



Environmental
Education on
the Potomac

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



OUR MISSION is to connect people to the natural world, sustainable agricultural practices, and the cultural heritage of their local watershed through education, stewardship, and advocacy.

From the Director's Desk



THERESA CULLEN

Dear Friends,

This past year was full of celebrations for the Alice Ferguson Foundation, culminating with a ribbon cutting ceremony on December 16th for our newly constructed Shirley and Frank Nicolai Education Pavilion. The completion of this building marks the conclusion of the Foundation's capital improvement project.

The Potomac Watershed Study Complex capital improvement project spanned over 20 years. It began with a collective vision to use the highest level of architectural sustainability on our property beginning with a building charrette formed in 2006, followed by the completion of the nation's longest living freshwater shoreline in 2010, and finally, the ground breaking ceremony of Maryland's only "Living Building" in 2015. We are proud of our nationally recognized accomplishments in sustainable architecture and landscape, and the completion of the Pavilion has drawn this chapter to a close. We are looking forward to the next chapter of "living" it.

Equally important, was the return of children back onsite. The calendars have been filled with scheduled visits from local schools eager to be back in the outdoors. In the fall, we welcomed third graders from Charles County Public Schools back to the farm for the first time in nearly 10 years. We are looking forward to visits from Prince George's County fifth graders shortly after the new year arrives. After a long few years of resilience, we have reached the light at the end of the tunnel. In this report, we are delighted to share our recent accomplishments with you.

Thank you for your continued support. We hope to see you at the farm soon!

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Daniel Donohue
Kate Johnson
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Kay Powell
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2022 Impact



6,487

students from 65 schools served through our outdoor and virtual environmental education programs.

430

children and community members participated in the Foundation's outdoor summer camps and onsite weekend events.



193

teachers trained through the Foundation's professional development workshops.



2,000+

*community volunteers from 150
cleanups removed 75,000+
pounds of trash from our
communities and waterways.*



6,431

*followers on the Foundation's
social media platforms -
Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and
LinkedIn. The Foundation gained
541 new followers in 2022.*



Get Involved!

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Help keep our programs within
reach with a gift today.

VOLUNTEER



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neighbors as you give back.

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Students from Latin American Montessori Bilingual Public Charter School gathered around the campfire.

Best of 2022



PAVILION RIBBON CUTTING

On December 16, the ribbon was officially cut on the brand-new Shirley and Frank Nicolai Education Pavilion. The completion of the Pavilion marked the conclusion of the Foundation's Potomac Watershed Study Complex capital improvement project. This beautiful new space will host students and community members for years to come.



CHARLES COUTY STUDENTS RETURN

In fall 2022, Charles County third graders visited the Foundation's environmental campus for outdoor field trips. During their visit, students observe nature through the lens of binoculars, discover cool critters on habitat hikes, interact with the farm animals, and much more.



CELEBRATE SCIENCE WITH BRIDGING THE WATERSHED

Students from Kenmoor Middle School joined Foundation educators for a day to celebrate science. Through hands-on activities like the trash timeline and using renewable energy devices, students learned about sustainability and the impact trash has on our environment.



SUMMER ADVENTURE CAMP

After a two-year hiatus, the Foundation's Summer Adventure Camps resumed with two one-week camp sessions in July. Kids engaged with the world around them while getting to know our lovable goats, digging in the garden, finding tadpoles and much more!



34TH ANNUAL POTOMAC CLEANUP

In spring 2022, cleanup site leaders and community volunteers joined together in removing more than 75,000 pounds of trash from our waterways and communities to keep them clean and safe.

Summer Adventure Camp

There's no better way to spend summer break than at Hard Bargain Farm! Thirty-six children participated in the Foundation's Summer Adventure Camp in 2022. Campers enjoyed two weeks full of adventure, friendships, and learning in our 330-acre outdoor classroom.

"I DIDN'T HAVE A GOOD DAY. I DIDN'T HAVE A GREAT DAY. I HAD AN AMAZING DAY!"
- LOGAN, CAMPER





7th grade students from Allegheny County learning in nature at the Allegheny Outdoor School at Rocky Gap State Park.

Charles County Returns

For the first time in nearly a decade, Charles County Public School students visited our environmental campus for outdoor learning. Eight school groups made the trip this past fall, while the other 14 elementary schools are scheduled to visit in spring 2023. These experiences are made possible by a grant from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.





Student from Gonzaga High School holding a crayfish during the macroinvertebrate field study.

In The News

RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY UNVEILS NEW EDUCATION PAVILION IN PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

Accokeek, MD – The Alice Ferguson Foundation held a ribbon cutting ceremony on December 16 to unveil its new education pavilion and celebrate the conclusion of the Potomac Watershed Study Center capital improvement project.

