

# 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

**SAND COUNTY FOUNDATION**

\* EMPOWERING LANDOWNERS ADVANCING A LAND ETHIC \*





**Sand County Foundation inspires and enables a growing number of private landowners to ethically manage the natural resources in their care, so future generations have clean and abundant water, healthy soil to support our growing food demands, plentiful habitat for wildlife and opportunities for outdoor recreation.**



PHOTO: PAOLO VESCIA

## Dear Friends

For more than 50 years, the “land ethic” Aldo Leopold wrote about in *A Sand County Almanac* has guided our work to empower America’s farmers, ranchers and foresters to recognize and embrace conservation opportunities on their land.

Leopold’s idea of a land ethic is alive and well in the hearts and minds of a growing number of landowners. Given the headwinds facing agriculture in 2020, landowner commitment to conservation efforts that improve the environment and rural economies has never been more urgent.

If a picture really is worth 1,000 words, the following pages will shed light on what a land ethic can look like on today’s agricultural landscape.

Thanks to your support, we’re proud to report that our work with landowners toward better water quality, soil health and wildlife habitat is taking root and growing.

Your investment in our work has also allowed us to build a team that is prepared to confront this era’s greatest environmental challenges. 2019 marked the single greatest expansion of the Foundation’s talent pool in our 53-year history.

We are on the brink of big changes in agriculture and land ownership. Thanks to you, Sand County Foundation and hundreds of thousands of American land stewards are ready to meet those challenges head-on.



**Lynne Sherrod**

Chairman  
Sand County Foundation



**Kevin McAleese**

President and CEO  
Sand County Foundation



## Sand County Foundation

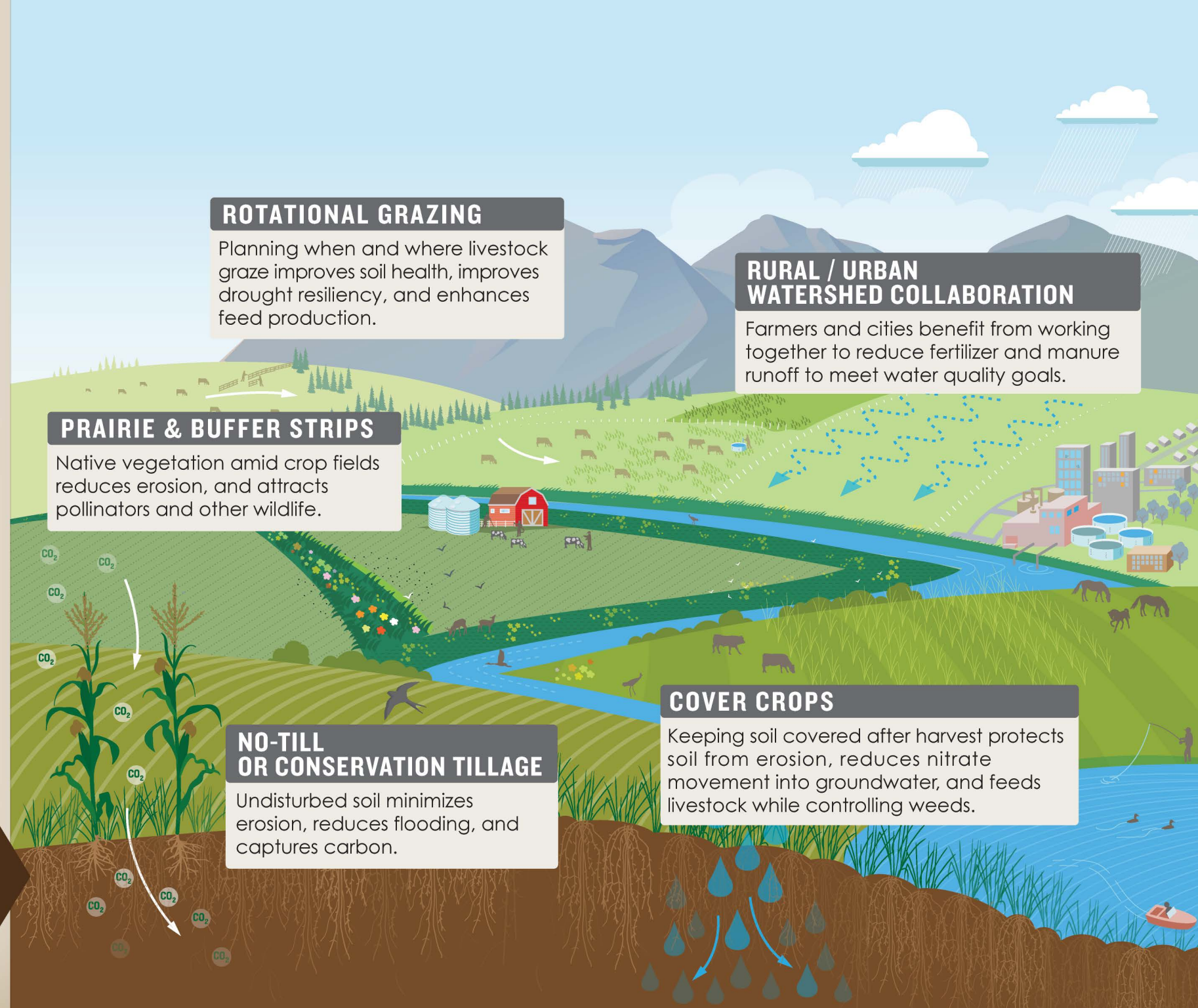
was built more than 50 years ago on an idea advanced by Aldo Leopold, America's foremost conservation thinker and author of "A Sand County Almanac."



