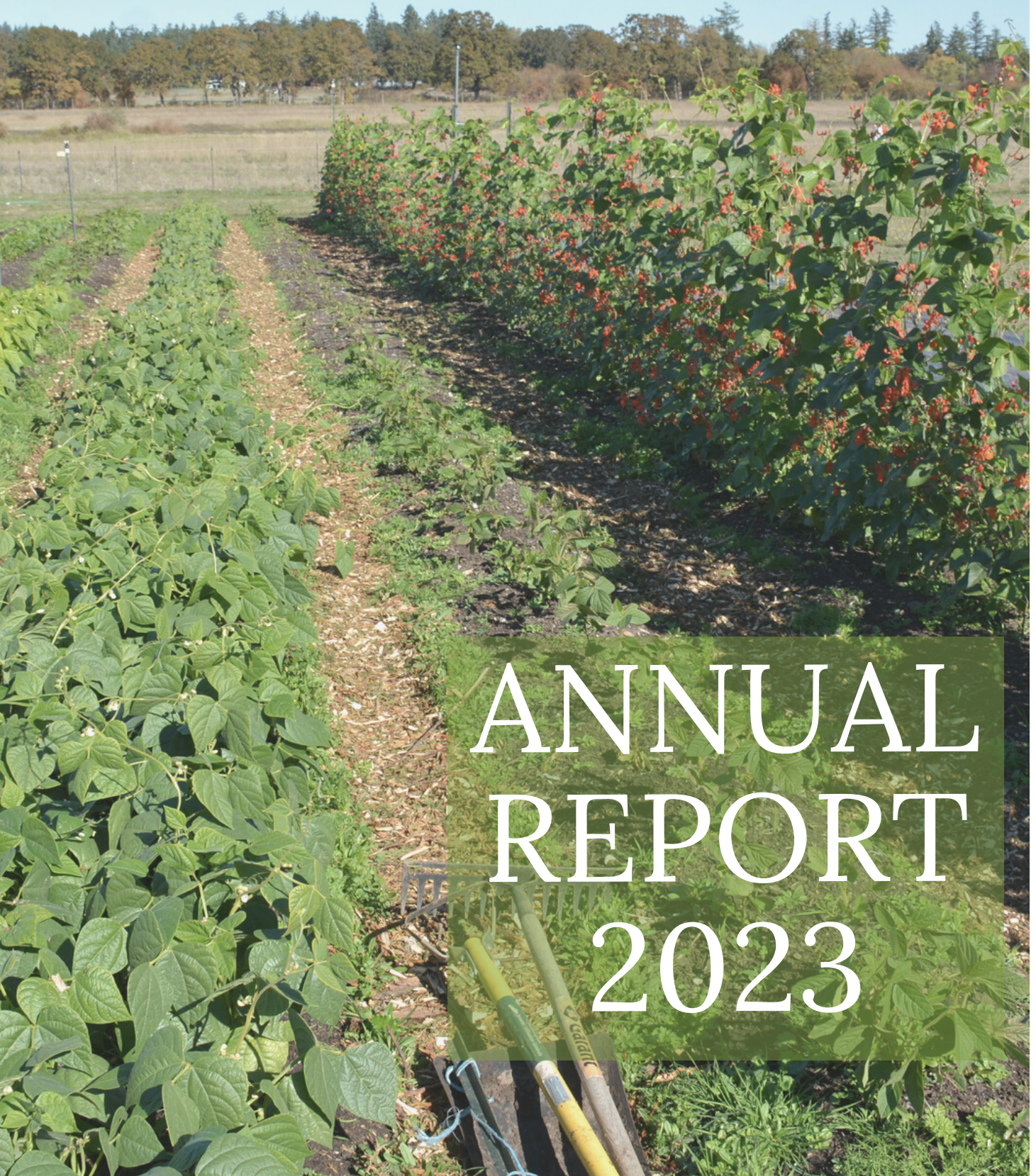




**SANDOWN CENTRE**  
FOR REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE



ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2023

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## WHERE WE ARE NOW

**The Circular Farm and Food Society (CFFS)** is the non-profit organization which sets the vision and mission, and oversees the management of the Sandown Centre for Regenerative Agriculture. The CFFS was founded in 2019 with the goal of becoming the long term operator for the 83 acre Sandown site (located on Glamorgan Rd in North Saanich). The CFFS was granted a ten year lease by the North Saanich Council in October of 2020, and Sandown Centre opened its gates in early 2021. Sandown Centre's work in 2023 continued to align with District goals, outlined in the Whole Community Agriculture Strategy and 2023-2027 Strategic Plan; including to protect the natural environment, and to focus on local agriculture and support food production and systems.

