



**SCHOODIC  
INSTITUTE**

AT ACADIA NATIONAL PARK



**IMPACT REPORT**

**2025**

# WE ARE LOCATED ON SCHOODIC POINT, IN THE HOMELAND OF THE WABANAKI, PEOPLE OF THE DAWN.

Archaeological evidence shows that Schoodic Point has been a place where Wabanaki families harvested fish, clams, sea birds, and mammals for thousands of years.

Schoodic remains an important place to Wabanaki Nations today, supporting Indigenous science, community gatherings, and cultural events.



Portions of the Schoodic Peninsula began to be exposed as the continental ice sheet melted north and inland.

14,000 years ago

Note to reader: This timeline is not drawn to scale. Time intervals are represented non-uniformly for visual clarity.

Dear Friends,

## This past year marks a meaningful moment in our story.

For 25 years, Acadia's Research Learning Center has been a place where curiosity meets commitment, and where science is shaped by the landscapes and communities it serves. What began as a small, place-based effort to support science in Acadia National Park has grown into a dynamic center for research, learning, and collaboration that reaches far beyond park boundaries.

This report features a timeline because our impact is best understood through continuity and change. It reflects where we started, highlights that shaped our work, and how our mission has responded to new knowledge, new challenges, and new opportunities. It also captures the progress of the past fiscal year, from advancing in long-term research to strengthening the programs that support students, fellows, and early-career professionals.

Our science continues to evolve, becoming more integrated and more responsible to the needs of parks, partners, and the planet. At the same time, our focus on paying attention to nature and supporting the next generation of conservation champions remains central to who we are. The future of conservation depends not only on data and dedication, but on people prepared to continue the work.

As we look ahead, this anniversary reminds us that lasting impact is built over time, through sustained investment, shared purpose, and belief in what science and education can make possible. Thank you for being part of this shared history and the work still ahead.

With gratitude,

Handwritten signature of David Ellwood, PhD, in blue ink.

