

Heartland

CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

2019 Annual Report

Our Mission: Heartland Conservation Alliance proactively conserves, protects, and restores natural lands and open space within the Kansas City region, benefiting the community and future generations by improving water quality, creating recreational opportunities, protecting life and property, and preserving our natural and cultural heritage.

HCA accomplishes its goals through collaboration with a network of public and private organizations and agencies that share its goals, values, and objectives, and through public outreach and education.

Protecting Our Connection to Nature

The Blue River is an amazing asset to the Kansas City region. It is imperative we protect it and the land surrounding it. We have to get going because we are losing it at an alarming rate. I am proud to know we are being good stewards of our small part of the watershed by planting native trees and plants, not using harmful chemicals and volunteering when we can to teach others. It isn't just for the Blue River, we are protecting a quality of life for ourselves and our grandchildren. We are so happy that our donation to Heartland Conservation Alliance made it possible to save the Chestnut Property this year.

~Connie Chapman

Co-Founder Heartland Conservation Alliance

A decade ago, landowners Connie and Mike Chapman observed a for sale sign for the 300-acre property adjacent to their home with a price tag of \$9 million. Their home sits on 40 acres surrounded by spring-fed creeks, limestone ridges and woodland home to abundant wildlife. Their land sits in the Camp Branch Creek watershed, headwaters to the Blue River. They tried unsuccessfully to save the land for sale from development. The bulldozers tore down the trees to make way for suburban subdivision with large homes, sewers and roads. In trying to save critical habitat and vital natural resources Heartland Conservation Alliance was born. The story repeated itself in the spring of 2018. This time, local trail advocates were trying to save nearly 100 acres of dedicated parkland due to be sold at a public auction because elected officials voted to surplus the properties. This time Heartland Conservation Alliance was ready with the help of its partners to purchase 40 acres of oak-hickory forest that perches on the bluffs along Blue River Road overlooking the Bannister Complex. Every day beautiful and important places in the Blue River Watershed and beyond are threatened by more development and the impacts are harmful to wildlife which lose a place to raise their young, to businesses lost to flooding and to neighborhoods that lose access to nature.



(Left) Private landowners Connie and Mike Chapman are working with Kansas Land Trust and Heartland Conservation Alliance to protect their land by setting up a conservation easement (Right) Local developer purchased nearly 300 acres of high quality natural areas in the Blue River Watershed to build homes

Conserving Natural Resources

101 acres under active restoration



11 acres at 81 Street and Troost in partnership with KC Water and The Conservation Fund



30 acres at Municipal Farm in partnership with Boys Grow, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and City of Kansas City, Missouri



40 acres at Blue Valley Park in partnership with KC Parks



20 acres at Alex George Park in partnership with Jackson County Parks and Recreation



1/4 acre in Dunbar/Leeds Neighborhood in partnership with Heart of the City Neighborhood Association



"The Blue River provides a community connection in a way that roads and highways do not. "

-Bill Brant, Local Environmentalist-

Photo courtesy of Bill Brant

NEW REGIONAL TOOL: The Blue River a documentary



I was proud to be a part of creating the Blue River documentary film. The film helps tell the story of the river, of our relationship with the river and highlights the need to change how we do business. I think without a doubt this can once again be a vibrant and healthy Blue River. The time to act is now.

Bob Berkebile

Heartland P5 Holdings

(Left) Bob Berkebile is featured in the Blue River Documentary that premiered in January 2019 on local public television station, KCPT.

Convening our Community



Our Alliance is 56 partners strong



Co-Leaders of the Kansas City Conservation Equity Network to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the conservation community



Ambassador for EPA's Urban Waters Federal Partnership and convened monthly meetings with federal partners contributing XX hours to Blue River restoration efforts



64% of funds spent in 2019 went to watershed partners



109 partners attended the Fifth Annual Partnership Summit



Convened 19 partners to create and publish the first Blue River Report Card, accounting for more than 430 partner contribution hours.