Maryland State Delegate Kris Valderrama, Prince George's County Public Schools Chief Executive Director Dr. Monica Goldson, and other dignitaries were in attendance to offer remarks and show support of the nearly decade-long construction.

"THE VISION FOR THIS PROJECT BEGAN WITH OUR EDUCATORS AND THE DESIRE TO HAVE A LIVING SUSTAINABLE STUDY CAMPUS THAT WOULD ALLOW STUDENTS AND THE COMMUNITY TO UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE THE NATURAL WORLD AND FIND JOY IN NATURE"

said Theresa Cullen, Executive Director of the Alice Ferguson Foundation.

Construction on the Potomac Watershed Study Center began in March 2014 and was completed in November 2022. The Center includes a brand-new education pavilion, living building, an ADA accessible wetlands boardwalk, two overnight sleeping cabins and features a rain garden, bioswale, demonstration cisterns, native plants, and interpretive signs.

The Foundation has a long working history with Prince George's County, committing to work alongside the County to support environmental initiatives.

"I am really excited to see this project come to fruition," said Andrea Crooms, Director of Environment for Prince George's County. "It's exciting that there are organizations like the Alice Ferguson Foundation in our own backyard who demonstrate the best management practices for stormwater runoff can be beautiful and work in harmony with the natural environment."

The education pavilion will be a gathering place for school groups, community residents, businesses, and organizations for outdoor educational programs, reinforcing the Alice Ferguson Foundation's commitment to "nature as a classroom".

"I am continuously amazed at the work of the Alice Ferguson Foundation," said Delegate Kris Valderrama. "Programs beyond the classroom that activate hands-on learning outdoors and promote careers in science are critical experiences for all of our students here in Prince George's County, and elsewhere."

The Alice Ferguson Foundation and Prince George's County Public Schools have had an ongoing partnership since the 1960's to deliver day and overnight programs to local school children and professional development for teachers.

Continued on the next page.



Above: Dr. Monica Goldson, CEO of Prince George's County Public Schools giving remarks during the ribbon cutting ceremony.



Above: Frank and Shirley Nicolai, pavilion namesakes, cutting the ribbon at the pavilion ribbon cutting ceremony.

For many years, the Alice Ferguson Foundation has been a valued collaborative partner for Prince George's County Public Schools and the William S. Schmidt Outdoor Education Center," said Dr. Monica Goldson, Chief Executive Officer for Prince George's County Public Schools. "The Foundation has helped us ensure every last one of our fifth graders have the opportunity to have an overnight environmental experience."

The pavilion was dedicated to honor the long-time contribution and support from Shirley and Frank Nicolai, generous volunteers and Board Emeriti of the Alice Ferguson Foundation.

"Naming this pavilion after the Nicolai's is a fitting honor, but it also tells a broader story about what we do," said Stephen Kim, Board President of the Alice Ferguson Foundation. "What started as a single visit to the Hard Bargain Farm evolved into a long term dedication to this organization."

For many years to come, the Shirley and Frank Nicolai Education Pavilion will help connect children to the natural beauty that Southern Maryland and the Potomac watershed have to offer.

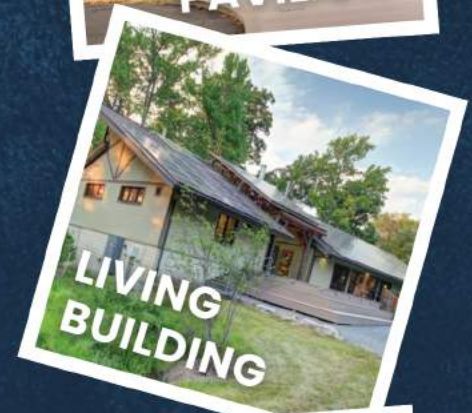
"Originally we thought we were going to help fund a classroom but this open pavilion is really so much better for children to be outside," said Shirley Nicolai, generous volunteer and board emerti of the Alice Ferguson Foundation.

**"WHEN THE CHILDREN
COME HERE, THEY LEARN HOW
TO LIVE GENTLY ON THE LAND
AND THAT THEIR ACTIONS HAVE
AN IMPACT ON THE
ENVIRONMENT, WHICH IS SO
CRUCIAL FOR THEIR FUTURES"**

To learn more about the features of the Potomac Study Watershed Center visit fergusonfoundation.org or scan the QR code below with your mobile phone.



POTOMAC WATERSHED STUDY COMPLEX FEATURES



The Center also includes a rain garden, bioswale, demonstration cisterns, native plants, and interpretive signs.



**Students from Ross Elementary School
observing the wildlife along the
Potomac River, including bald eagles!**



Celebrate!

