



WELCOME !

Tonight's Agenda

5:30 – 6:00: Mingle and enjoy appetizers and drinks

6:00 – 7:00: Friends of Bosque del Apache updates

- Welcome & State of the Friends - Friends Board President, Jonathan Manley
- Friends Financial Report from fiscal year ended March 31, 2026 – Friends Board Vice President, Jon d'Alessio
- Presentation of Martha Hatch Award to Volunteer of the Year for 2025
- Closing remarks – Jonathan Manley

7:00 - 8:30: Keynote and Discussion with Mark Seth Lender



Friends of Bosque del Apache

Jonathan Manley - Board President

Who are Friends of Bosque del Apache?



- 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization promoting appreciation & conservation of the refuge's wildlife and habitat
- Established November 24, 1993
- 14 Board Members (5 new)
- Staff (2 full-time, 6 part-time, & 2 seasonal)
- Community of ~1,500 Friends globally, giving annually or monthly (OASIS program)

Bosque del Apache – our magical oasis in a desert

- Established in 1939 – currently 57,331 acres
- 14-mile tour loop; 43 miles of trails; 12 hiking trails
- 413 species of birds/ 2nd highest bird count in US
- ~200,000 visits per year
- Carefully managed to mimic the historic behavior of the Rio Grande
- Famous for winter migratory birds, but truly a refuge for all seasons
- Voted #4 out of 572 NWRs (List of Top 10 Best Refuges by USA Today)
- 1 of the “6 Best Natural Wonders of New Mexico” (World Atlas, 2026)



Birds - good for us and for NM

- Birding offers relief from stress and anxiety while promoting overall wellbeing – a personal refuge
- Americans interested in birds and birding grew exponentially from 47 million to 96 million between 2016 and 2022 – a gain of 49 million Americans!
- Birding now enjoys mainstream popularity & brings people together across regions & demographics
- \$279B boost to US economy; \$38B in tax revenue; 1.4M jobs
- \$20m of commercial benefit from the refuge, from a budget of \$1.8m (including Friends)



Our refuge faces a perfect storm

- Less water from sources above and below ground
- Increased water demand in MRGV & from other entities associated with Rio Grande compact
- Increasing heat and evapotranspiration
- Increased cost of habitat management
- Shrinking Federal funding and staffing
- Environmental hostility in Washington



Underfunding of NWRS shows no sign of relenting

- The National Wildlife Refuge System has been underfunded for the last 10 years by at least 30%. The President's Budget proposes a further 20% reduction.
- In the past five years, BdA's Federal funding reduced by 30% - from \$2M to \$1.4M.
- In three decades, the headcount on the refuge has steadily decreased from a high of 22 to half that now, despite growing demands in habitat management.
- Friends now funds ~25% of the refuge's costs, including daily operational expenses.
- Until now, we collectively have been able to avoid irreparable damage; however, that may not be true going forward.

“Water, water, everywhere” (Coleridge)

- Snowpack & river flows now among the lowest in history - Snowpack in Colorado well below average this winter & warm snap in March sped up snowmelt. As of mid-April, snow water equivalent was at 13% of median for the Rio Grande headwaters.
- Water rights can't help us – we are significant “under-consumers”, now that there is no farming on the refuge
- Current consumption levels in NM are unsustainable and exacerbated by new “water-hungry” projects
- Working with NMT & Friends Board members with water expertise to tell BdA story

No water = no habitat, no wildlife, no visitors, no funding, no refuge!



With your help, there is hope!

What we're doing together

Friends projects on the refuge

Pollinator Habitat Enhancement Project

- Restored 12 acres to support monarch butterflies & other native pollinators
- Goals we met:
 - Increased & diversified native pollinator plant species to better support pollinators
 - Expanded accessible trails, added interpretive signs (more to come), and now creating outdoor classroom
- Donors: Petscheks, Watermolens, NMEDD, USFWS, and Friends like YOU – **Thank you!!**
- One of 16 partners in River for Monarchs



Friends projects on the refuge

Regenerative Farming Pilot - BEAM

- Friends ran a 5-year pilot project on 38 acres, starting Autumn 2023 and ending early, after 2.5 years
- Goals:
 - Improve soil health to increase crop production
 - Improve water usage
 - Reduce manpower required in long-term
 - Demonstrate how regenerative agriculture could benefit area farmers and others in the community/refuges
- Insufficient water for planting cover crops in Fall 2025 and Spring 2026 ending the project
- Donor: Carroll Petrie Foundation
- Soil samples taken April 2026; data report coming soon



Friends projects on the refuge

Water for the Wild Campaign

- Campaign run in 2026 to replace critical water control structures on refuge
- Goals:
 - Keep refuge functioning and viable during ongoing water and budget crises
 - Make the best use of available water
 - Eliminate safety hazards
- Friends community raised \$55,955 so far!
- Met \$25K challenge grants from Bolger Foundation & National Wild Turkey Federation



We are stronger together! – Advocacy efforts

- Trip to D.C. - Invited by American Bird Conservancy to provide “ground-level” insights to lawmakers about the impact of Federal funding cuts and the proposed removal of protections in the Endangered Species Act.
- Pressing Congress via CORFA & NWRA to increase funding & writing letters and visiting legislators to advocate for refuge concerns.
- Creating a guiding coalition to increase momentum & be a collective voice (ABC, ICF, NM Wild, RGALT, Sierra Club, IPL, Cornell, and others).



