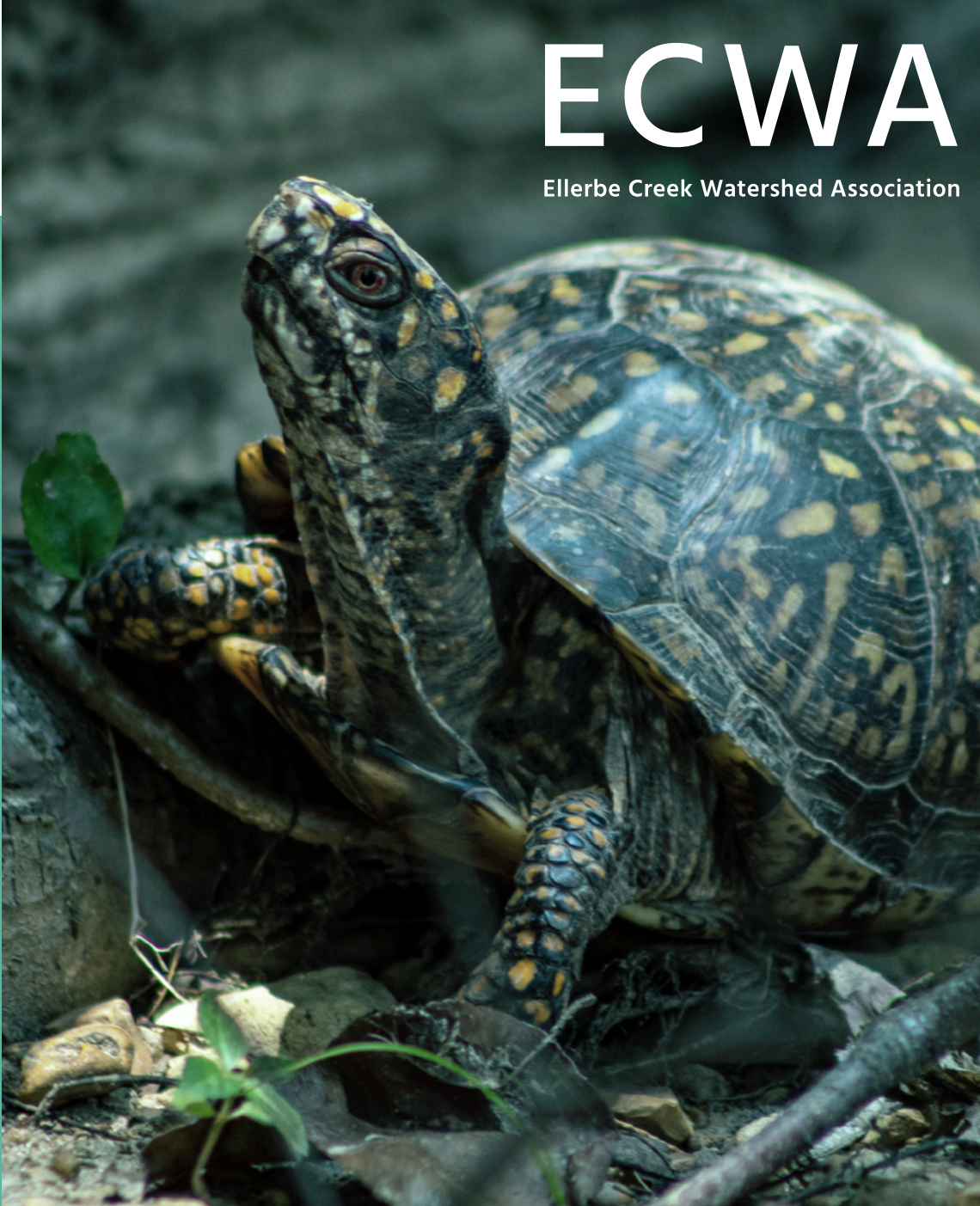


# 2021 Annual Report

## ECWA

Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association



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"People who interact with nature 30 minutes a week have better health outcomes and mental well-being than those who don't."