Partner with Green Drinks to host four community events in 2019 with a combined attendance of 83 people.



235 hours of staff time attending partner events and supporting regional planning efforts



Co-leading of Kansas City Conservation Equity Network to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion

NEW REGIONAL TOOL: THE BLUE RIVER REPORT CARD

The Blue River Watershed spans two states, nine counties and 20 municipalities. The only way to improve the health of the watershed and protect natural resources is through collaboration and coordination. In 2019 our organization, The Nature Conservancy Kansas, joined the Missouri Department of Conservation and Heartland Conservation Alliance to develop the first-ever Blue River Report Card.

We recognize we must work across state boundaries to really make a difference to the health of the Blue River. In order to find opportunities where we could really make a difference, we had to first assess the situation and really understand the current health of the river. It took an entire year and we involved stakeholders at every step of a five-step process developed by the University of Maryland. We learned how important it was to include a variety of indicators to fully see how the community and the river interact. Now we have the really hard work to share the results and act on the recommendations in the 2019 Report Card.

~ Kelly Blandford

The Nature Conservancy Kansas

Connecting People to Nature

Green Guard Stewardship Training Program: Building a community of land stewards



56 new graduating stewards



101 individual participants

10 Marlborough residents participated in the Green Guard Stewardship program during the summer of 2019.

"I want to reestablish my rain garden. I learned that additional maintenance is needed the first few years by watering, mulching lightly, and keeping invasive plants out."

"I didn't fully understand water pollution's impact on our community and environment."

"Native plants were the most valuable [lesson learned] because it was interesting to learn about the plants that are natural to our state and how they benefit the land around us."

(Left) Marlborough Green Guard Stewards visit native prairie plantings working to reduce flooding in the Marlborough neighborhood



(Above) East High School Green Guard Stewards explore different areas along the Blue River during the Fall 2019 class. The 10-week stewardship training class finished the fourth year at East High School with the largest graduating class size to date. The Stewards explore the woods and new green infrastructure on the East High School campus as well as embark on field trips to other Blue River partner sites.

Connecting People to Nature

Partners working together to make the Blue River healthier



Participating partners: Bridging the Gap, Deep Roots, Giving Grove, Healthy Rivers Partnership, Heartland Tree Alliance, KC Water, KC WildLands, MARC, Monarchs on the Move, City of Overland Park

66 community events hosted in the watershed

9,799 attendees to events

152,156 people reached through the promotional campaign

83,614 pounds of trash diverted from river

630 tires collected

900 native plants planted

2,315 trees planted

22.93 acres of invasive plants removed



"We can make the Blue River more accessible with walking and bike trails"

-Officer Antoney Perez, Police Athletic League-



"I try to do my part in preserving nature so others have similar opportunities to learn and play in it."

Mark Sharp,
Missouri Master
Naturalist intern,
Osage Trails
Chapter



"The real connection is connecting neighbors to come and help care for a bit of nature right by their houses."

-Ann Pai, Urban Trail Co.-

Photo courtesy of Ann Pai

BLUE RIVER ROAD CLEAN-UP in Partnership with Urban Trail Co and KC Water



Sixty-seven volunteers showed up on a cloudy Saturday morning in October to clean up chronic illegal dumping sites along Blue River Road. This was a collaborative effort between Heartland Conservation Alliance, KC Water, Urban Trail Co. and Rockhurst University students. Participants learned the value of restoring the Blue River by cleaning up trash along its corridors, and by understanding how pollutants travel into the Little Blue River and into the Missouri River, where we get our drinking water.

(Left) Many volunteers at the clean-up are avid bicyclists who spend a lot

Sound Foundation for a Solid Future

Heartland Conservation Alliance has the ability to conduct a variety of programs because of support from the Conservation Fund, the National Recreation and Parks Association, and local private funders such as the Health Forward Foundation and the Shumaker Foundation. We also receive vital government support from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, the Missouri Department of Conservation and the Environmental Protection Agency. HCA's development plan continues to focus on diversifying sources of income and increasing contributions from individuals and local businesses.

