



RIPPLE
THE CENTER FOR EDUCATION & ECOSYSTEM STUDIES

2024

Annual Report



View Online

OUR MISSION

Expanding environmental literacy and stewardship through field-based science and research experiences.

OUR VISION

We envision a future filled with scientifically literate, responsible, environmental stewards empowered to create a more resilient Montana.

OUR VALUES:



Stewardship

We exist to ensure sustainable futures.



Trust

We communicate factual information that the public can trust.



Science

We encourage curiosity in ourselves and others through scientific inquiry.



Education

We promote scientific literacy through place-based experiential learning.



Inclusion

We strive to provide accessible science for all.



Letter From the Director

In 2024, the Clark Fork Watershed Education Program (CFWEP), became an officially recognized Center of the Montana University System. This change in designation afforded us the opportunity to change our name, recognizing that we now serve students throughout Montana. Core to our mission is the story of the Clark Fork Watershed. The CFWEP program will continue as originally designed under the new Center umbrella. We will utilize this successful model to inspire hope and action within all of our projects and future development, ensuring that we continue our legacy of environmental stewardship. Our new name, Ripple: The Center for Education and Ecosystem studies was chosen in order to reflect the ripples of change our program creates. We have also begun to recruit affiliate faculty and are positioning the Center to provide more research opportunities for Montana students.

In 2024, the team has made excellent progress in each of our strategic goal areas. Some highlights are the new partnership with Missoula Conservation District. We are developing a citizen-science research project for high school students in the Missoula area. Students will be involved in studying tributaries of the Clark Fork, providing important information regarding nutrient uptake in the tributaries. A second highlight is the rollout of our low-tech, process-based, restoration (LTPBR) modules for landowners. This project was the brainchild of our long-time partner, Ted Dodge of the Watershed Restoration Coalition. The goal of this project is to create quick, scientifically accurate learning modules tailored to landowners. MT Tech's Restoration Ecology students will provide on the ground monitoring of LTPBR techniques that landowners choose.

We continue to pursue grant and private funding to launch the EcosySTEM project. The vision for this project is to engage students in learning science while contributing to their communities through scientific enterprise. Among the many partners who have been inspired to join this project are Montana Technological University, MT Fish Wildlife and Parks, the National Park Service, Dr. Shane Doyle, US Forest Service, Yellowstone Safe Passages, Rural Resilience, Montana Resources, University of Montana Bird Ecology Lab, Butte Local Development Corporation, and the Livingston and Butte Public Schools. With support from the Cinnabar Foundation, the first module is well under way.

January 2025 has opened with great uncertainty for non-profits that rely on federal grant funding. Ripple's leadership team is working to address the possible budget deficits. Our program has been successful with gaining highly competitive federal funds during our 20 years of operation. However, we have always viewed those funds as a long shot. We carefully craft our budgets to be insulated from possible funding cuts at the federal and state levels. Still, recent changes make our private donations more critical than ever. Your dollars directly impact the lives of MT students and teachers. To continue our legacy of creating the next generation of informed and scientifically literate Montana citizens and environmental stewards, we will need you. Thank you for your on-going support!