**Our mission is to steward 83 acres of farm, seasonal wetland, meadow and forest in North Saanich. Sandown supports, teaches and engages with emerging growers, farmers, researchers and community members; serving as a dynamic regional hub for food systems transformation and climate action.**

With investment in fencing, irrigation, buildings (greenhouse, cold /dry storage, processing), original incubator plots and community garden beds, the critical farm infrastructure was established in 2022. **In 2023, our focus was on increasing the amount of land under cultivation and we welcomed more farmers and community gardeners to grow at Sandown Centre.**

Unfortunately, **the land is severely degraded from historical use as a racetrack, resulting in extreme compaction, loss of topsoil, lack of soil biology and biodiversity, and invasive species.** At the same time, because soil and ecosystem health are foundational to regenerative agriculture, we have the unique opportunity to demonstrate that through time, and the right land management practices, **we can actively restore land, while growing delicious, nutrient-rich food for the local community.** Our soil science partners are validating our progress.

**In 2023, The Growing Young Farmers Society** (Registration #84181 6887 RR001) entrusted Sandown Centre to run its youth programming, thereby creating an exciting partnership of our organizations and the opportunity for kids to visit a working farm, without the risk of exposure to toxic pesticides, herbicides/fungicides or synthetic fertilizers, and learn about sustainable food production.



# TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Sandown Centre is located on the traditional lands of the SENĆOTEN speaking WSÍ,ĶEM (Tseycum) peoples of the WSÁNEĆ First Nations. We recognize, with deep humility and respect, the people who stewarded these lands since time immemorial and the devastation caused by colonization.

Regenerative Agriculture draws from the wisdom and environmental connection that is found in Indigenous food systems throughout history and the globe. During colonization and settlement, the need for farmland was used to remove Indigenous people from their ancestral lands and disrupt their traditional foodways, causing widespread suffering and loss of life. Integral to regenerative agriculture is food sovereignty, equity, justice, environmental conservation, and the knowledge that we must care for the earth to care for ourselves.



# 2023 BY THE NUMBERS

**12** farmers operating **9** farm businesses

**6** acres under cultivation

Over **50** varieties of edible crops grown

**1,200** visitors to the farm

**66** community garden beds

**6** workshops for local area farmers



# MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

I love farmers. I named my youngest son, George, in part because it means farmer in Greek. I also feel very vulnerable living on an island dependent on imported food. It was this gratitude and concern for local food that called me to this work. Learning of the many barriers to entry for the next generation, especially women and BIPOC farmers, was a key motivator for me as one of the founders of Sandown Centre in 2020.

The pandemic and post-pandemic inflation have hit both farmers and not-for-profits hard. As a result, 2023 was a crucial time for Sandown Centre to transition to stable leadership, with an Executive Director dedicated to revenue generation and fundraising. One of my proudest moments in my five years of service to Sandown Centre was welcoming Stephanie Jacobs (one of our cohort of farmers in 2021) as our first Executive Director. I am immensely proud of her and the entire Sandown team including Jennifer Cline, Trevor Kryt, Emily Harris and Matthew Kyriakides. We could not do what we do for our farmers and the community without this team.

And 2023 was our best year yet at Sandown Centre. We exceeded what was planned for both the number of farmers and community gardeners on the site. Thanks to the hardwork and dedication of the farmers, food is being grown at Sandown, regeneratively, and the health of the land and soil is returning. And we as community members are benefiting - because, after all, soil health equals human health. My family and I ate very well this year, thanks to farmer Veronique from Frozen Coast Farm, who grew a season's worth of veggies for us - including the best delicata squash I have ever tasted.

There are so many ways to get involved at Sandown Centre, and when spring arrives, I welcome you to join the community, visit Sandown, and eat something delicious!