# A Letter from the Executive Director

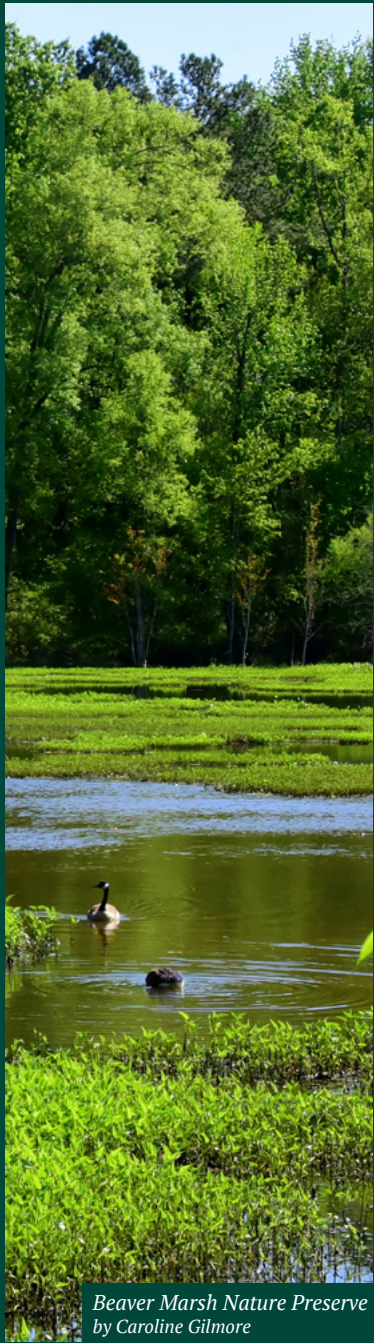
As someone who cares deeply about nature, I think about the ways that urban nature helps heal our community. The research increasingly shows that people who interact with nature 30 minutes a week have better health outcomes and mental well-being than those who don't and that easy access to urban nature in Durham is difficult in most neighborhoods outside of historically wealthy and historically white neighborhoods, meaning that many residents don't have ready access to explore nature on their terms.

*We need urban nature*, whether it's a little pocket rain garden, a preserve with a trail, a big bioretention project with lots of native pollinator plants, or a wild stream. We need any place that gives us a little respite from

the crazy world we have found ourselves living in. And we *need to re-establish* those connections between ourselves and the nature in our backyards so that we can reap the benefits that having a solid relationship with nature and water provides.

This annual report highlights just a few of the many ECWA-led projects that demonstrate the hard work that staff and volunteers have accomplished over the year to ensure that we protect more urban nature, restore more land and water to its natural patterns, and engage more people to appreciate and benefit from the creek and urban nature. And we're excited to do more in the coming years. After all, *we're all in this creek together*.

# Urban Nature Expansion



Beaver Marsh Nature Preserve  
by Caroline Gilmore

Adapting to the pandemic has been difficult for everyone. At ECWA, we've had to be creative and flexible with our goals so that we can keep moving forward as an organization. Over the last year, we've still been able to complete acquisitions despite the challenges, including acquisition of small, but integral additions to Lively and Veasey Nature Preserves.

At the Eva M. Lively Nature Preserve, *we expanded the conserved land by 1½ acres* through land donations. Lively is a private preserve located right next to the busy South Ellerbe greenway that runs from downtown through a shady corridor of trees and protected land. Foxes, coyotes, deer, and an amazing variety of birds depend on the creek and forests of this valley. The donated land protects a beautiful forested wetland and riparian areas that are integral to water quality and wildlife in South Ellerbe Creek. *ECWA has protected almost 15 acres in this corridor to date*. Combined with land owned by the City and County, this area could one day be a part of a *30-acre greenway park for Durham!*

In December 2021, we acquired the 2-acre Harrington property. This important piece of land not only expands Veasey Nature Preserve, but also *protects more than 1½ acres of floodplain* that connect the preserve to the Falls Lake Shorelines and Tributaries Natural Heritage Area. This is an essential corridor for wildlife in Ellerbe Creek and for ECWA as it provides a driveway to areas of Veasey that were difficult to access.