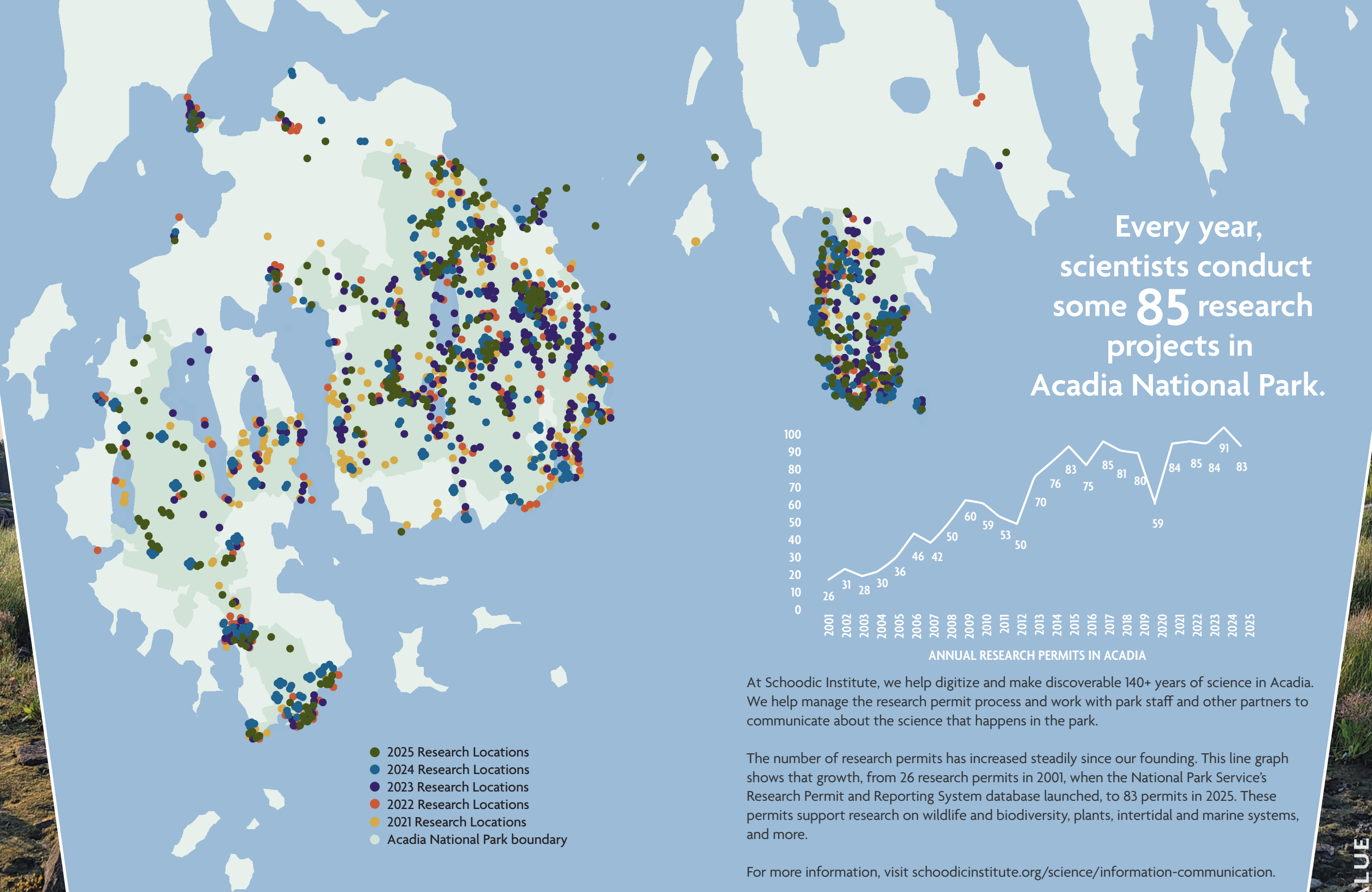
David Ellwood, PhD  
Board Chair



Handwritten signature of Nicholas Fisichelli, PhD, in blue ink.

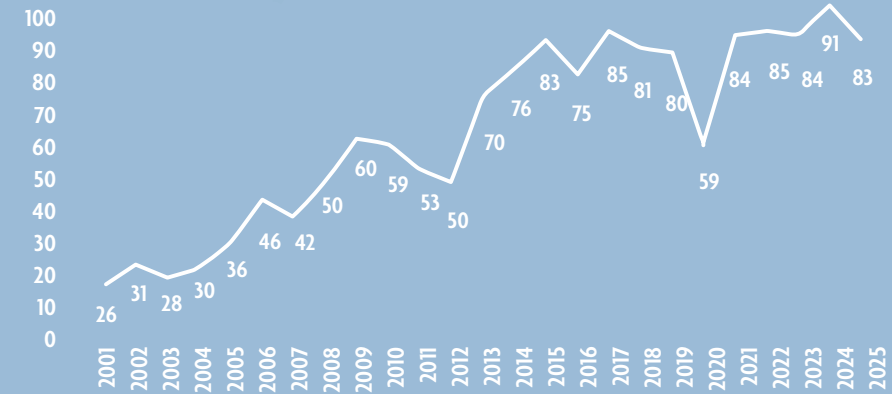
Nicholas Fisichelli, PhD  
President & CEO





- 2025 Research Locations
- 2024 Research Locations
- 2023 Research Locations
- 2022 Research Locations
- 2021 Research Locations
- Acadia National Park boundary

Every year, scientists conduct some **85** research projects in Acadia National Park.



ANNUAL RESEARCH PERMITS IN ACADIA

At Schoodic Institute, we help digitize and make discoverable 140+ years of science in Acadia. We help manage the research permit process and work with park staff and other partners to communicate about the science that happens in the park.

The number of research permits has increased steadily since our founding. This line graph shows that growth, from 26 research permits in 2001, when the National Park Service's Research Permit and Reporting System database launched, to 83 permits in 2025. These permits support research on wildlife and biodiversity, plants, intertidal and marine systems, and more.

For more information, visit [schoodicinstitute.org/science/information-communication](https://schoodicinstitute.org/science/information-communication).

