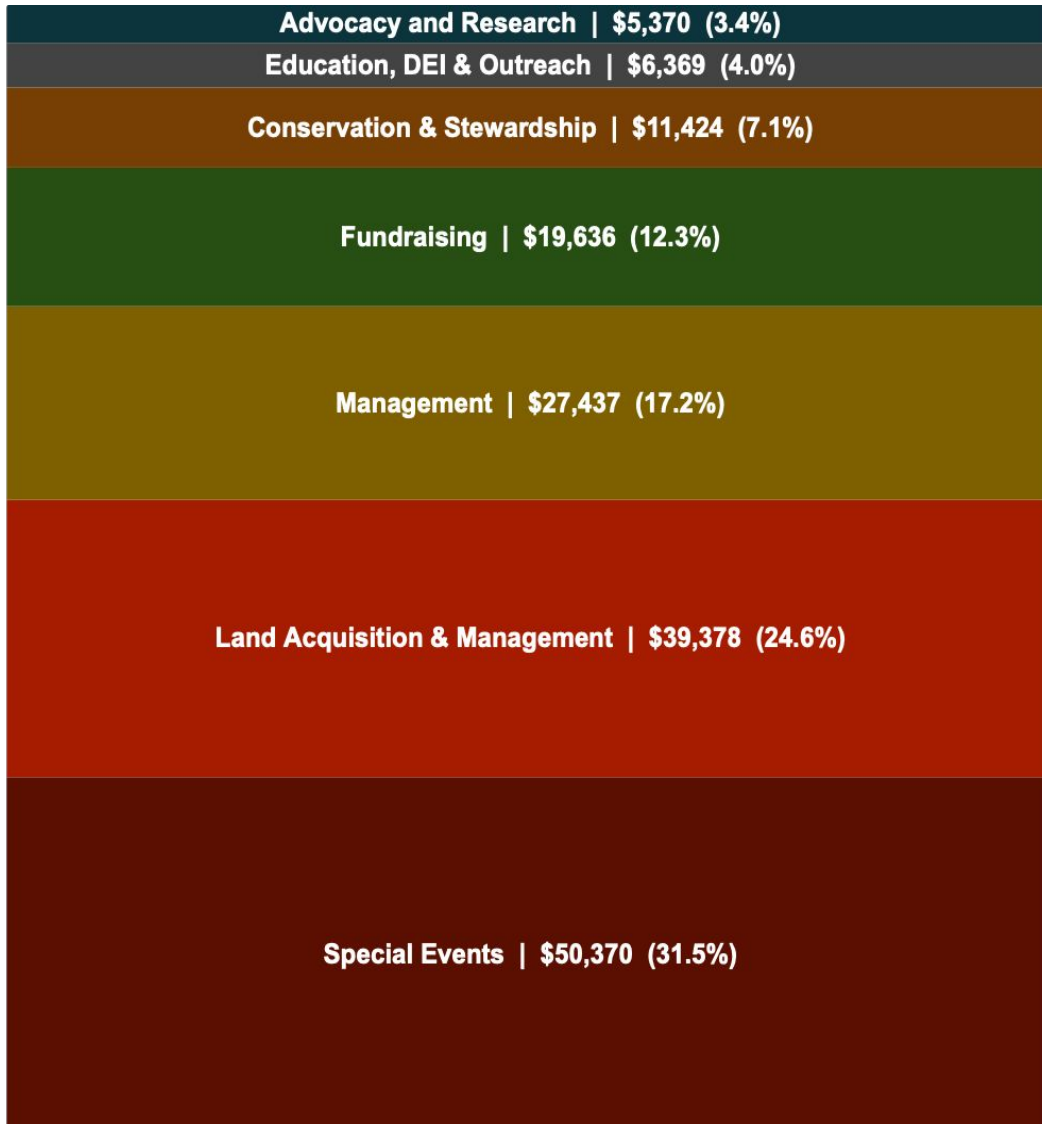
Finances: Expenses

Expenditures: \$159,983



2023 Notable Expenditures

- MFRP parking lot expansion (\$11,900)
- Motherlode parking lot expansion



Individual Donors

\$5,000+

Anonymous

\$1,000+

Jeff Willis
Jereme Ransick
Keri & Doug Libbe / Bunce
Matt Brunell
Nathan Hollingsworth
Ray Strods
Rebecca Dunbar
Van Wombwell

\$500+

Bill Strachan
Chris Elkins
David O'Brien
Jerry Kripal
Jixuan Cheng
Jon Weber
Jonathan Bruns
Joseph Costanzo
Laura Rice
Mark Rohr
Rick Randjelovic

\$200+

Charles Wood
Curtis Rogers
Dan Chandler
David Miller
Dennis and Beth
Lappin
Elizabeth Carlisle
Ellen Hall
Jake Ellis
Jimmy Hctor
Jim Santee
Joern Putschke
Kevin Gardner
Matthew Fronck
Melissa Hargis
Michael Hargis
Noah Kaufman
Ray Ringle
Robert Matheny
Ronit Majumdar
Stefan Griebel
Tara Palazzolo
Taylor Bryant
Will Sweeney
Yoga for Climbers

Corporate Sponsors

\$7,500+

Quantrell Subaru

\$5,000+

Black Diamond
Cliffview Resort
Elemental Climbing
Miguel's Pizza
Trango // Tenaya

\$2,500+

Ale-8-One
Blue Water Ropes
La Sportiva
Maker's Mark
Ocún
prAna
Quest Outdoors
Redpoint BBQ
Red River Rockhouse
The North Face
West Sixth Brewing
YETI
5.Life

\$1,000+

Adventurtle
Arc'teryx
Axcel Energy
Bailout Systems
Breaking Trail Jerky
Climb Time
Evolv
Joshua Tree Skin Care
Hop's
Lee County Tourism
LEF Climbing
MadTree Brewing
One Love
North Mass Boulder
Petzl
RAB
Rockquest
SCARPA
Scenic Cabin Rentals &
Daniel Boone Coffee Shop
Sport Bolting
Wolfe County Tourism

\$500+

BedRock
Bluegrass Climbing School
BÜ Sunscreen
COROS
Country Boy Brewing
Dynamite Starfish
Elite Performance Climbing
Gnarly Nutrition
Mammut
Physivantage
Powell County Tourism
Red River Gorgeous
Rocky Talkie
Send Climbing
Southeast Mountain Guides
Sterling Ropes
UK Earth & Environmental Sciences
Wabi Wear Repair
Wild Country
Wolverine Publishing
5.Life

Supporters

Access Fund
American Alpine Club
Catalyst Sports
Clif Bar
Climb Cincy
Climbers for Christ
Lago Linda Hideaway
Muir Valley
RedSTAR Wilderness EMS
REI (Cincinnati)
Squid Squad
Yosemite Climbing Association