Leopold inspired landowners to adopt what he called a "**land ethic**" - a moral responsibility to treat land, water and wildlife with respect.

Today, most of the land in the contiguous U.S. is owned and managed by farmers, ranchers and foresters. Sand County Foundation is inspiring and enabling a growing number of them to become conservation leaders who ethically care for soil, water and wildlife habitat while they work the land.

Here are some of the ways we help landowners express their land ethic.



### ROTATIONAL GRAZING

Planning when and where livestock graze improves soil health, improves drought resiliency, and enhances feed production.

### RURAL / URBAN WATERSHED COLLABORATION

Farmers and cities benefit from working together to reduce fertilizer and manure runoff to meet water quality goals.

### PRAIRIE & BUFFER STRIPS

Native vegetation amid crop fields reduces erosion, and attracts pollinators and other wildlife.

### NO-TILL OR CONSERVATION TILLAGE

Undisturbed soil minimizes erosion, reduces flooding, and captures carbon.

### COVER CROPS

Keeping soil covered after harvest protects soil from erosion, reduces nitrate movement into groundwater, and feeds livestock while controlling weeds.

## Where Sand County Foundation comes in...



### INFORM

We research, demonstrate and share practical, scientifically-sound conservation methods that can improve water quality, soil health, habitat and a landowner's bottom line.



### ENABLE

We seek policy innovations to scale up conservation on agricultural land by creating incentives and breaking down barriers.



### INSPIRE

We find and promote the stories of leading land stewards whose conservation successes inspire others.



## Leopold Conservation Award

Sand County Foundation created the Leopold Conservation Award program in 2003 to recognize and celebrate landowners committed to a land ethic.

The class of 2019 Leopold Conservation Award recipients demonstrates the many ways farmers, ranchers and foresters are benefiting the environment and their bottom line by embracing conservation practices that conserve water, improve soil health and provide necessary wildlife habitat. This inspiring group includes landowners growing tomatoes in California, managing forests in New England, producing pork in Missouri, and grazing cattle from North Dakota to Texas.

This year, the award program expanded to Montana and the six states that make up New England. In 2020 we'll welcome the first recipient from New York into an alumni network that is more than 130 strong.