Friends Financial Report

Jon d'Alessio, Board VP

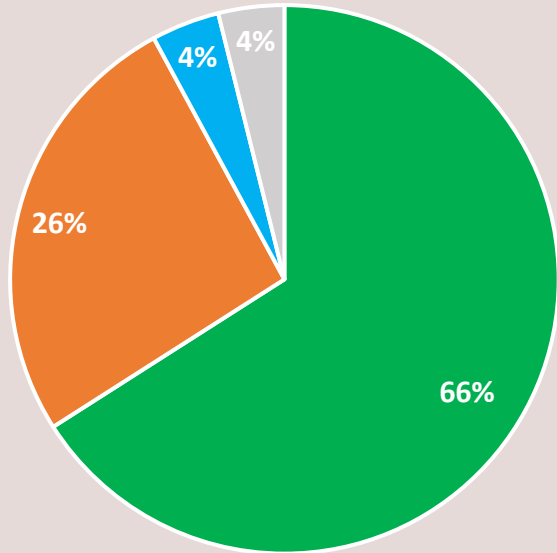
Last Year - (Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 2026)

- Raised \$372k in contributions
 - \$252k from individuals like you
 - \$120k from foundations
- Spent over \$436k on programs and direct support for the refuge
- Ended the year with \$664k in cash
 - Restricted \$184k
 - Board/Oper. Reserve \$315k
 - Uncommitted Cash \$165k
- We had a net operating deficit of \$104k as we spent down cash reserves as planned, while weathering the impact of government shutdown and Festival of the Cranes cancellation.

Revenue & Expenses FY25-26

Revenue

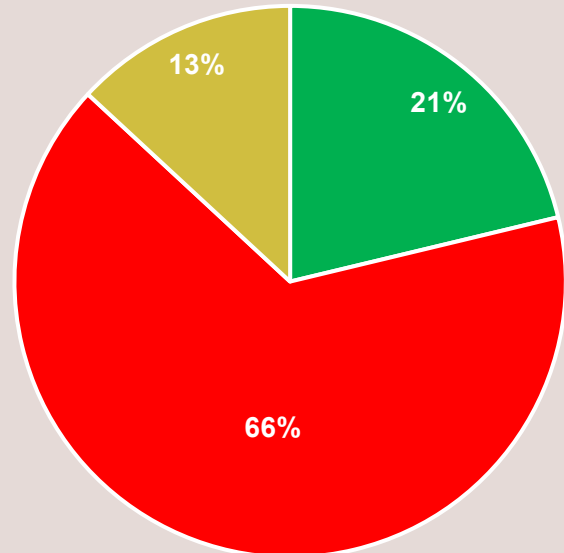
Two thirds of our revenue came from donations