Sincerely,

*Lindsey Boyle*



Photo Credit: Taylor Roades

# REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE AT SANDOWN

Regenerative Agriculture is a farming philosophy and set of practices which place soil and ecosystem health at the foundation of food production. At Sandown, we adhere to and teach six accepted practices in regenerative agriculture:

1. Minimize soil disturbance
2. Maximize crop diversity
3. Keep the soil covered
4. Keep a living root in the ground year-round
5. Integrate animals
6. Understand the context of your farm

Our farmers and growers do not use any pesticides, herbicides/fungicides or synthetic fertilizers. In 2023, we utilized lots of compost, mixed species cover crops, straw and paper mulch to keep soil covered, rotational grazing with sheep, installed native perennial hedgerows and pollinator corridors, and grew over 50 varieties of crops for production, soil restoration and biodiversity.

Collectively, these farming practices improve resilience to climate extremes, support biodiversity and environmental conservation, and sequester atmospheric carbon - all while growing bountiful, nutrient-dense food.

To learn more about the practice and many positive impacts of regenerative agriculture visit: [sandowncentre.com/about](https://sandowncentre.com/about)



# 2023 PROGRAMS AND IMPACT

## Regenerative Farmer Program

The Regenerative Farmer Program works to foster the next generation of environmentally sustainable, local farmers. We reduce barriers to farming by providing land access, tools, infrastructure and mentorship to new-entrant farmers, to help them grow local food, hone their skills, and launch their farm businesses in a supported, low-risk environment.



### Land Access, Shared Tools and Amenities:

Farmers license the use of 1/4-1/2 acre plots at market rates, and share access to a greenhouse, shaded processing area, cold storage, dry storage, Jang seeder and walk-behind tractor with flail mower and rotary plough, and new for 2023, a flame weeder.

**In 2023 we increased land under cultivation from 4 to 6 acres, allowing the program to grow from 7 to 12 farmers.**

### Mentorship and Support:

In 2023, our on-site farm manager Jennifer Cline provided ongoing farming and business mentorship, field advice, troubleshooting and sometimes a shoulder to cry on, as farmers contend with the ongoing and increasing challenges of farming today.

As part of the 2023 cohort, the regenerative farmers also relied on each other to bounce ideas around, lend a hand rolling out a tarp, or share a quick lunch break in the midst of a long day.

## Regenerative Farmer Program cont.

### Farm Businesses at Sandown 2023:

Frozen Coast Farm/TINY FLWRS\*/Luminous Gardens/  
Testbed Project\*/Regrowth Food and Fibre\*/Fireweed  
Farms/Fairweather Farm and Garden/A-L Grows Herbs/  
Farm or Die Agricultural Solutions LTD.\*

*\*owned by more than 1 farmer*

*++Six of the farm businesses are women-owned.*

### Production and Market Channels:

This year, the farmers grew over 50 different varieties of edible crops, including mixed vegetables and berries, mushrooms as well as cut flowers and medicinal plants. Farmers also incorporated pollinator-friendly crop rows into their production areas.

Sandown farmers sold through food box subscriptions (known as Community Supported Agriculture, or CSAs), grocery stores, cafés, at weekly farmers markets such as the North Saanich Farm Market, through collaborative farmer sales, direct to consumers, at Sandown's spring plant sale, and through aggregated distribution such as the South Island Farm Hub and the Good Food Box.

We know many residents of North Saanich are avid home cooks and appreciate the diverse and delicious ingredients made available from the Sandown farm businesses!



*“Sandown has been a really great place to start my business because I was able to start small, build it up, get a feel for what I like to grow, and what grew well here, and what my markets were, and I was able to build and have the support because we have a lot of shared facilities and tools on site”.*

*- Farmer Veronique, Frozen Coast Farm*

## Growing Young Farmers at Sandown

This year Sandown began work to develop on-site youth programs on behalf of the Growing Young Farmers Society (GYFS), a charitable organization dedicated to providing hands-on education to children on healthy eating, sustainable food production, and environmental stewardship.

Previously, GYFS ran in-school garden classes, and children's summer camps (including at Sandown in 2022). In 2023, we raised funds and started the plans to build a wheelchair-accessible teaching garden, and created field-trip programming for K-12 students. The teaching garden will be finished early next year, and field-trip programming will begin in the spring of 2024.



## Community Garden

Sandown Centre's community garden is a lively place where residents can get their hands in the dirt, grow delicious, nutrient-dense food, meet their neighbours, and contribute to the restoration and stewardship of the land. This year we expanded the community garden to cover 15,000 square feet of land at Sandown, increasing from 54 to 66 garden beds.