**READ AND WATCH** the stories of each  
2019 Leopold Conservation Award recipient.



**“We greatly appreciated the Leopold Conservation Award recognition. Since then, I’ve helped others with nominations and served on the selection committee. I believe if you get something, you have some obligation to give back whether that is in money or time or mentoring people or helping people improve their situation.”**

**- Dino Giacomazzi, 2012 California Leopold Conservation Award recipient.**

Many Leopold Conservation Award recipients believe so strongly in the program that they have become supporters of it by giving of their time and resources. We talked to one such supporter, Dino Giacomazzi, of Hanford California.

### **What did receiving the Leopold Conservation Award mean to your family?**

It was an honor to be recognized for our work. We’ve been farming this same land for 127 years. Most of the work we have done and decisions we make are about how to manage our land and resources. It’s about sustaining the family business and taking care of the land because it’s the right thing to do for our kids and our community. We didn’t do it thinking there was going to be an award for doing what we’re supposed to do. But what’s great about being recognized is it creates an example about what is possible when you think about the future and you apply the future to the land.

### **How does the award program inspire farmers and ranchers?**

The Leopold Conservation Award encourages landowners to explore new conservation ideas and take risks. But what brings about these opportunities for growth and new ideas isn’t the award itself, it’s that there is a community around the award. Sand County Foundation holds events for award alumni that bring about conversations that wouldn’t happen ordinarily. The people at those meetings are like the one percenters of agriculture in my opinion. Not only are they brilliant but they are caring. They share Aldo Leopold’s view that we can continue to farm and improve the land and restore habitat and live harmoniously with the environment. I say it’s profitable environmentalism. They don’t have to be two different things. Conservation is a mindset. It’s an attitude. And I think the Leopold Conservation Award exemplifies that attitude.





More farmers are partnering with us to demonstrate how planting native grasses and wildflowers next to crop fields can reduce soil erosion, improve water quality and provide wildlife habitat. Greater adoption of these **prairie filter strips** is expected thanks to their recent inclusion in the federal Conservation Reserve Program.



In 2019, we expanded the number of schools in our **pollinator habitat grant program**. Agriculture and science teachers in 22 high schools received native wildflower seedlings, a training webinar and \$1,000 grants to engage students in establishing habitat on local farmland for insect pollinators and imperiled monarch butterflies.



Leaders representing 40 watersheds engaged at our **11th Leadership for Midwestern Watersheds forum**. These annual convenings promote collaboration to scale-up project success and accelerate measurable water quality improvements.



A prairie filter strip in Iowa. Photo: Omar de Kok-Mercado



**Prioritizing Resources to Meet Water Quality Goals.** The nation's water quality is dependent on past, current and future land use and management decisions. To align priorities towards meeting national goals, Sand County Foundation conducted a **comprehensive agricultural water quality assessment** in partnership with more than 30 agriculture and water quality experts. The report identified primary focus areas critical to advancing conservation on agricultural land. These five areas of emphasis present opportunities where funding and support should be prioritized to address the nation's agricultural water quality challenges.

**Creating Urban/Rural Partnerships for Water Quality.** When cities work in partnership with farmers to improve water quality, everyone wins. Our team spent part of 2019 negotiating **a first of its kind agreement** in Iowa that allows cities to meet water quality requirements by working with farmers to implement farm conservation practices that reduce fertilizer and manure runoff. By investing in farm conservation practices in the local watershed, cities could also avoid costly upgrades to water treatment plants. We are extending these opportunities to other cities and states in 2020.

**Restoring Monarch Butterfly Habitat.** Monarch butterflies are declining, especially on the west coast, and may be listed as an endangered or threatened species. Leaders of the Environmental Policy Innovation Center, a fiscally-sponsored program of Sand County Foundation, were part of the team that developed **the largest-ever collaborative effort** to help them. The agreement will open the way for highway agencies and power companies to improve and expand habitat for the butterfly across 48 states.