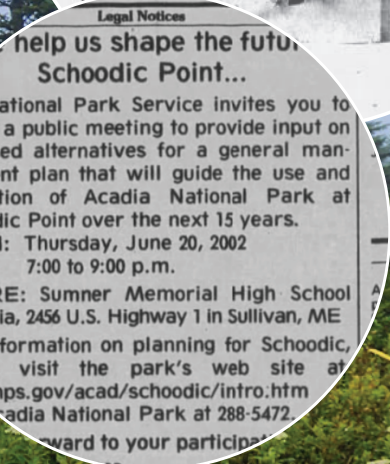
- 1929** Ruth and Faith Moore, daughters of John. G. Moore, donate ~2,000 acres on the Schoodic Peninsula to the National Park Service for park use and scientific research.
- 1935** U.S. Naval Base moves from Otter Point to Schoodic Point.
- 1971** Annual Christmas Bird Count begins in Acadia.
- 1994** Cadillac Mountain Hawk Watch begins.
- 1999** U.S. Navy issues intent to close. Schoodic Arts For All is created.
- 2000** Acadia National Park submits proposal to turn Navy base into a Research Learning Center.
- 2001** Foc'sle Galley at the Navy Base serves its final meal as the base prepares to close.

# EXPANDING STEWARDSHIP CAPACITY

## Acadia's collaborative community of science is growing!

And, thanks to committed scientists working closely with park managers, active and effective stewardship of Acadia's resources is growing, too.

Through several fellowship programs, we have helped expand research in Acadia. One of the earliest was the Fitz Eugene Dixon Research Fellowship, established in 2006 with generous support from the Dixon family and through the leadership of Bill Zoellick.



“We have to ask ourselves, ‘What is this place going to look like in 20 years?’”

- Paul Haertel, Acadia National Park Superintendent from 1994–2002

From a *Bangor Daily News* article that year, then Acadia National Park Superintendent (2003–2015) Sheridan Steele said, “Acadia National Park has a great need for increased knowledge about how the natural systems of the park change over time. We also have a great desire to engage citizens and, in particular, young people, in the life of the park. This fellowship program will stimulate research activity that meets both of these objectives at once.”

Through private philanthropy and additional grants, Schoodic Institute more than triples the National Park Service investment in science and education in Acadia. Our efforts are complementary to and coordinated with Friends of Acadia.

Learn about the inaugural class of Dixon fellows on the following pages.

Schoodic Education and Research Center (SERC) is established as Acadia National Park's Research Learning Center. Schoodic Education Adventure (SEA) program initiated, led by Kate Petrie and piloted by 41 students from Mount Desert Elementary and Winter Harbor.

2003

Schoodic Institute (then called Acadia Partners for Science and Learning) created with Patricia Tanski as interim director. National Park Service (NPS) hosts first bioblitz.

2006

Campus is open to private groups for use, including a Wabanaki Language Immersion course.

2004

Former campus bowling alley is converted to a bunkhouse, which now primarily houses students during the SEA program. Denny O'Brien hired as first Executive Director of Acadia Partners for Science and Learning.

2002

CORE VALUE Knowledge

# DIXON RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

## INAUGURAL CLASS OF DIXON FELLOWS: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Fitz Eugene Dixon  
Photo courtesy E. Dixon

In 2006, the Fitz Eugene Dixon Research Fellowship was established to support and expand ecological research in Acadia National Park, an initiative that was part of a larger effort to increase scientific research within the park. Learn about the inaugural class of fellows (and where they are now) below.

### Catherine Schmitt, Science Communication Specialist at Schoodic Institute



Catherine Schmitt  
Photo by NPS/B. Richards

Catherine Schmitt's path to Schoodic Institute did not begin with a fellowship application, but rather through redirection of an application from a different grant all together. As a science writer with Maine Sea Grant at the University of Maine, she was already immersed in the work of translating research into stories that mattered. When she proposed a project on the history and ecology of Sargent Mountain Pond through an L.L.Bean research grant, the idea landed slightly outside the grant's scope. Still, reviewers recognized its promise and redirected their support, offering Catherine one of the first Dixon Fellowships instead.