In order to ensure that our landholdings around Veasey serve the needs of the neighboring communities, ECWA will be *forming a steering committee* of residents around Lower Ellerbe Creek to strategically plan for the future use of the land in Lower Ellerbe Creek. This effort is led by our new Engagement Coordinator, L. A. Davis-Durante.



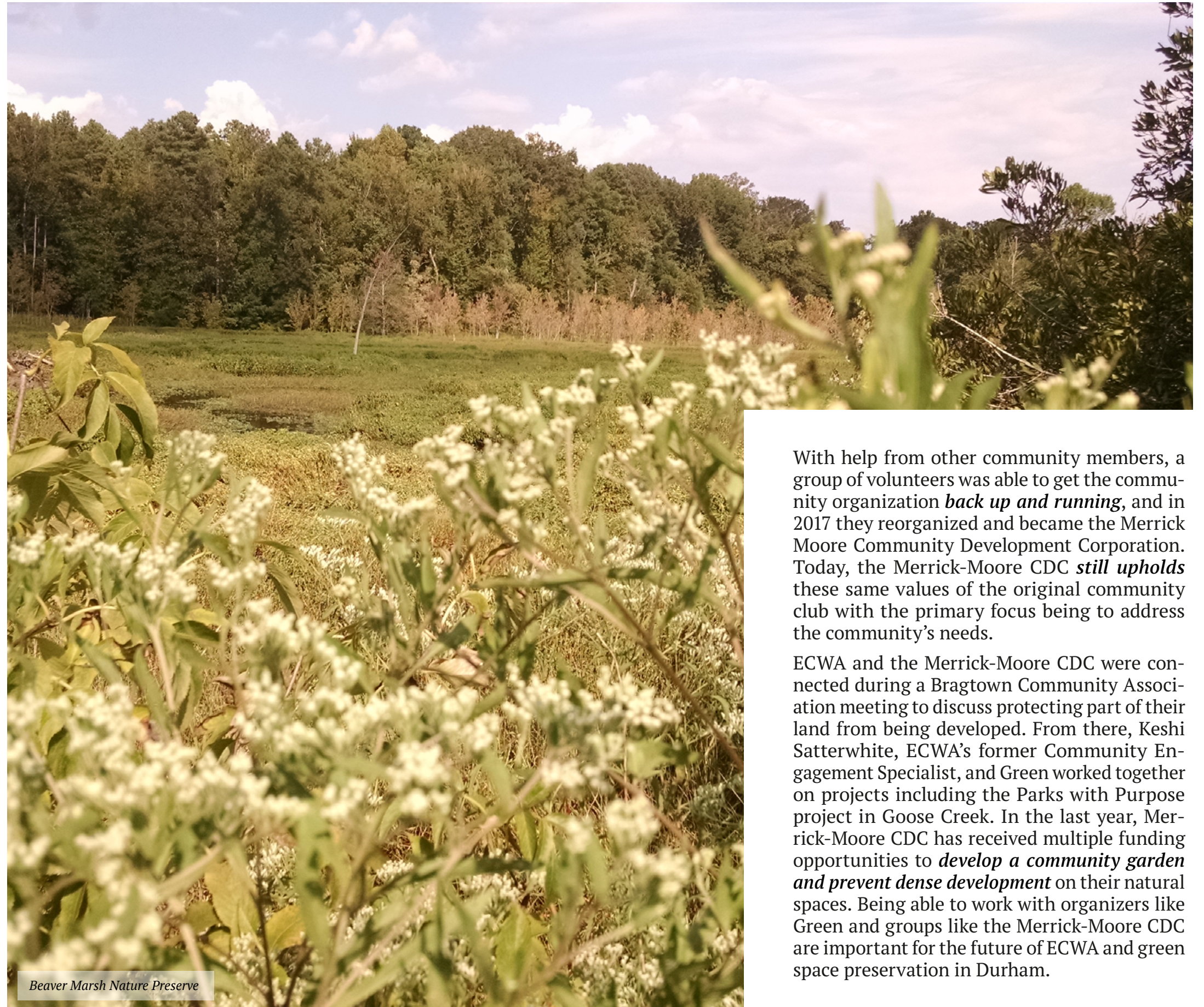
## Community Spotlight: **Merrick-Moore and Bonita Green**