**Making the Endangered Species Act Work Better.** Finding better, faster, cheaper ways for the nation's Endangered Species Act to recover rare or declining species is a focus of the Environmental Policy Innovation Center, or EPIC. Our colleague, Jake Li, represented EPIC during **a segment on CBS Sunday Morning** to discuss how to improve the Endangered Species Act for the benefit of wildlife and landowners.



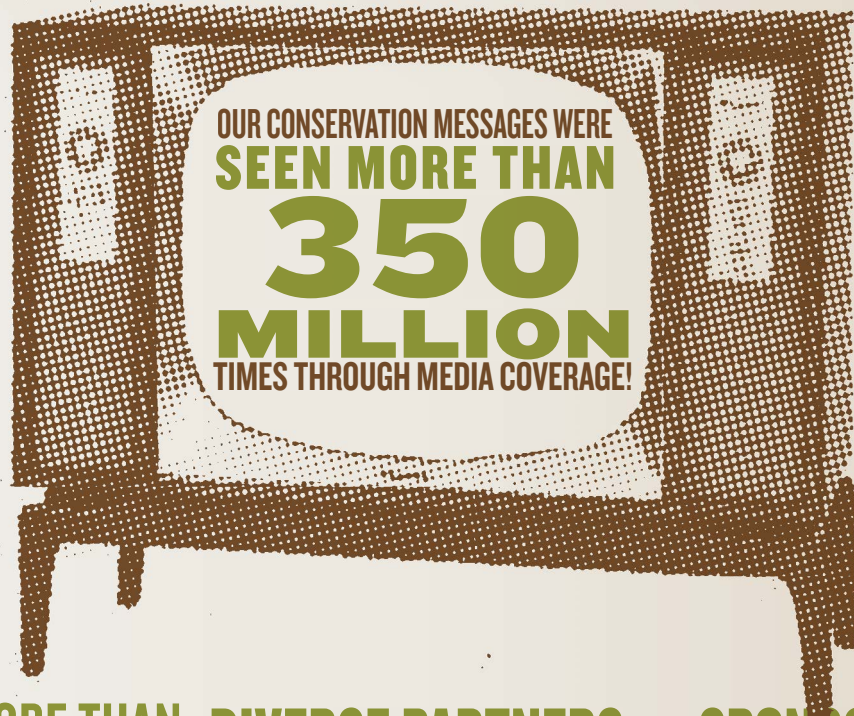


# 2019

► BY THE  
NUMBERS ◀

**\*OVER\***  
**11,000**  
LANDOWNERS  
AND INFLUENCERS

► ATTENDED ◀  
**EVENTS AND  
OUTREACH  
PRESENTATIONS**  
TO LEARN MORE ABOUT  
CONSERVATION-MINDED  
FARMING AND RANCHING



MORE THAN  
**175** DIVERSE PARTNERS AND SPONSORS  
MADE THE LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD PROGRAM  
POSSIBLE IN 20 STATES

**70 LEADERS  
REPRESENTING**



# 40

WATERSHEDS  
ENGAGED AT OUR  
11TH ANNUAL  
LEADERSHIP  
FOR  
MIDWESTERN  
WATERSHEDS  
FORUM



**LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD RECIPIENTS MANAGE  
OVER 2.8 MILLION ACRES**

**22 HIGH SCHOOLS  
RECEIVED GRANTS TO GIVE MORE THAN  
600 STUDENTS**

**HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE PLANTING**

**14,000 POLLINATOR-  
FRIENDLY PLANTS ON  
LOCAL FARMLAND  
6 EXPERIENCED  
PROFESSIONALS  
JOINED OUR TEAM**





# THANK YOU TO OUR 2019 DONORS!

Donors support Sand County Foundation's work to advance voluntary conservation on private land and find solutions to some of the most pressing environmental issues we face. We gratefully acknowledge those who generously donated in 2019 and those who have continually supported us over the years.