Kind Regards,

Rayelynn Brandt

Executive Director

Achievements

32% Increase
in New
Individual &
Business
Donors

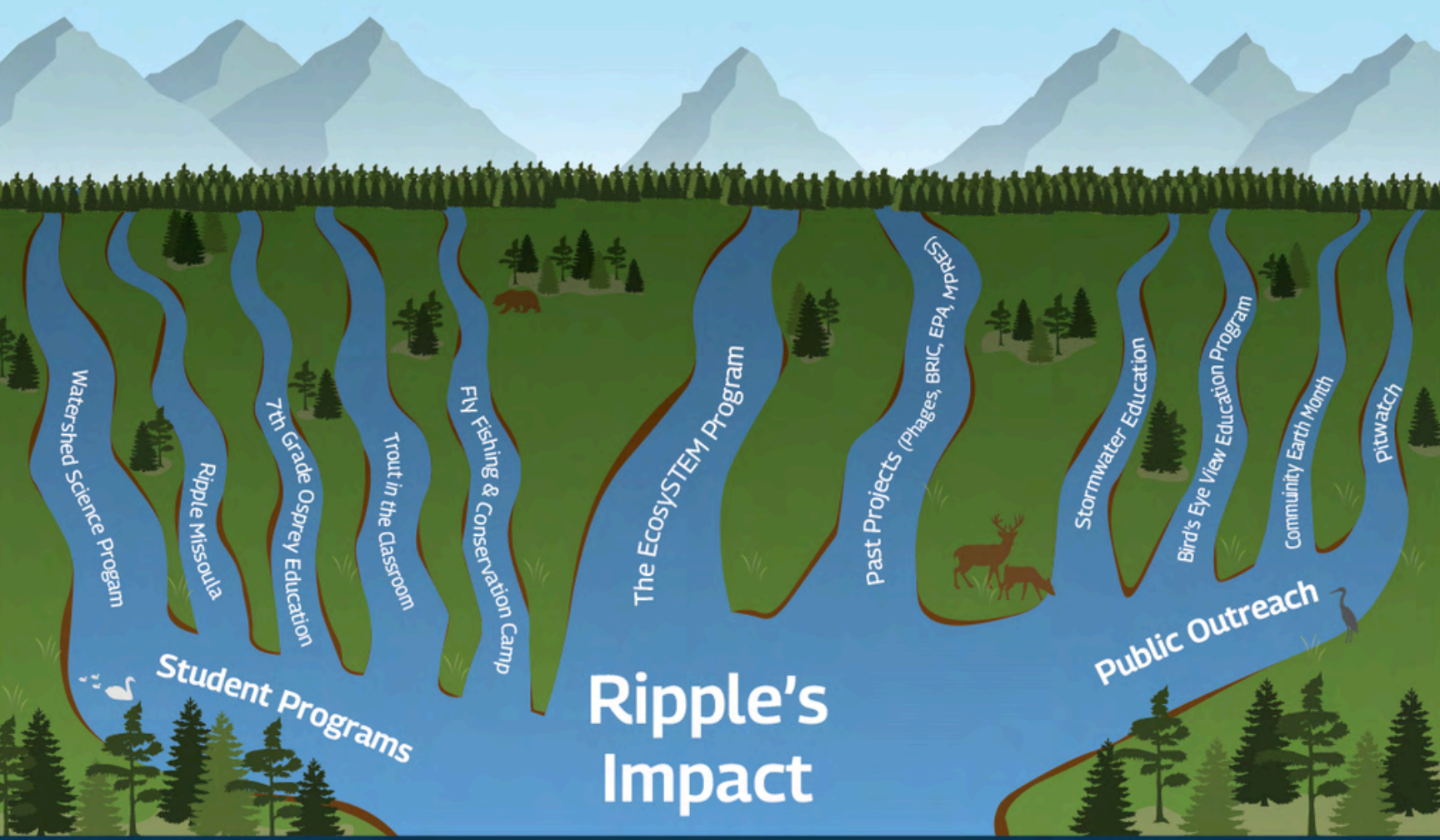
Increased
Restoration
Tour
Participation
by 146%

29% Increase
of Small
Contracts &
Fees for
Service

Decreased
Overall
Spending in
2024 by
16% vs 2023

Added 24
New In-Kind
Donors -
Raising
Over
\$17,500

Submitted
11 New
Contracts &
Grants



Our programs reach students, teachers, and community members. Each program acts as a tributary, joining together to create a wider impact.

