



# EcoForesters

Forestry. Conservation. Education.

# 2021

## Annual Report

*EcoForesters' restoration crew working on conservation trust land.*



*Michelle Weymouth battling kudzu on the South Mountain game lands.*

**As EcoForesters staff prepares for 2022, we would like to take a moment to reflect on our accomplishments of 2021. The common thread through all of them is dedication. Our clients are dedicated to forest health and investing in the natural world. Our staff is dedicated to helping landowners by spending time with them and putting in the hard work restoring forests. Our partners are dedicated to bringing ideas and resources to the table that allow our programming to be sustainable and successful. And our supporters have shown a dedication to our mission by helping us reach our goals and grow our organization.**

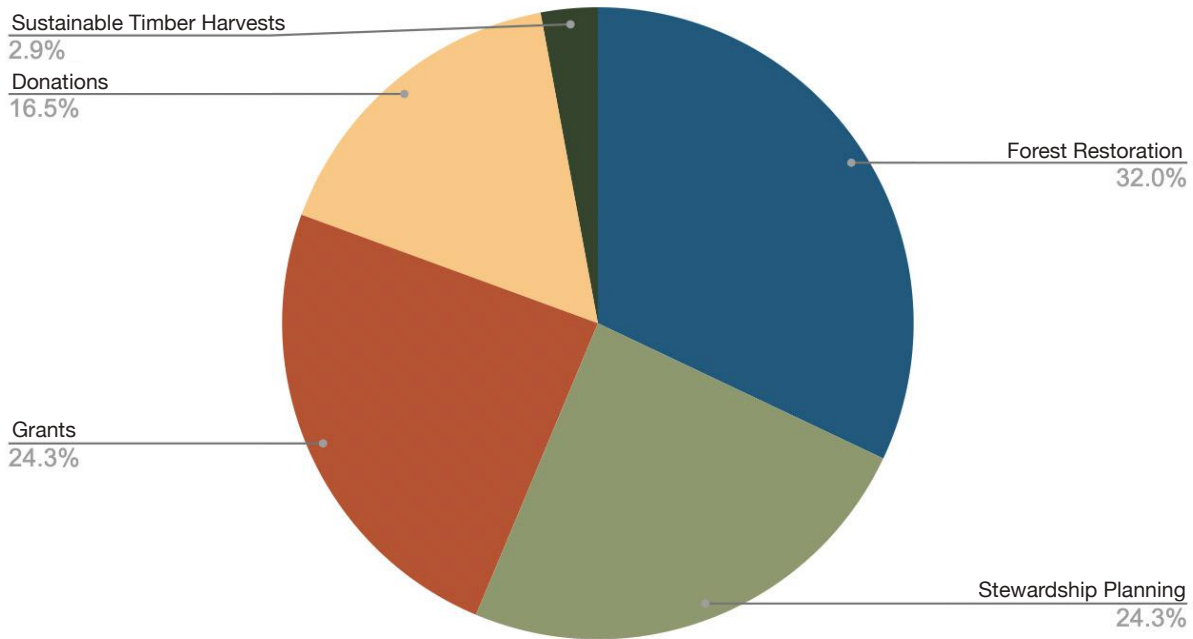
**We continue to learn, sometimes from mistakes and most often from our clients and partners. As we plan for the future, we ask your help in making sure we get it right. Please reach out to us with questions, suggestions, or for opportunities to get involved in the changing world of forestry. We value all of our dedicated partners and could not have done it without you.**