HARD BARGAIN FARM'S CENTENNIAL MILESTONE

This year marks the centennial milestone of Alice Ferguson's purchase of Hard Bargain Farm, situated along the Potomac River on ancestral land of the Piscataway people. Check out the history of its purchase and how this historic property has transformed over the last century.

The year is 1922. Insulin is used for the first time to treat diabetes, the United States Supreme Court rules that baseball is in fact a sport and not a business, and the first two-color Technicolor film, *The Toll of the Sea* premieres. What a year this was for setting the foundation for future generations.

One hundred years ago, Alice Ferguson searched for a property where she and her husband Henry could escape the hustle and bustle of Washington DC and host gatherings for their family and friends. For Alice, that special place was Hard Bargain Farm, located in Accokeek, Maryland. The Henry agreed to her purchase which included a dilapidated farmhouse, several farm structures, fields, woodlands, wetlands, streams, the Potomac shoreline, a view of Mount Vernon, and a beautiful rolling landscape. **This year the Alice Ferguson Foundation celebrates 100 years since Alice's purchase of Hard Bargain Farm.**

Alice named the Farm "Hard Bargain", after an old estate in Maryland. Where Bryan Point Road takes off from Livingston Road was often as close as you could get to the property by car. Wilton, their chauffeur often had to pick them up and/or drop them off there by horse or buggy.*

For many years, Hard Bargain Farm and its breathtaking view of the Potomac was the backdrop for the Fergusons and their many gatherings. More than that, it was the birthplace of today's Moyaone Community and partial formation of Piscataway Park. **Let's take a look at how the property has changed over the last century.**

1924 - The Ferguson Farmhouse was constructed on the site of a two-story frame house that collapsed when efforts were made to restore it for use by the Fergusons.

The iconic Blue Barn, granary and corn crib were constructed at about the same time as the house.

Early 1930's - Henry and Alice Ferguson built an amphitheater in a natural ravine at Hard Bargain Farm. The original stage was merely a half circle of concrete laid in what used to be a gravel pit. For many years, it was used primarily for dances. However, the Fergusons used this place also to gather with friends, dressing up in elaborate costumes and putting on spontaneous plays for their own amusement.

1933 - The milking barn (used today for visiting students) was built.

1951 - Shortly after Alice's death, Henry generously donates Hard Bargain Farm to the community.

**Excerpt from Charles Wagner's "A Rambling History of the Moyaone Reserve"*



October 24, 1954 - Henry Ferguson established the Alice Ferguson Foundation as a non-profit organization to honor the historic and artistic contributions made by his wife, Alice.

"IT HAS SO MANY DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES - RIVERS, STREAMS, HILLS, FARMLAND, BEAVER DAMS, MARSH. IT HAS IT ALL, IN A VERY COMPACT WAY. THERE'S SO MUCH OPPORTUNITY TO TEACH EVERY LITTLE ASPECT OF THE ECOSYSTEM,"

said Kay Powell, a current Board member and former Executive Director of the Alice Ferguson Foundation. Kay, a proud resident of the Moyaone community, also served as a park ranger and extra set of hands on the farm, where she could be "a kid at heart."



Left: Kay Powell, current Board member and former Executive Director of the Alice Ferguson Foundation

1966 - A loosely gathered group of theater-loving amateurs started the Hard Bargain Players and helped to upgrade the Ferguson Amphitheater by constructioning a full-length wooden stage.

1968 - The Alice Ferguson Foundation transferred ownership of 85 acres between the current farm property and the Potomac River to the National Park Service to ensure its protection from nearby development. The land transfer included the one condition that the Foundation would retain the right to use the land for activities consistent with the Foundation's educational mission.

1976 - Named after G.B. "Bernie" Wareham, the first Executive Director of the Alice Ferguson Foundation, the Wareham Lodge was constructed to be a learning and sleeping space for the students visiting Hard Bargain Farm for day and overnight stays. Over the next 40 years, the Lodge became a beloved space where memories were created, and a home base for the students who went on nature adventures, formed friendships, and explored the farm and its surroundings.

"MY FATHER WAS SO DEDICATED TO THIS PLACE. HE MADE AN ATTEMPT TO MEET EVERY SCHOOL BUS THAT PULLED IN AND TO GREET THE KIDS VISITING THAT DAY"

recalled Bud Wareham during an interview about his connection to Hard Bargain Farm. Bud is a former Board Member of the Alice Ferguson Foundation and son of Bernie Wareham, our first Executive Director. During his childhood and well into his adult years, Bud spent many days here on the Farm as a close neighbor, farm hand, cleanup volunteer, and actor in the Hard Bargain Players.



Above: Bud Wareham, former Board Member of the Alice Ferguson Foundation and son of Bernie Wareham, our first Executive Director

2002 - The Amphitheater was refurbished with the support of grants from the State of Maryland and the Redevelopment Authority of Prince George's County. A sound booth was constructed, electricity was rewired, and lights were added to the parking area. The following year new pine decking, catwalk, roof, railings, and steps were installed.