Acacia Conservation Fund	Dick Cates	Gates Family Foundation
Ann & Jim Addis	Patrick Cauthorn	Bob Giacomini
AgriBusiness Association of Kentucky	Brenda Christensen & Tom Barry	Green Cover Seed
Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay	City of Cedar Rapids	Grady Grissom
Alliance for the Future of Agriculture in Nebraska	Reed Coleman & Ann Miller	Brent Haglund & Dayle Keitel-Haglund
Amazon Smile Foundation	Leta Collord	Kurt Haglund
American AgCredit	Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust	Alan Haney
American Farmland Trust	Colorado Cattlemen's Association	Mrs. David R. Hansen
Peter Anderson	Compeer Financial	Dave Hanson & Linda Bochert
Association of Missouri Electric Cooperatives	CropLife America	Harvey L. & Maud S. Sorensen Foundation
Bad River Ranches	Cynthia & George Mitchell Foundation	Hull Forestlands LP
David Bamberger	Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin	William Hutchins
Basin Electric Power Cooperative	Dairyland Power Cooperative	Ann & David Ingram
Ramona & Lee Bass	Dakota Community Bank & Trust	Lesley & Ben Inker
Bayer Crop Science	Robyn & Tom Davison	Iowa Corn Growers Association
Belle Fourche River Watershed Partnership	Nancy & Marc DeLong	Iowa State University
Lyschel Bersch	Delta Waterfowl	Linda Irving
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Diane Derouen & Glenn Chambliss	ITC
Bird Conservancy of the Rockies	Ducks Unlimited	Wesley Jackson
Brenda & Donald Boydston	Andrew M. Duda	John J. Frautschi Family Foundation
Caty Brown	John P.C. Duncan & Anita Sarafa	Jamie & Brian Johnson
Nancy & James Bruins	Ecosystem Investment Partners	Carol & Darrell Johnson
Homer & Darla Buell	Enel Green Power	Jean & Scott Johnson
Tina Buford	EPRI	Frank Jones
Ingrid C. Burke	Evergy	Kalkowski Family
Burleigh County Soil Conservation District	Farm Credit	Kansas Association of Conservation Districts
California Farm Bureau Federation	Farm Credit Mid-America	Kansas Dept. of Agriculture, Division of Conservation
Amy & Gary Cammack	Farm Credit Services of America	Kansas Dept. of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism
Capitol Travel	Carol & Jim Faulstich	Kansas Forest Service
Dan Carey	Tom Fenger	Mike L. Keiser
Cargill	First Dakota National Bank	KEM Electric
	Paul Francis	Kentucky Agricultural Council
	Fund for Lake Michigan	
	Ethel & Pete Garrett	

Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts  
Kentucky Corn Grower's Association  
Kentucky Department of Agriculture  
Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation  
Kentucky Pork Producers  
Kentucky State University  
Kentucky Tree Farm Committee  
Kentucky Woodland Owner's Foundation  
Kieser & Associates  
Pamela & Jeff Kochel  
Mike Kollath  
Amanda & Casey Langan  
Nina & Steve Laubach  
Tod B. Linstroth  
LPC Conservation  
Craig McNamara  
Kevin McAleese & Tricia Wheeler  
Bobby McCormick, Ph.D.  
McDonald's USA  
McKnight Foundation  
Craig McNamara  
Mike McNerney  
MFA, Inc.  
Mildred Michalski  
Millborn Seeds, Inc.  
Ken & Bonnie Miller  
Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District  
Missouri Assoc. of Soil and Water Conservation Districts  
Missouri Cattlemen's Association  
Missouri Corn Merchandising Council  
Missouri Department of Agriculture  
Missouri Department of Conservation  
Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
Missouri Farmers Care Foundation  
Missouri Pork Association  
Missouri Soil & Water Conservation Program  
Missouri Soybean Association