If you have not yet had the opportunity to meet Ms. Bonita Green, president of the Merrick-Moore Community Development Corporation (Merrick-Moore CDC), you are missing out on someone special. Lucky for you, she agreed to talk with ECWA about the history of the Merrick-Moore CDC and her work in Durham. ECWA and Merrick-Moore CDC have worked together on various initiatives over the last few years to *preserve urban nature in Durham*.

*Being able to work with organizers like Green and groups like the Merrick-Moore CDC are important for the future of ECWA and green space preservation in Durham.*

The Merrick-Moore CDC has had many different lives and names. Originally called the Merrick-Moore Community Club in 1952, the club sprouted out of the Merrick Moore Ladies Club. This new club, led by Green's father, focused on relationship building, social work, trading skills, and fundraising within the community. Many of the club members at the time were World War II veterans and were able to help their neighbors with trade skills like carpentry and masonry to build homes.

When Bonita Green returned to Merrick-Moore in 2012, she found that the Merrick-Moore Community Club was no longer active. Being raised in the Merrick-Moore community and having parents heavily involved with the community club fostered a strong sense of community importance and connection for her.



Beaver Marsh Nature Preserve

With help from other community members, a group of volunteers was able to get the community organization *back up and running*, and in 2017 they reorganized and became the Merrick Moore Community Development Corporation. Today, the Merrick-Moore CDC *still upholds* these same values of the original community club with the primary focus being to address the community's needs.

ECWA and the Merrick-Moore CDC were connected during a Bragtown Community Association meeting to discuss protecting part of their land from being developed. From there, Keshi Satterwhite, ECWA's former Community Engagement Specialist, and Green worked together on projects including the Parks with Purpose project in Goose Creek. In the last year, Merrick-Moore CDC has received multiple funding opportunities to *develop a community garden and prevent dense development* on their natural spaces. Being able to work with organizers like Green and groups like the Merrick-Moore CDC are important for the future of ECWA and green space preservation in Durham.





# Staff Spotlight

## L. A. Davis-Durante

Born and raised in Durham, L. A. has deep roots within the Black and LGBTQ+ community in Durham. He grew up in organizing spaces in large part due to his mother’s involvement in the community. But L. A. got involved for himself in electoral organizing and getting out the vote during his time at UNC-Greensboro in 2014. The majority of his life prepared him for relationship-building and community organizing, but when he returned to Durham after college, his work and education made him realize that he *didn’t have the same access* to nature growing up as other people who grew up in other areas in Durham did. No one came to his schools or communities to encourage them to go to nature preserves or state parks.

*Seeing the Beaver Marsh Nature Preserve behind a large supermarket was intriguing to L. A. and embodied urban nature for him.*

He also found that he was priced out of his hometown and so now lives in Hillsborough. Despite being further away from the city, L. A. has had a chance to explore the nature in and surrounding Durham and, in that process, had his first interaction with ECWA at a walk at Beaver Marsh Preserve last year. Seeing the Beaver Marsh Nature Preserve behind a large

supermarket was intriguing to L. A. and *embodied urban nature* for him. After that, he knew he could inspire other QTBIPOC (Queer and Trans Black, Indigenous, People of Color) to enjoy the nature surrounding them.

Although L. A. doesn’t have the formal land protection, urban planning, botany, or biology expertise, he is connected to the environmental and social justice issues that Durham is facing. He understands the communities that are most affected by climate change in Durham and knows that the reason they have higher home cooling costs is because no one gave their communities the proper tree coverage, which is an example of systemic environmental racism.