2013 - A fully accessible boardwalk, replete with observation stations completed construction, meandering through an emergent wetland thereby complementing the notion of nature as classroom.

2015 - The Alice Ferguson Foundation unveils its net-zero impact student center. In keeping with the Foundation's mission, the Living Building stands in harmony with nature and is used both as a classroom and as a teaching tool. This is the first phase of the Potomac Watershed Study Complex capital improvement project.

2018 - The Ferguson Farmhouse received much needed repairs and a fresh coat of paint. We restored rotted window frames, replaced sill rot along the foundation and roofline of the farmhouse and outbuildings, repaired the chimney and replaced bricks damaged in the 2011 earthquake. Some much needed repairs were also done to the stormwater drainage system.

2019 - Nearly 100 years of age, our barnyard buildings got a much-needed refresh, returning it to its original 1930's blue glory. Also during this year, the Wareham Lodge was taken down.

Late Fall 2022 - An education pavilion is constructed where the Wareham Lodge once stood, marking the conclusion of the Potomac Watershed Study Complex capital improvement project. The pavilion serves as a host to school groups, community residents, and local businesses and organizations for outdoor educational programming, reinforcing the Alice Ferguson Foundation's commitment to "nature as a classroom".

Just as it has over the last century, Hard Bargain Farm brings people together. Today, we are overjoyed to hear the constant excitement and laughter of children enjoying the great outdoors from our offices in the Ferguson Farmhouse, and through our community events our neighbors and friends are able to enjoy the Farm's unique charm and create memories that will last a lifetime.

So what's next?

"My hope for the future is that by visiting Hard Bargain Farm, it reignites people's love for the natural world," shared Powell.

"My hope would be that we continue to educate kids as my father started and others have continued to do," shared Wareham.

Without the dedication of the Fergusons, Hard Bargain Farm as we know it would not exist today. We are grateful for the hard work done by those who came before us. As our centennial year comes to a close, we are hopeful for the future and eager to see what's in store, for both Hard Bargain Farm and the Alice Ferguson Foundation. **Here's to continuing to cherish and protect this special place for generations to come. ♦**

To learn more about this remarkable property and its fascinating history please visit fergusonfoundation.org or scan the QR code below with your mobile phone.





Students from Green Acres School dipnetting along the wet meadow at the Foundation's environmental center .

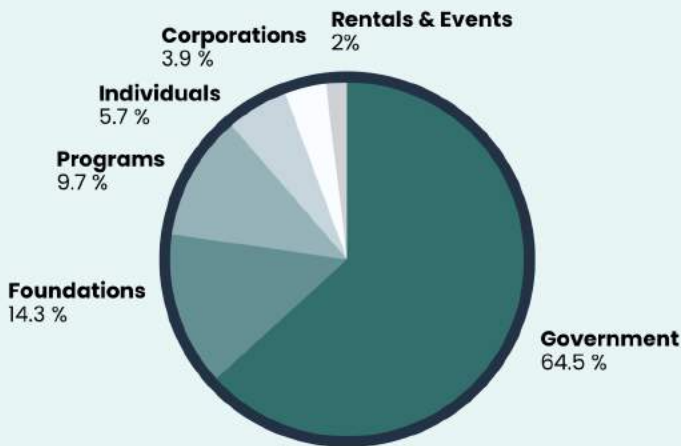


Thank You

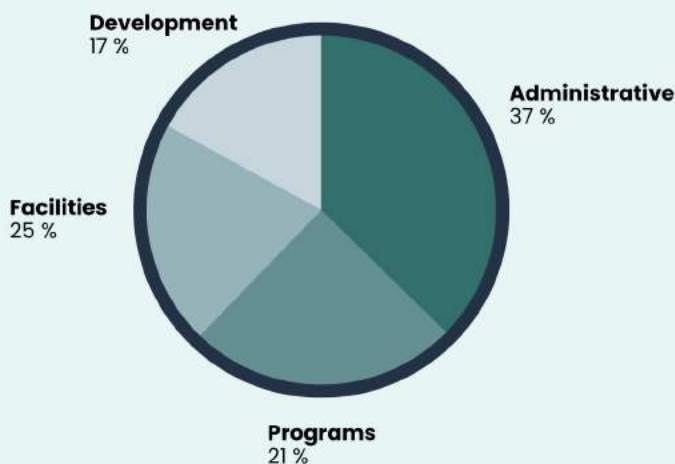
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REVENUE



EXPENSES



Students and teachers from Mt. Daniel Elementary School taking a hayride to the Potomac River shoreline.



**ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION
ON THE
POTOMAC**

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