Missouri Soybean Merchandising Council  
Montana Department of Agriculture  
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation  
Montana Farm Bureau Federation  
Montana Grazing Lands  
Montana Rangeland Resources Committee  
Montana Weed Control Association  
Dina & Mark Moore  
Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative  
Debra & Todd Mortenson  
Catherine & Birch Mullins  
National Audubon Society  
National Fish & Wildlife Foundation  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, Inc.  
North Dakota Natural Resources Trust  
Nebraska Environmental Trust  
Nebraska Game and Parks  
Nelnet Foundation  
Network for Good  
New England Forestry Foundation  
Chad Njos  
Noble Research Institute  
North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts  
North Dakota Chapter of the Wildlife Society  
North Dakota Game & Fish Department  
North Dakota Grazing Lands Coalition  
North Dakota Stockmen's Association  
Nossaman LLP  
Office of Montana Governor Steve Bullock  
Mike Offner  
Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association  
Oklahoma Conservation Commission  
Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture  
Oklahoma State University

Diane & Dave Olenchek  
Paulson Institute  
Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts  
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau  
Perkins Coie LLP  
Holly Perrotti  
Carolyn & Rolf Peterson  
Pheasants Forever, Inc.  
Producers Livestock Marketing Association  
Professional Alliance  
Rainwater Basin Joint Venture  
Ranchland Trust of Kansas  
Mary & Dennis Ray  
Restoration Systems, LLC  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
Rocky Mountain Mineral Law Foundation  
Roughrider Electric Cooperative  
Sandhills Task Force  
Christina Schellpfeffer  
South Dakota DENR - SD Discovery Center  
South Dakota Soil Health Coalition  
Del & Lynne Sherrod  
Sibanye Stillwater  
Dale Sievert  
Slope Electric  
David B. Smith  
Soil and Water Conservation Society  
South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts  
South Dakota Cattlemen's Association  
South Dakota Department of Agriculture  
South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Parks  
South Dakota Farm Bureau Federation  
South Dakota Grassland Coalition  
South Dakota State University Foundation  
Spring Point Partners LLC



Peggy & Bill Sproul  
Alli & Kartik Sribarra  
Jo & Jim Stanko  
Emily Stanley  
Starion Bank  
Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education  
Sustainable Conservation  
Buck Sweeney  
Syngenta Crop Protection, LLC  
Richard Taylor & Suzie Paris  
Ellen Temple  
Stan Temple  
Texas Parks and Wildlife  
The Dixon Water Foundation  
The Farm Credit Associations of Kansas  
The Heinz Endowments  
The Ida and Robert Gordon Family Foundation  
The John Merck Fund  
The Nature Conservancy  
Marcus Trapp  
Peggy & Jon Traver  
Tri-State Generation & Transmission Association  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
UK College of Agriculture, Food & Environment  
United Soybean Board  
University of Illinois  
Utah Association of Conservation Districts  
Utah Department of Agriculture and Food  
Utah Farm Bureau Federation  
Utah Wool Growers Association  
Wagner Land & Livestock  
Walton Family Foundation  
Ed Warner & Jackie Erickson  
We Energies Foundation  
Western AgCredit  
Bill White

Whole Foods Market  
Wildlands and Woodlands  
William H. Donner Foundation, Inc.  
Windward Fund  
Wisconsin Corn Growers Association  
Wisconsin Corn Promotion Board  
Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation  
Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association  
Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association  
Wisconsin Soybean Marketing Board  
Woodtiger Fund  
World Wildlife Fund - Northern Great Plains Program  
Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies  
YourCause LLC  
Tom Zale



Sand County Foundation is a Gold Level GuideStar participant. This means we are committed to demonstrating transparency and accountability to our donors. View Sand County Foundation's profile on GuideStar's website to find details about our financials, program activities and impact.