2024 by the numbers



7th Grade Osprey Pilot Program

164

Students Taught



Restoration Tours

427

People

14

Different Groups



Watershed Science Education Interns

4

University of Montana Students



Watershed Science Program

1,191

Students Taught in

35

Clark Fork Classrooms



Trout in the Classroom

259

Students Taught in

15

Rural Classrooms



Fly Fishing & Conservation Camp

23

Campers Educated



Earth Month &
CUBS Week

543

Students & Community
Members Involved



PHAGES

16

Teachers Trained &

1,189

Students Reached



Mainstreet Uptown Butte Folk
Festival Family Area

9

Different Groups Represented

28+

Volunteers

500+

Visitors



Bird's-Eye View
Education Program:

257

Community Members
Engaged

Learn more about our programs at ripplemt.org



2024 Volunteers

Volunteers are essential to helping our programs run smoothly and effectively. Thank you to everyone who has given their time to Ripple this year:

Taleigh Adrian • Aidan Anderson • Monica Berreman • Judy Boyle • Weston Decker • Jenna Dohman • Chris Doyle • Sara Edinberg • Tala Eneboe • Turner Gill • Amelia Gilsdorf • Ashely Golightly • Aviv Guscio • Geffen Guscio • John Mike Haldane • Ann Hanson • Karmen Hess • Jonathon Karlen • Amanda Kimbell • Chris Leipheimer • Mikayla Lewis • Kaicee Liva • Jacqueline Marez • Mark Mariano • Kylie Marks • Joan Martin • Kate Mattern • Claire Mbia • Tom Mocilac • Sarah Mootry • Wyatt Nielson • Mackenzie Norton • Nikki Pontier-Carrels • Nicholas Rasschaert • Amy Jo Rohrbauk • Brandon Rubertus • Abigail Sherwood • Judi Shutte • Autumn Silk • Cory Sonnemann • Fletcher Stone • Mary Sutherland • Kiley Sweet, August Tolzman • Jared Trilling

2024 Teacher Awards

Ripple works with some of the leading teachers in the state. Several of our teachers have been recognized for their outstanding work this year, including:

Sarah Urban - Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching 2023

Kate Belinda - Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators 2024



STRATEGIC GOALS

Looking to the future, Ripple is preparing for more growth. We made good progress on the strategic goals we set for ourselves in 2024. These goals will guide our efforts through 2025 and 2026 as we bring in new projects and expand existing programs.



Secure
sustainable
& diverse
funding



Attract,
train, &
retain top
talent

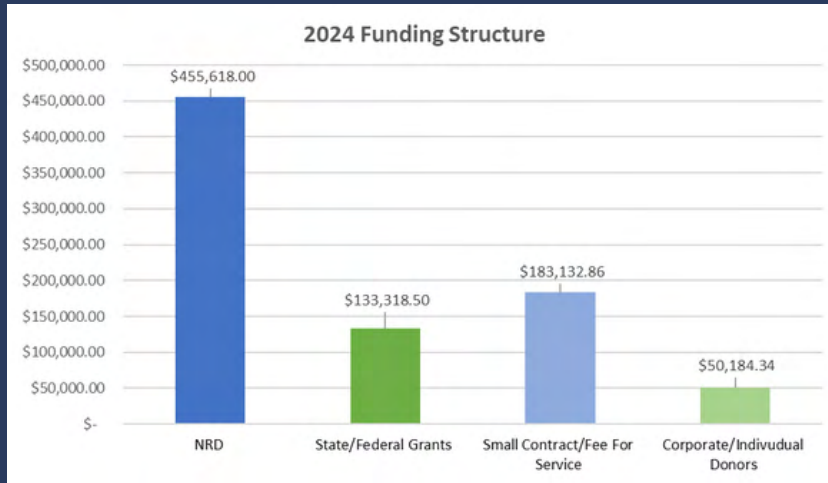


Extend
Partnerships
and Program
Outreach



Build and
Broaden
Research
Activities

Funding Structure



Ripple's funding transition plan rolled out in 2022. Our goal is to balance funding sources from four areas: 25% from NRD, 25% from state and federal grants; 25% from small contracts and fee for service programming; and 25% from corporate and individual sponsors. Since the inception of this plan in 2022, we have made significant strides in these areas. We have decreased overall spending from NRD, and we have increased small contract and fee-for-service programming to \$183,132, or approximately 73% of the \$250,000 target. Our state and federal grants portion is down in 2024 due to federal grant renewals and new proposals

that are still pending as of this report. Our NIH-SEPA award represents the largest change in this section. Individual and corporate donors are down by 15% from 2023. The change in this area represents a strategy change taken by the team to request larger donations from foundations rather than small, one-time requests.