L. A. is *looking forward to telling ECWA’s story* in a way that acknowledges the communities that have been *overlooked* by organizations like ECWA and how that has impacted the public health of these neighborhoods. By shifting the focus onto these areas, ECWA can work to be a resource for these communities by building relationships with our partners and community associations that want to address issues like land protection and flooding. We can’t wait to connect with these communities and get involved with their goals and visions and for urban nature in Durham with L. A.’s leadership.

# 2022 Beaver Queen Pageant

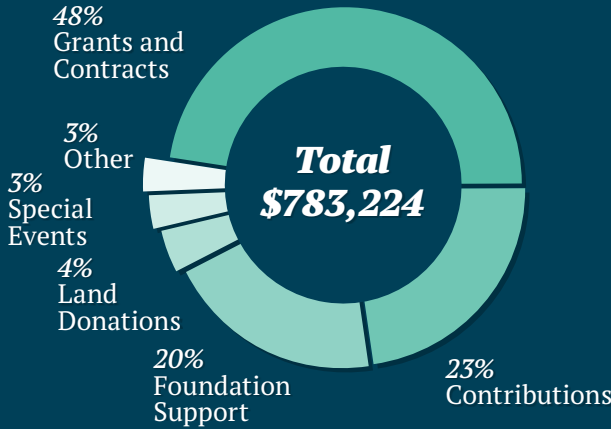
With our business sponsorships, contestant votes, and judge bribes combined, the **2022 Beaver Queen Pageant** raised over \$36,000 for ECWA! Put your paws together for the 2022 Beaver Queen, Tinder Beaver! We are excited to use the proceeds to protect more land, improve water quality, connect people to nature, and of course provide more habitat for beavers (and other wildlife) in downtown Durham.

A big shout out to all of this year’s wonderful volunteer contestants! Thank you to our partners in crime, the Beaver Lodge Local 1504, for once again putting on a spectacular show. And, thanks to each and every one of you who shook your tails in the meadow, cast a vote, or bribed a judge. *Be sure to mark your calendars for June 3rd, 2023 for the 19th Annual Beaver Queen Pageant. Peace, Love, Beaver!*

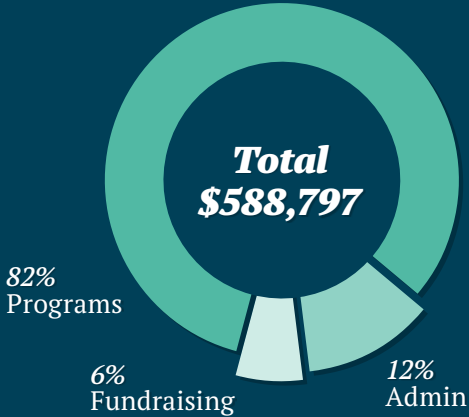


*Tinder Beaver* being awarded the 2022 Beaver Queen Pageant  
Photo by Katie Rentzke

# 2021 Revenue



# 2021 Expenses



# Facts From 2021



2,852

Number of votes in the 2022 BQP



3.5

Number of total acres conserved by ECWA



1,340

Number of stewardship volunteer hours



25

Number of rain gardens and cisterns installed



# ***2022 Board of Directors***

**Tatia Ash**

**Dexter Blackwell**  
Treasurer

**Rodney Butler**  
Vice President

**John Dorney**  
Interim President

**Kaitlin Grable**

**Sarah Musser**  
Secretary

**Ian Pond**

**Rusty Painter**

**Kevin Primus**

**Katie Rentzke**

**Kelly Roth**

**Clayton Rugh**

**Chastan Swain**

**Roberto Valle Kinloch**

## ***Staff***

**Rachel Cohn**  
Associate Director

**L. A. Davis-Durante**  
Engagement Coordinator

**Chris Dreps**  
Land Protection Director

**Megan McClaugherty**  
Creek Smart® &  
Stewardship Technician

**Robert Meehan**  
Water Management  
Specialist

**Donna Myers**  
Stewardship Director

**Laura Stroud**  
Water Management  
Program Coordinator

**Jordan Thomas**  
Communications and  
Outreach Coordinator

**Joe Weitz,**  
Creek Smart® Technician

**Rickie White**  
Executive Director