9.61%

9.92%

15.54%

15.82%

49.1%

2019 REVENUE SOURCES

- FOUNDATIONS
- ORGANIZATIONS
- INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY
- GOVERNMENT
- BUSINESS

Financial Responsibility

Assets

ASSETS	
Cash	106,128
Promises to Give	605,578
Accounts Receivable	91,269
Prepaid Expenses	19,613
Long-term Investments	9,425,825
Property & Equipment - Net	6,573

TOTAL ASSETS \$10,254,986

Liabilities and Net Assets

LIABILITIES	
Accounts Payable	38,416
Grants Payable	40,000
Other Liabilities	76,317
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$154,733

NET ASSETS	
Unrestricted Net Assets	6,399,588
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	3,700,665
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$10,100,253

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS \$10,254,986

Sand County Foundation has always been committed to full financial transparency. The Foundation is classified as a 501(c)(3) Public Charity under IRS code. The report of an independent auditor, 2019 audited financial statements and our 2019 tax return are available at [sandcountyfoundation.org](http://sandcountyfoundation.org)

In addition, Sand County Foundation conducts organizational and programmatic reviews of its work every three to four years. This interdisciplinary review process is conducted by prominent independent experts and helps guide our priorities and strategies.





## Board of Directors

CHAIRMAN

**Lynne Sherrod**

Owner - Rocking U7 Ranch, Colorado

CHAIRMAN EMERITUS

**Reed Coleman**

CEO, Retired - Madison Kipp Corporation,  
Wisconsin

VICE-CHAIR/SECRETARY

**David Hanson**

Attorney - Michael Best & Friedrich, Wisconsin

TREASURER

**Homer Buell**

Owner - Shovel Dot Ranch, Nebraska

**Tina Buford**

Owner - H. Yturria Ranch, Texas

**Dick Cates, Ph. D.**

Owner - Cates Family Farm, Wisconsin

**Kevin Conrad**

Entrepreneur and Conservationist, New York

**Nancy DeLong**

Agriculture Sustainability Consultant, Iowa

**John P. C. Duncan**

Attorney - Kozusko Harris Duncan, Illinois

**Brent Haglund, Ph.D.**

Chief Scientific Officer - Sand County  
Foundation, Wisconsin

**Stanley Temple, Ph.D.**

Professor Emeritus - University of Wisconsin,  
Wisconsin