“Dixon fellowships are meant to be seeds.”  
- Mr. Fitz Eugene Dixon

That redirection changed everything. Encouraged by Bill Zoellick to pursue the pond's story while remaining open to new threads of inquiry, Catherine found herself with something rare: permission to follow curiosity. That freedom led her into the archives of the Mount Desert Island Historical Society, where she opened boxes containing the handwritten notebooks of the Champlain Society. That moment would turn out to be the beginning of more than a decade of work digitizing and transcribing thousands of pages of nineteenth-century observations. From those notebooks emerged a far-reaching body of work on the history of science in Acadia. Catherine shared these stories through museum exhibits, lectures, journal and magazine articles, an edited volume of *Chebacco*, two books, and projects that continue to evolve. She can still recall the feeling of standing in the MDI Historical Society schoolhouse, opening those archival boxes for the first time and realizing that science lives as much in preserved stories as it does in the field or lab.

### Sarah Nelson, Director of Research at Appalachian Mountain Club



Sarah Nelson  
Photo courtesy S. Nelson

When Sarah Nelson arrived at Schoodic Institute in 2007 as a Dixon Fellow, both the campus and her career were at a moment of transformation. Schoodic was still operating as Acadia Partners in Science and Learning, and Sarah was completing her PhD when she learned about the fellowship through Bill Zoellick. Sarah and Bill had just co-led what may have been the Institute's first field course, a winter session for students from the

NPS completes construction on Moore Auditorium and converts former Navy buildings into labs, classrooms, dormitories, and staff housing.

2007

2010  
Acadia Partners for Science and Learning changes name to SERC Institute.

2011  
Inaugural Acadia National Park Science Symposium.

2012  
SERC Institute helps organize first national Conference on Public Participation in Scientific Research in Portland, Oregon.

2013  
SERC Institute renamed Schoodic Institute at Acadia National Park and officially re-opens Rockefeller Hall.

Dixon Fellowships  
CORE VALUE  
To Expand Acadia  
Innovation  
Ecology Research

WINTER HARBOR  
Fitz Eugene Dixon Research Fellowship program is being established by Acadia Partners for Science and Learning to encourage more research into the plant and animal world.  
Acadia National Park Superintendent Sheridan Steele says the program is a great way to engage young people in science.

Maine School of Science and Mathematics exploring geochemistry across the Schoodic landscape. The Dixon Fellowship allowed Sarah to expand her scientific lens. While her doctoral research focused on mercury in rain, snow, and streams, her fellowship project took her into Acadia's vernal pools: small but rich wetlands where mercury can accumulate in food webs. Working closely with Dr. Cynthia Loftin and vernal pool expert Dr. Aram Calhoun, Sarah exchanged hiking boots for waders and began tracing mercury through seasonal cycles and into developing wood frogs. This first foray into biological research proved pivotal, shaping a line of inquiry she continues today, including the nationally recognized Dragonfly Mercury Project developed in collaboration with Schoodic Institute scientists. While much has changed, Schoodic Institute remains what it has always been: a quiet, spectacular place to tune out the noise and be fully present in the science of the outdoors.

### Jessie Muhlin, Chair of the Ocean Studies Department at Maine Maritime Academy



Jessie Muhlin  
Photo courtesy J. Muhlin

In 2001, Jessie Muhlin, then a PhD student at the University of Maine studying rockweed, was drawn to the Schoodic Peninsula for the exposed coastline, expansive tide pools, and ecological complexity that offered a research facility unlike any other. The U.S. Navy had only recently transferred the property. Fences still marked former boundaries, and researchers relied on each other and a collective sense of responsibility. Schoodic quickly became central to her work and her growth. Over the next five and a half years, Jessie conducted intensive intertidal research through long days and cold months, pumping seawater hourly around high tide to capture brief windows of seaweed reproduction. At the same time, she was witnessing the early formation of a research campus finding its identity. As the organization evolved, Jessie remained