As the horizons for federal funding in 2025 seem to be changing, we are working to amend our funding plans. We currently have four requests into private foundations that are pending. We have been working with state government to determine if there is a viable path for direct funding for Ripple beyond the NRD settlement dollars, and we are working with Montana Tech's Foundation to become part of their large-scale capital campaign. We are confident that we can continue providing excellent service for Montana's students. We will need your help this year. Thank you to all of our donors who have supported us in 2024 and please consider us for your giving in 2025. To make a donation or share other ideas with us regarding future projects, please reach out via our website at ripplemt.org.

2024 Donors

Our work is possible because of the generosity of our donors. We are grateful to everyone who financially contributed to Ripple this year.

Cash Donors

\$1000+ Rayelynn Brandl & Jim Holodnick, Colleen Elliott & Chris Gammons, Bill & Sidni Markovich, Joe Griffin & Sherry Vogel, George Grant Chapter of Trout Unlimited

\$500 - \$999 Bob Bailes, Tammy Gordon, Steven Kittel, Kayla & John Lappin, Kelsey Marquez, Stephanie Murphy, Rachel Robinson, Michael Rodriguez, Tyler Shaffer, Eric Sperling, Water & Environmental Technologies, The Archibald Company, GEO Steele Co. Inc., Jack W Harkins Estate

\$250 - \$499 Terry Biere, William Callaghan, Cody Clark, Tommy Heppler, Carrie Keane, Sara Lester, Nicki Miller Houston, Jim Mullins, Justin Ringsak, Una Schlaebitz, Josh Vincent, Livingston Elks Charitable Foundation, Park County Community Foundation, Clearwater Mountain Properties

\$100 - \$249 Brad & Francene Archibald, Rhonda Coguill, Amanda Cyr, Chris Doyle, Alexx Foley, Aidan Francisco, James Gillespie, Parker Hansen, Bev & Fred Hartline, Jace Haynes, Mark Heims, Brandon Heims, Nestor Hill, David Hutchins, Gary Icopini, Lindsay Kambich, Nancy Kennedy, Chris Leipheimer, Johanna Lester, Lori Lubke, John McKee, Linda Moore, Doug & Patti Neal, Chelsea O'Connell, William Patrick, Sharon Pielaet, Amanda Rapstad, Michelle Thomas, Melissa Wanamaker, John & Leah McCarthy Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund

2024 Funders

**DENNIS & PHYLLIS
WASHINGTON
FOUNDATION**

**PARK COUNTY
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
CINNABAR
FOUNDATION**



In-Kind Donors

\$1000+ Rayelynn Brandl & Jim Holodnick, Washoe Park Trout Hatchery, Butte Auto, Pintler's Portal Hostel

\$500 - \$999 Tom Mocilac, APOC World, Montana Tech Athletics, Foundation & Campus Store, SWMT Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

\$250 - \$499 American Prairie Reserve, Claire Emery Art, Fairmont Hot Springs, Hannah Jakob Scientific Illustration, Headframe Spirits & Manufacturing, LB Snow, Montana Learning Center, Old Works Golf Course, Run Your Pack, University of Montana Bird Ecology Lab/Bird's Eye View, Wolf's Mercantile, Pizza Ranch, Foley Engineering