**Ed Warner**

Geologist and Philanthropist, Colorado

DIRECTOR EMERITUS

**Indy Burke, Ph.D.**

Dean - Yale School of the Environment,  
Connecticut

## Foundation Staff

**Kevin McAleese**

President and CEO

**Heidi Peterson, Ph.D.**

Vice President - Agricultural Research and  
Conservation

**Christina Schellpfeffer**

Vice President - External Relations

**David Bailey**

Western Director - Leopold Conservation Award  
Program

**K. Bartlett Durand, Jr., Esq.**

Director - Water Quality Partnerships

**Craig Ficenec**

Program Director

**Phoebe Higgins**

Director of Markets - Environmental Policy Innovation  
Center

**Lance Irving**

National Director - Leopold Conservation Award  
Program

**Liina Keerd**

Program Assistant

**Casey Langan**

Communications Director

**Ya-Wei (Jake) Li**

Director of Biodiversity - Environmental Policy  
Innovation Center

**Timothy Male, Ph.D.**

Executive Director - Environmental Policy Innovation  
Center

**Greg Olson**

Field Projects Director

**Holly Perrotti**

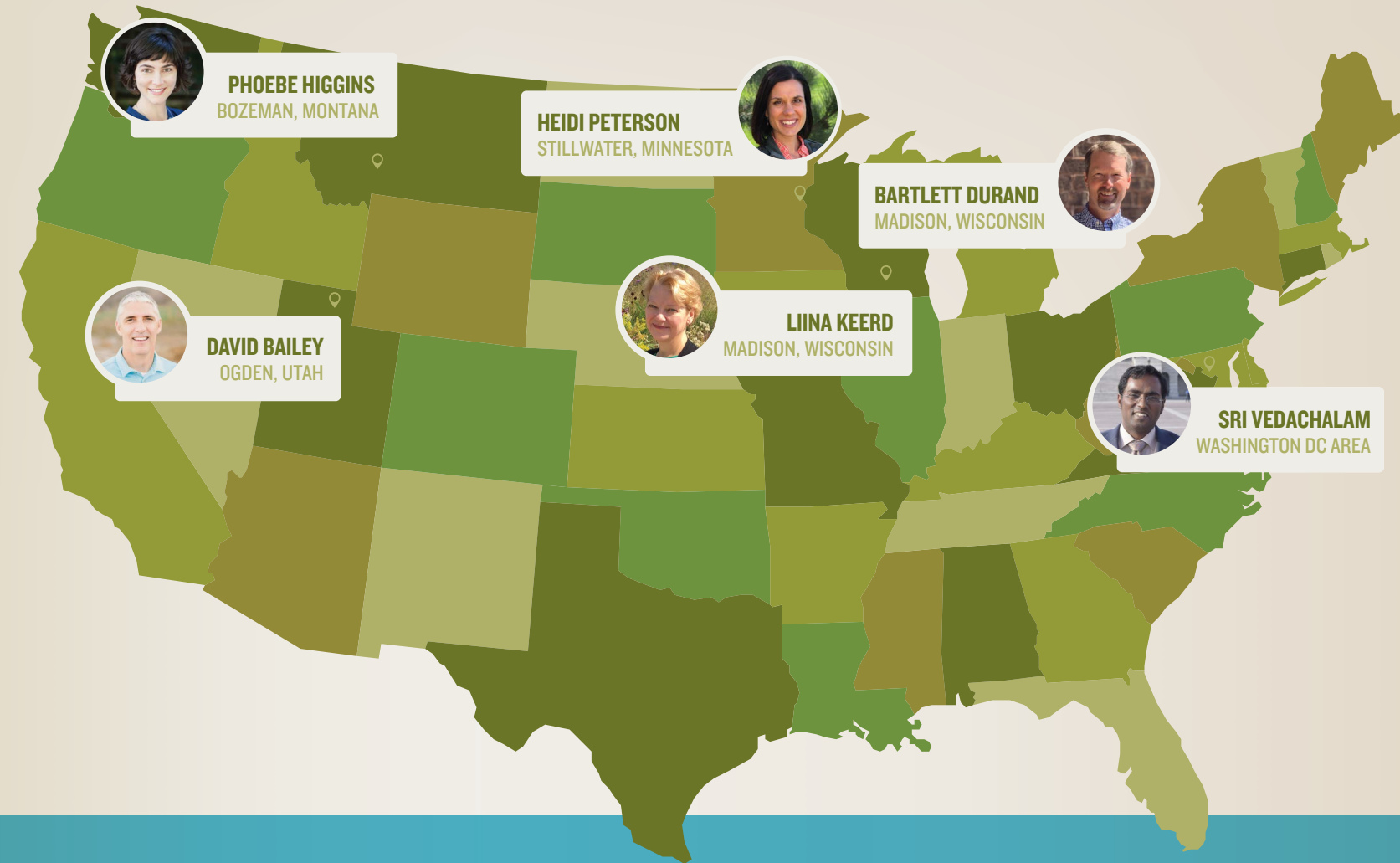
Director of Operations

**Sridhar Vedachalam, Ph.D.**

Director of Water - Environmental Policy Innovation  
Center

**Katie Ziemer**

Soil Conservationist



**Sand County Foundation's** work to inspire more farmers, ranchers and foresters to embrace conservation practices is more important than ever as an estimated two-thirds of American farmland will change hands in the coming decades. Your support, including special gifts to our **Campaign for Conservation**, helps us build our capacity to address critical environmental issues. Thanks to your contributions in 2019, we expanded our talented team with conservation professionals from Big Sky Country to our nation's capital. **Click here to read more about them.**



“Conservation can accomplish its objectives only when it springs from an impelling conviction on the part of private landowners.”

- ALDO LEOPOLD



ENABLING LANDOWNERS.  
ADVANCING A LAND ETHIC.

\*

131 West Wilson Street,  
Suite 610  
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

\*

[sandcountyfoundation.org](http://sandcountyfoundation.org)

\*

Rominger Brothers Farms, 2019 California Leopold Conservation Award recipient. Photo: Paolo Vescia