2015

Superintendent Steele's leadership, aided by Maine Coast Heritage Trust and Friends of Acadia, secures preservation of an additional 1,400 acres, with plans for Schoodic Woods Campground and miles of new bike paths and hiking trails.

part of that unfolding story. She built lasting relationships with early leaders and staff and eventually became one of the first Fitz Dixon Fellows. The fellowship provided more than practical support; it validated her growing commitment to education, citizen science, and public engagement, ideas that were still emerging at the time. For Jessie, Schoodic Institute is a place where rocky shores, salt marshes, forests, and people meet; where science, education, and stewardship are intertwined; and where collaboration often begins simply by showing up and starting a conversation. More than twenty-five years later, it remains a place she returns to.

### Yvonne Davis, former Director of Career and Technical Education in Maine



Yvonne Davis  
Photo by J. González

"I have always been a proponent of hands-on learning both as a high school science teacher, and as the state director of career and technical education," says Yvonne. "The Dixon Fellowship at Schoodic Institute gave me the opportunity to work with students on original research. They were studying dragonfly larvae and they had to develop a research project using the scientific method. They were pleased that their work was contributing to a real research project and, while not easy, was meaningful. The work that is being conducted at Schoodic is important in understanding the area's environment and the fact that students and teachers continue to be involved in some of the research is essential to making them better stewards of the land (and water)."

To read the full stories of our inaugural class of Dixon fellows, visit [schoodicinstitute.org/dixon-fellows](http://schoodicinstitute.org/dixon-fellows).

2016

David E. Shaw launches Second Century Stewardship in partnership with the American Association for the Advancement of Science, National Park Foundation, Schoodic Institute, and NPS. Schoodic Institute hosts first Artist-in-Residence program in partnership with Abbe Museum and NPS.

CORE VALUE  
Innovation

# FOSTERING CAREERS IN CONSERVATION

Each year, we offer several highly competitive programs to advance the careers of college students, new graduates, and scientists. Through these initiatives, we have built a successful ladder of opportunities for researchers, educators, and science communication professionals, providing on-the-ground experience working with scientists and resource managers.

## Acadia Science Fellowship

- Early-career research scientists
- 1-2 year fellowships
- Original research relevant to park management
- Science communication training

## Cathy and Jim Gero Acadia Early-Career Fellowship

- Recent college graduates
- 10-month fellowships
- Span the college-to-career gap in STEM professions and conservation

## Environmental Education Teaching Assistants

- Recent college graduates
- 4-month assistantships
- Lead three-day immersive environmental education for middle school students

## Ecology Technicians and Interns

- College students and recent graduates
- 8-20 week positions
- Lead field research data collection, analysis, and science communication

# THANK YOU to our 2025 CONSERVATION CHAMPIONS

Seasonal Educators, Fellows, Technicians, and Interns



## Ecology and Science Technicians and Interns

Izzy Andrus  
Eleanor Freed  
Rachel Hoffman  
Jenny Kafas

Chloe Lawrence  
Conor Moses  
Nick Parlavecchio  
Adelaide Prosser  
Megan Wenner

## Schoodic Education Adventure Environmental Educators

Avery Alvarado  
Daniel Ardizzone  
Arturo Barrett  
Julianna Cannato  
Jamie Eldridge  
Nina Foster  
Sam Fuss  
Bianca Joseph  
Ezra Levine

Sandra Lord  
Ashley Lutz  
Courtney Martinez  
Ashleigh Miller  
Mary-Virginia Reed  
Kelley Rush Sanborn  
Caleb Rypstra  
Brenna Trefethen  
Caro Woodard

## Research Assistants, Coordinators, and Communicators

Heather Augustine  
Eliza Broughton  
Jessica Dolan

Lucy Enders  
Geneva Langley  
Stephanie Outhier

## Cathy and Jim Gero Acadia Early-Career Fellows

Gillian Audier  
Julia Rush  
Abby Schill

## Acadia Science Fellows

Colby Bosley-Smith  
Veronica Winter



Photo courtesy Doug Parsons/  
America Adapts

White House Office of Science and Technology Policy makes public its first biennial report on citizen science activities conducted by federal agencies. Schoodic Institute's partnerships with Acadia National Park in biodiversity discovery and phenology monitoring and the Dragonfly Mercury Project are cited as examples.