Sandown Centre offered our season-long gardening course for the third year, where participants meet at the farm one evening a week, from March to October, to learn comprehensive gardening skills in a supported, hands-on class.

*"My snap peas were amazing - I was very proud of what I learned that I could grow". - Course Participant*



# RESTORATION AND STEWARDSHIP

At Sandown we are actively working to restore degraded ecosystems on-site, including agricultural soils, coastal Douglas fir forest, former Garry oak meadow, and a seasonal wetland.

## Sandown Soil Lab

Led by PhD candidate and scientist Brooke Hayes from the Uvic EcoSoil Lab, the Sandown Soil Lab is home base for soil restoration on-site. In 2023 we built biologically active compost piles, and used them to brew compost tea and extracts to apply directly to the soil. This biology boost helps increase soil microbes; the microscopic building blocks for healthy soil, healthy plants and nutritious food.

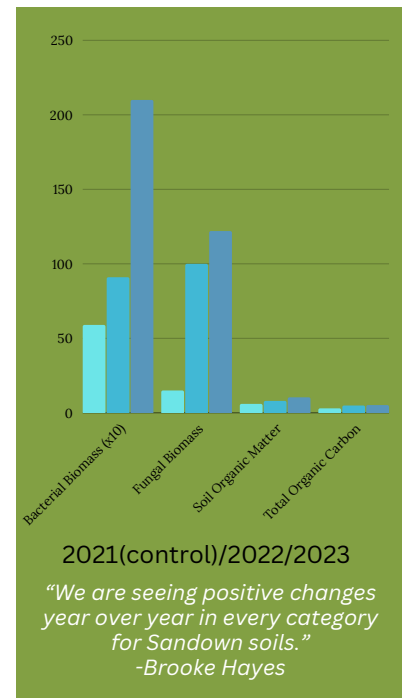
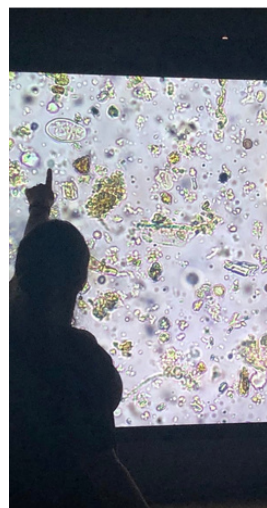
When we began in 2021, the soil in the farming areas was so poor, it looked like concrete, and crumbled to dust between your fingers. In just three years, we have seen dramatic improvements. We have already made huge progress, thanks to the tireless efforts of our farmers, and the addition of compost, compost tea, regenerative growing, and lots and lots of plants!



Soil on a farmer's plot - 2021



Soil on the same plot - 2023





## The Sandown Centre Volunteers

Sandown Centre has a dedicated group of forest stewards who volunteer their time to remove English ivy and Himalayan blackberry from the forest. We are grateful for their enthusiasm and care in undertaking this massive and critically important task!

In addition to the ongoing work of our forest stewards, in 2023 we hosted three volunteer invasive species removal events, advertising to the larger community. We welcomed 25 volunteers, who removed English ivy from the forest and cut back Scotch broom.



Interested in volunteering?

Subscribe to our mailing list for information on upcoming volunteer opportunities!

[www.sandowncentre.com](http://www.sandowncentre.com)

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

In 2023 Sandown Centre welcomed over **1,200** people to the farm to learn about what we are doing, how they can get involved and to make vital social connections. Another **2,000** people engaged with us digitally through our newsletter and social media (Facebook, Instagram).

## **Spring Plant Sale:**

We hosted the second annual spring plant sale in May, welcoming the community on to the farm to buy locally grown plant starts for their gardens.

## **Soil Sunday Open House:**

In July over **50** local farmers and community members came to Sandown to hear about the on-site soil research from Dr. Charlotte Norris of the Pacific Forestry Centre, Soil Lab leader and PhD candidate Brooke Hayes, and our Restoration and Stewardship Manager Matthew Kyriakides, who is doing his PhD research on site. Visitors learned about the soil/food web, atmospheric carbon sequestration in soil, on-site soil restoration, and how regenerative agriculture has the potential to improve plant health and crop yields.