■ Fundraising ■ Store ■ Events ■ G&A

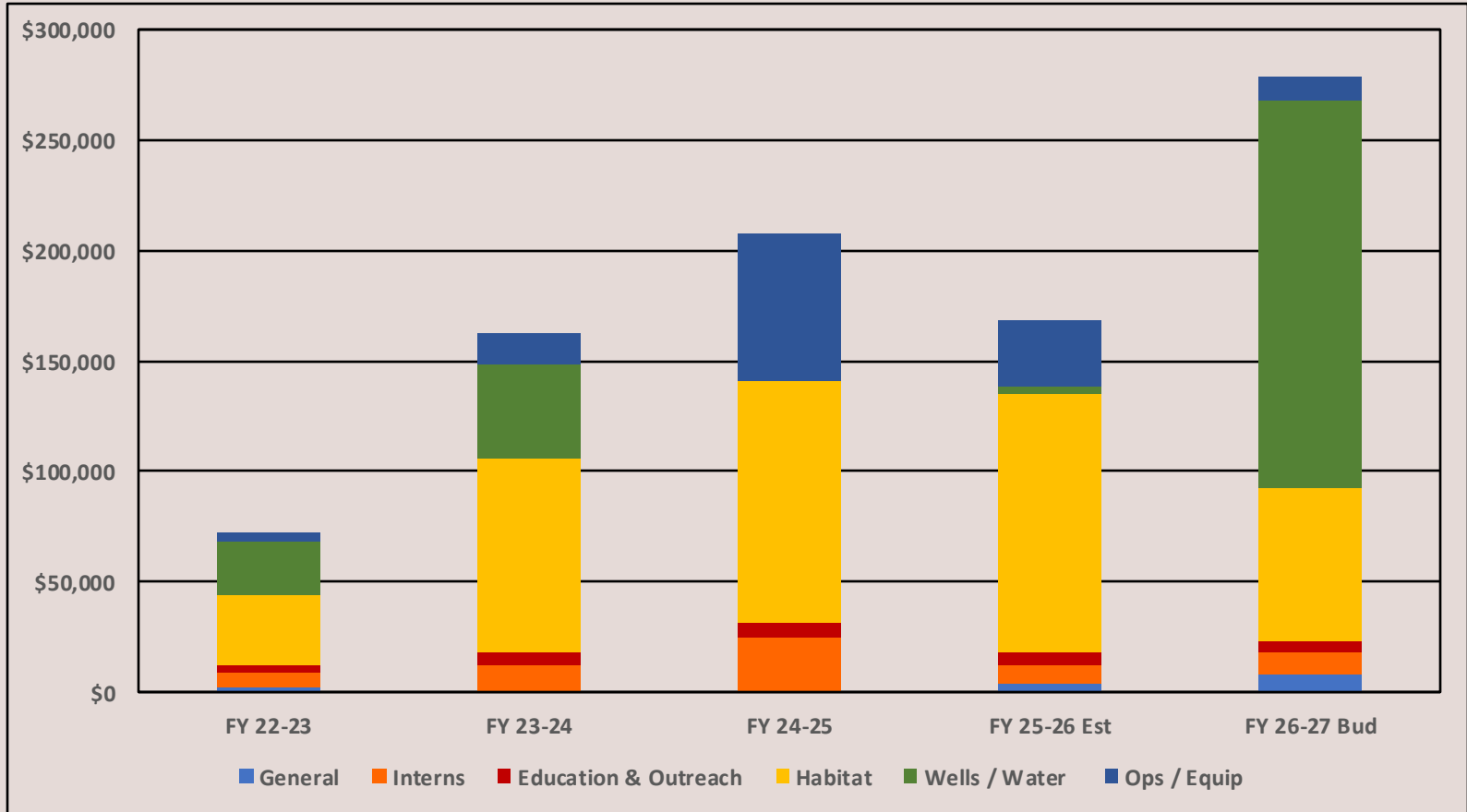
Expenses

Two thirds was spent on refuge programs



■ Fundraising ■ Programs ■ G&A

Direct Refuge Support



Looking Forward Financially

- Continued uncertainty:
 - Long term drought/Climate Change is increasing needs
 - Refuge system and grant funding community is being disrupted
- Can expect greater need for Friends to close the gap as refuge budget and staffing is not sufficient and faces further cuts
- Friends are in a good position but face risks beyond this coming fiscal year:
 - Sufficient balance sheet to fund planned refuge projects into next year
 - Rely on strong donor base and dedicated, high performing staff
 - Challenge is to grow support to face ever growing future refuge needs
- Strategic direction is to spend down reserves to fund refuge projects and support:
 - Projects targeted to maximize chances of refuge thriving over the long term
 - Continue growing our fundraising to achieve sustainable consistent refuge support

Needs far exceed what we have in hand; we need your help!

How You Can Make a Difference

- Spread the word
- Advocate
- Become a Friend
- Donate
- Create a lasting legacy
- Visit
- Volunteer

Please refer to our handout for details.

More info online at:

www.FriendsofBosquedelApache.org





Martha Hatch Volunteer of the Year Award

Volunteer who makes a difference: Mary Ruff

Congratulations to our Martha Hatch Volunteer of the Year for 2025: **Mary Ruff**

- Friends Board President 2021-2023
- Friends Board Treasurer 2018-2021
- Friends Board member at large 2015-2018
- Chaired many Friends Board committees
- Powerful Advocate for the refuge
- Instrumental in Protect Our Rio Grande advocacy efforts, holding SunZia accountable
- Still volunteering on Friends and refuge projects and in the community





Closing Remarks: Looking Forward

Broadening our appeal: a refuge for all seasons, for all creatures and for all interests



- **Spring:** Spring Migration Celebration, April 30-May 3
- **Summer:** Pollinator Event, Aug 15
- **Autumn:** Wildlife Zone, Sept 26
- **Winter:** Festival of the Cranes, Dec 2-5, 2026

April 9-18, 2027: Ecuador with Holbrook Travel, Inc. (donation to Friends for every attendee)

Looking forward...

- Implement the outcome of Directors Order 230 review
- Apply our regenerative farming “learnings” elsewhere
- Engage more actively in the “water” dialogue with our chosen advocacy partners
- Develop a long-term plan with refuge management, using realistic assumptions about water availability plus opportunities for innovation and nature-based solutions
- Work with the newly formed NM Department of Wildlife
- Steadily increase and stabilize our fundraising base
- Move from advocacy to activism





"Choosing to have joy is not naively thinking everything will be easy. It is courageously believing that there is still hope, even when things get hard."

-MORGAN HARPER NICHOLS

Keynote Presentation

When Birds Migrated to the Moon

"I grew up downwind of Monsanto Chemical. Creatures of the Natural rescued me. I love them for it and have come to know them as little different from myself. Through my writing and photography, this is what I try to share."



- Mark Seth Lender – reporter, author & explorer-in-residence