2018

2019

Current logo and website launches, expanding Schoodic Institute's digital presence and online storytelling. The first web story posted highlights the Schoodic Point Christmas Bird Count (56 total species, 20 participants).

CORE VALUE  
**Inclusion**

# 9,000+ HOURS

of Schoodic Institute-led work spent by seasonal technicians on field data collection, facilitating science experiences for visitors, and communicating about our work.



# 23,781 OBSERVATIONS

submitted by 1,837 people to iNaturalist, documenting 2,390 species in Acadia, including plants, birds, insects, fungi, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.



# 733 APPLICANTS

considered for 8 early-career positions at Schoodic Institute, resulting in 195 staff hours invested in the hiring process.



# 5,049 lbs OF SOIL

hiked to Acadia's summits by 292 volunteers as part of Save Our Summits, a partnership of the National Park Service, Friends of Acadia, and Schoodic Institute. Photo courtesy Friends of Acadia



# 85 STORIES

published in digital, print, and audio formats through Schoodic Institute and Acadia National Park websites, as well as the *Sea to Trees* and *America Adapts* podcasts and *Coastal Conversations* radio program, sharing stories of science, learning, and community in Acadia and beyond.



# 26,995 VISITORS

came through our Welcome Center at Rockefeller Hall between May and September. We also hosted 93 private groups, bringing over 2,800 people to our 100-acre campus.



# 4<sup>th</sup> SEASON

developed for *Sea to Trees* podcast, focusing on place-based science within three areas of Acadia: freshwater wetlands, granite-topped mountain summits, and boreal forests.



# 93 JOBS

held by 31 year round staff, 43 seasonal positions, and 19 technicians and fellows.



# 700+ ATTENDEES

participated in our 2025 Summer Lecture Series, comprised of four events featuring leading experts in climate action, science communication, climate adaptation efforts, and more.



2021



Landscape of Change launches in collaboration with Mount Desert Island Historical Society, College of the Atlantic, the Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory, A Climate to Thrive, and the National Park Service to document Acadia's changing landscape.

2022

Cathy and Jim Gero Acadia Early-Career Fellowship is established through the support of Cathy and Jim Gero, the National Park Service, the National Park Foundation, and Schoodic Institute.

# MEET AT SCHOODIC

## In 2025, your visit helped protect the future of Acadia National Park.

By staying on campus, attending lectures, participating in workshops, or hosting your meetings and events at Schoodic Institute, you supported Acadia's Research Learning Center campus and helped the next generation of conservation champions lead the science and solutions to rapid change.



### Meets and Retreats in 2025

We welcomed 93 groups to campus, including 18 nonprofits, 26 schools (K-12), 11 art and adventure groups, 6 birding events, and 7 wedding and special events, totaling more than 2,800 people. Learn more at [schoodicinstitute.org/meetings-and-events](https://schoodicinstitute.org/meetings-and-events).

### Events in 2025

Nearly 1,200 people participated in Schoodic Institute's in-person and virtual events, helping to support our mission and fund science, education, and conservation in Acadia National Park. Learn more about getting involved at [schoodicinstitute.org/events](https://schoodicinstitute.org/events).



# Thank You

VOLUNTEERS

Located on Schoodic Point and run entirely by volunteers, our Welcome Center at Rockefeller Hall was constructed in 1935 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Last season, Welcome Center volunteers greeted nearly 27,000 visitors from around the world. From welcoming guests to swearing in Junior Rangers, their dedication and commitment makes a lasting impact every day.

## In Memoriam | Dennis LeRoy Ihle



Denny Ihle was a cherished member of Schoodic Institute's community and a true light in our Welcome Center as a regular volunteer for many years. As a veteran with 24 years of service, Denny spent much of his naval career stationed at Naval Security Group Activity Winter Harbor. He delighted visitors and staff alike with his recollections and deep knowledge of the base and surrounding area. Denny will be sorely missed, and we are profoundly grateful for the joy he shared with us all.