*"It's great to be able to come here and buy plants for my garden from the farmers."*



*"I didn't realize there was so much happening with the soil here. This is really interesting."*

## **Flavour Trails Festival:**

The Flavour Trails Festival is a signature agricultural event held annually, organized by the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR). We welcomed over **750** people to enjoy a Sandown market, live music, food trucks, sheep shearing demo and everyone's favourite, zucchini boat races!



Photo Credit:CRFAIR

## Educational Opportunities

Education and awareness building are foundational to Sandown's work, and an important part of building capacity for improving the food system. This year, the Sandown Centre welcomed 12 students from the University of Victoria and from Vancouver Island University to do co-op placements, research and capstone projects on site.



*"Sandown gave me the hands-on educational experience I never could have achieved without them. Their presence provides a unique learning opportunity that happily includes not just students but the entire community."*  
-Teale,  
UVIC co-op student

In 2023 we offered six workshops to support farmers (both from Sandown and the wider region) building their skills.

### Business Planning (Spring 2023):

1. Farm Finance with Maddy Clerk of Field Guide Finance
2. Succession Planning workshop with local farmers Emily and Tyler from The Plot Market Garden

### Four-Part Regenerative Farming Seminar Series (Fall 2023):

1. How to Design, Install and Maintain a Hedgerow: Taught by Kristin Miskelly of Satinflower Nurseries.
2. Green Mulch and Perennial Polycultures: Interplanting for Soil Coverage and Biodiversity - Taught by Solara Goldwynn of Hatchet & Seed.
3. Plant Deficiencies, Diagnostics and Targeted Amendments in a Regenerative Context: Taught by Shellie MacDonald
4. Building Resilience as a Farmer - Taught by Kareno and Kimi of Sweet Digz Farm



## Partnerships and Collaborations

We are delighted to have sheep on-site during the farm season, from local livestock producer **Pasture Perfect**. The sheep support our rotational grazing efforts, and utilize areas of the field that are not suitable for crop production.

This year, the Sandown Centre welcomed an on-site collaboration with **Farm Folk City Folk (FFCF)**, BC's oldest and largest food and agriculture charitable non-profit organization. Vancouver Island Seed Security Program Coordinator Lisa Willot grew climate adapted local seed for trialing, breeding and increasing local seed security. In addition to seeds, Lisa grew over 1200 lbs of produce on the ¼ acre plot, which was donated to the Victoria Native Friendship Centre.

We formed an exciting collaboration with **ReWood** in 2023, a local non-profit with a dedicated group of skilled volunteers who divert lumber from the landfill and reuse it to build much needed infrastructure and garden projects.



**Exciting Recognition:**  
Sandown Centre was the **winner** of the capital region's Good Food Network awards, for both **Leader Good Food Economy** and **Overall Good Food Champion 2023!**



Photo Credit: CRFAIR

# GRATITUDE FOR SUPPORTERS



The Sandown Centre wishes to express its gratitude to the District of North Saanich for its ongoing support for our work, through the Agricultural Reserve Fund. This award winning reserve model directs commercial tax revenue from the Sandown commercial subdivision back to the Sandown Centre, to support the delivery of the Regenerative Farmer and Community programs, and ongoing restoration and stewardship of the Sandown lands.

We are also extremely thankful for the additional support and funding received from:



In-kind Donors - ReWood, Gardener's Kit, Hoyne Brewing, Sea Wench Naturals, Fairmont Empress, Russels Nursery, West Coast Seeds, John Gibbs.

And a heartfelt thank you to our private community donors for their ongoing support. We would not be here without you!

If you are interested in supporting The Sandown Centre,  
visit our website or reach out to start a conversation!  
[www.sandowncentre.com](http://www.sandowncentre.com)

# STAFF AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS



## **Operations Team - From left to right:**

Emily Harris - Community Engagement Manager

Trevor Kryt - Facilities and Finance Manager

Stephanie Jacobs - Executive Director

Matthew Kyriakides - Restoration and Stewardship Manager

Jenn Cline - Farm Operations Manager

## **Board of Directors:**

Lindsey Boyle - Board Chair

Penny Gibbs - Treasurer

Ann Eastman - Secretary

Brooke Williams - Farmer Representative

Peter Chandler - Director at Large

Nick Meelker - Director at Large

Charlotte Harman - Director at Large

# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