\$100 - \$249 5518 Design, Kayla Lappin, Richard & Sharon Miles, Monica Schwemin, Dean Stringer, Michelle Thomas, ACE Hardware - Anaconda, Adventure Missoula, Bedrock Sandals, Garnet Mountain Pottery, Mark Smith Photography, Montana Therapeutic Massage, onX, Orangetheory Fitness, Philipsburg Brewery, Riddle's Jewelry, Science Mine, The Kitchen Shop, Woods' Rose Wellness Center

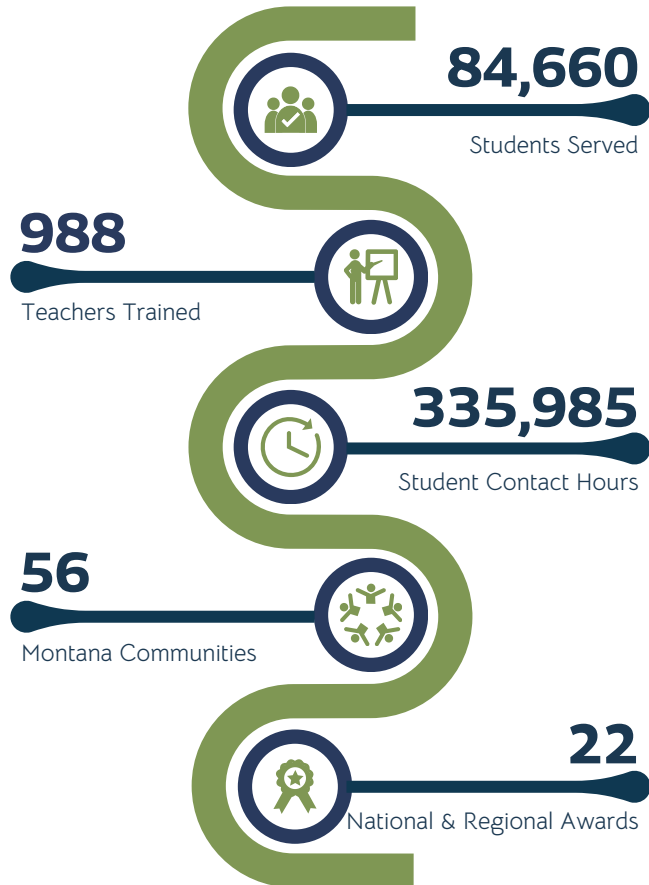
Executive Leadership Team

Ripple's Executive Leadership Team, a volunteer committee of community leaders dedicated to helping us expand our funding sources.

Dr. Tim Elgren - *Montana Tech Provost*
Dr. Steve Gammon - *Montana Tech (retired)*
Brad Archibald - *Pioneer Technical Services*
Maggie Davis-Welch - *Butte Broadcasting, Inc.*
Rick Edwards - *NorthWestern Energy*
Elizabeth Erickson - *Water and Environmental Technologies*
Jeremy Fleege - *Montana Resources*
Erick Greene - *Montana Osprey Project*
Sidni Markovich - *Markovich Inc.*
Matt Vincent - *Rampart Solutions*

TOTAL SERVED SINCE 2005

For All Ripple Direct Programming



Montana Tech
1300 West Park Street
Butte, Montana 59701

University of Montana
32 Campus Drive
Missoula, Montana 59812

Staff

Rayelynn Brandl
Executive Director
rbrandl@mtech.edu
(406) 496-4898

Tammy Gordon
Budget Analyst
tgordon@mtech.edu
(406) 496-4136

Dalit Guscio
Missoula Program Manager
dalit.guscio@umontana.edu
(406) 361-0599

Chris Pavlovich
Dir. Programming & Evaluation
cpavlovich@mtech.edu
(406) 224-0009

Samuel Klusmeyer
Communications & Outreach Coordinator
sklusmeyer@mtech.edu
(406) 496-4833

Ripple's work is made possible by...



SEPA SCIENCE EDUCATION
PARTNERSHIP AWARD
SUPPORTED BY THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

MONTANA
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

DEQ
MONTANA



Learn more about
Ripple at **ripplemt.org**