**247K**  
Total acres treated and covered by Forest Stewardship Plans to date..

**437**  
Acres of Invasive Species treated this year.

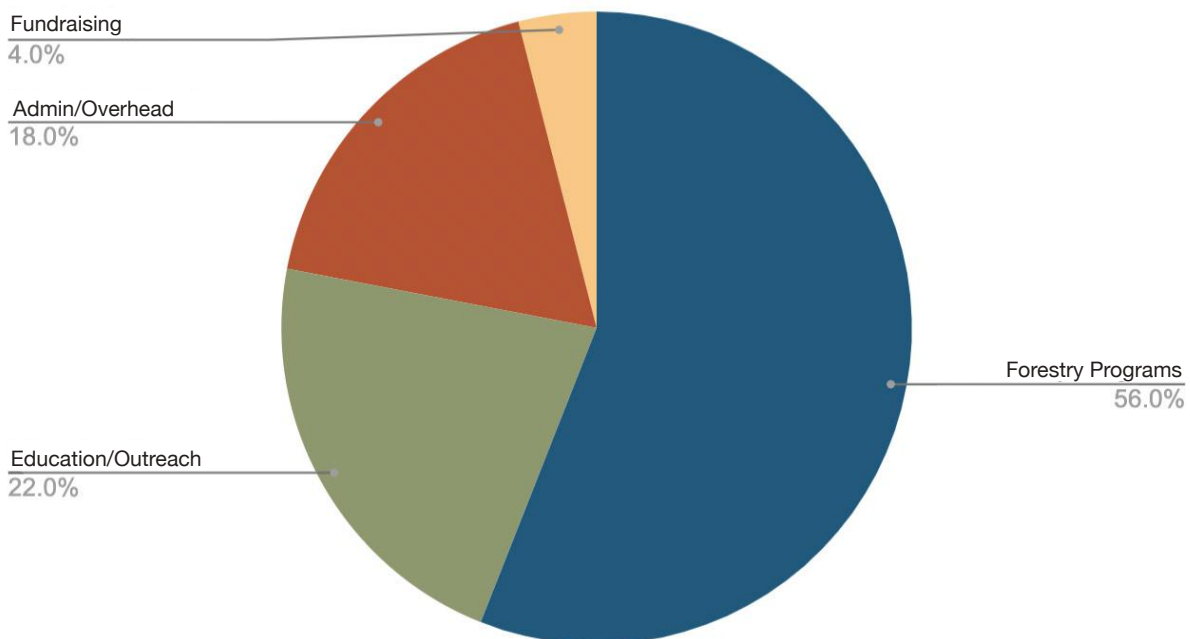
## Income

Recent strategic planning helped identify areas for growth and where we could improve processes in our day to day. Growth in our forest restoration sector increased with demand for invasive plant control and agreeable weather conditions. Our outreach programming expanded with our Sandy Mush forestry project and COVID created opportunities for video creation and distribution.



## Expenses

Opportunities for 2022 include expanding our restoration crew and increased funding for forest stewardship on conservation and public lands. We also will strive to improve the benefits we offer our staff. We have a dedicated bunch that impact our region with their hard work. We would like to make sure they can flourish and be compensated justly. The board of directors has EcoForesters poised for smart growth and we look forward to the future.



# 2021 EcoForesters Highlights

## Launched the FOREST Fund to double the forest stewardship for local conservation lands.

Identifying the funding barrier to forest stewardship is not enough. We must innovate around raising funds for forest restoration projects and with partners, we created the Forest Restoration and Stewardship (FOREST) Fund. By working with the Community Foundation of WNC and local industry partners, we highlighted the connection between natural services and economic development for Western North Carolina. From breweries to forest products, local businesses are helping restore forests on conservation lands that have been degraded by invasive plants. We will continue to grow this fund in order to help local communities and call attention to the role forests play in the beauty and success of the region.

1



## Wrote 26 forest stewardship plans to cover 2,260 acres of forest.

All forest stewardship should start with planning. This process puts the landowner in tune with their current forest conditions and a blueprint for keeping it healthy. In 2021, EcoForesters wrote 26 management plans for private landowners, local land trusts, and tribal lands. With planning in place, landowners can properly budget for and implement stewardship activities that put their forest on a positive ecological trajectory. It is also crucial for obtaining cost share funding and realizing the full potential of their forest.

2



## Engaged the Sandy Mush Community in forestry and provided resources for rural landowners and conservation lands

Our flagship program started in 2019 and despite a pandemic, we are making headway increasing the pace of stewardship in this important Buncombe County watershed community. We have learned that landowner engagement takes time and cannot be rushed. There are benefits to meeting in Community Centers, sharing a meal, and finding new ways to work together. By bringing resources to the Sandy Mush community, we have controlled invasives on State Game Lands and restored over 300 acres of conservation land trust forests. Most importantly, we have created a template for helping rural communities tackle important forestry issues.

3



*Andy Tait presents to rural landowners in Sandy Mush about forest management*

**Administered 6 sustainable timber sales over 170 acres.**

EcoForesters clients rely on us to carefully plan and manage ecologically sound and profitable timber harvests. By following best management practices, water sources can be protected and desirable species can be promoted. Each harvest is implemented with landowner objectives in mind. From improving forest structure to creating wildlife habitat, timber harvest design and implementation can improve long term forest health and resiliency.

4



**Collaborated with partners to engage and advise the US Forest Service in the writing of forest management plans on the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests.**

Managing over one million acres of forest is not done lightly. Throw in multiple uses and a complicated bureaucratic process and you have the potential for conflict. Fortunately, EcoForesters has been meeting with regional and national partners for eight years to advise the Forest Service on how best to ecologically manage the public's forest. We have made new friends, learned more about this detailed process, and provided content (and context) through our collaborative process. These important public forests have the chance to usher in a new era of ecological stewardship that will benefit the public for future generations.

5



**Created 9 videos on the benefits of ecological forestry.**

Education is a big component of our mission and videos are a great way to share information with landowners and communities. This year we produced 9 videos ranging from how to control invasive plants to webinars on the impacts of past forest management. We heard from landowner partners to hear their forest stewardship stories and learned more about the resources available to landowners.

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