As with most nonprofits, HCA's largest expense is staffing. In 2019, a part-time Outreach Coordinator was added to the full-time Executive Director, Partnership Coordinator and Land Trust Coordinator. Coordinators are paid through specific programmatic grants, with about 10% of an average grant dedicated to administration. A guiding principle of the organization is to bring new money into Kansas City and to share funding with nonprofit partners through collaborative projects; in 2019, 63% of grant funding passed through HCA to nonprofit peers and local contractors.

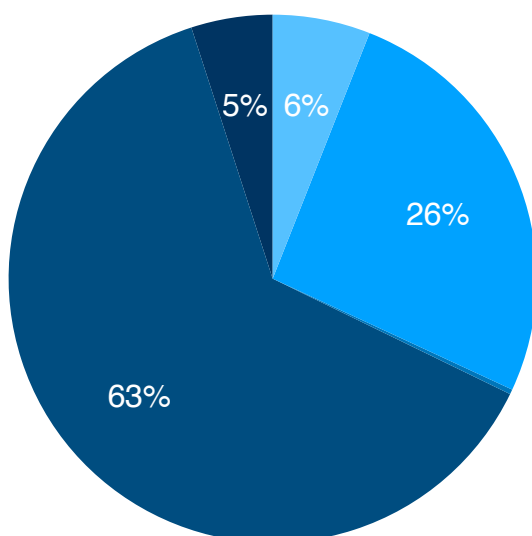
In 2019, HCA for the first time was able to fulfill its mission as an urban land trust, through the purchase of forty acres of riparian oak and hickory forest overlooking the Blue River. This tract was purchased from Jackson County with the help of a \$152,000 loan from the Conservation Fund. Over the next two years HCA will be raising funds for the repayment of this loan and the perpetual maintenance of the property.

The organization's first audit was completed in 2019. It reflected sound fiscal management with only minor recommendations for recording for recording grants and expenses. The audit provides documented evidence that HCA is well funded and stable.

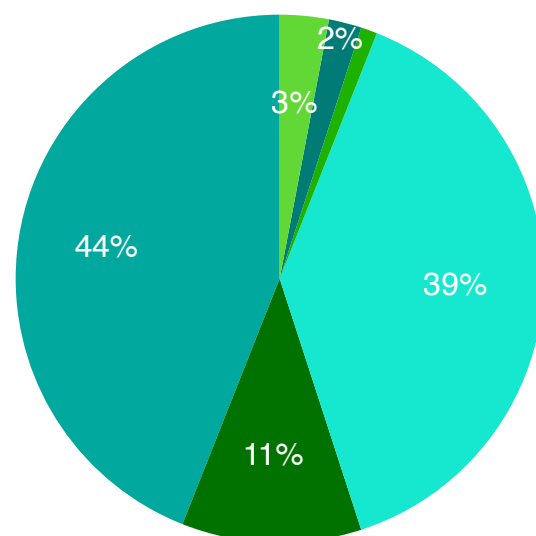
- Program Expenses
- Personnel Expenses
- Land Trust Expenses
- Project Partners and Contractors
- Operational Expenses

- Individual Donations
- Gifts in Kind
- Sub-Award Grants
- Corporate Donations
- Government Grants
- Foundation Grants

Heartland Conservation Alliance
2019 Expenses



Heartland Conservation Alliance
2019 Income Sources



THANK YOU TO OUR 2019 FUNDERS

Black and Veatch
Bridging the Gap
Environmental Protection Agency
Health Forward Foundation

Healthy Rivers Partnership
J Crew
Jackson County Parks + Rec
KC Water

Missouri Department of Conservation
Missouri Dept. of Natural Resources
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
National Recreation and Parks Assoc.
Shumaker Family Foundation
Urban Neighborhood Initiative
US Forest Service
The Conservation Fund
The Nature Conservancy-Kansas Chapter

2019 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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2019 STEERING COUNCIL

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