Denny Ihle

*meet · eat · stay*  
AT SCHOODIC INSTITUTE

2023

Acadia Science Fellowship launches, building on the success of Second Century Stewardship. *Sea to Trees* podcast is created.

Indigenous America 250 research initiative launches, focusing on the histories of tribal nations and the Revolutionary War in the Northeast.

2024

2025

Schoodic Institute celebrates 25 years of Acadia National Park's Research Learning Center — honoring more than two decades of impact in Acadia and beyond.

CORE VALUE  
**Hospitality**

# OUR TEAM

## Board of Directors

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| David Ellwood, PhD, Chair      | William Holmes, JD                            |
| David Manski, Vice Chair       | Mark Kryder, PhD                              |
| Kathleen Nauss, PhD, Secretary | Ellin Miller                                  |
| Jim Andrews, PhD, Secretary    | William Schlesinger, PhD                      |
| Steve Myers, Treasurer         | Eric Stiles                                   |
| Frank Chudnow                  | Hilary Spandorfer                             |
| Ken Cline, JD                  | Joseph Townsend, PhD                          |
| Kareem Dieng                   | Nancy Townsend                                |
| Ivan Fernandez, PhD            | Katharine Wellman, PhD                        |
| Alan Goldstein                 | Kevin Schneider, Acadia National Park Liaison |
| Vicki Goldstein                | Nicholas Fisichelli, PhD, Ex Officio          |

## Schoodic Institute Staff

- Emma Albee, Science Information Specialist
- Bonnie Alvarez, Housekeeping Manager
- Jamie Attanasio, Forest Monitoring Crew Leader
- Seth Benz, Senior Bird Engagement Specialist
- Emily Bosworth, Science Information Technician
- Dolora Conley, Human Resources and Office Manager
- Molly Donlan, Wildlife Science and Management Biologist
- Nicholas Fisichelli, PhD, President and CEO
- Lisa Frazell, MBA, CFRE, Development Director
- Kirk Geadelmann, Finance Director
- Roy Gott, IT Manager
- Suzanne Greenlaw, PhD, Postdoctoral Scientist
- Emma Lanning, Invasive Species and Native Plant Restoration Biologist
- Kyle Lima, Data Analyst
- Sarah Luchini, Marketing and Design Manager
- Jim McLean, Maintenance Manager
- Laura Misenheimer, Environmental Educator
- Caroline Moore, Environmental Educator
- Megan Moshier, Director of Sales and Operations
- Chris Nadeau, PhD, Climate Change Adaptation Scientist
- Shannon O'Brien, Science Engagement Coordinator
- Tyler Piebes, Bookkeeper
- Craig Pinkham, Maintenance Manager
- Michelle Pinkham, Sales and Hospitality Manager
- Natalia Portales, Data Visualization Specialist
- Danielle Ruddy, Director of Food Services
- Peg Rush, Housekeeping
- Thomas Severance, Certified Water Operator
- Catherine Schmitt, Science Communication Specialist
- Val Watson, Forest Management Research Assistant
- Hannah Webber, PhD, Marine Ecology Director
- Amina Wilson, Restoration Research Associate

## Seasonal Food Services and Housekeeping

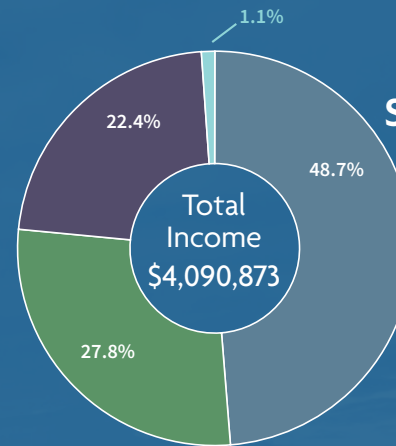
- |                  |                       |                      |
|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Ainsley Alley    | Lynda Kane            | Zoe Toribio          |
| Natalia Avdonina | Priscilla Kennedy     | Ramona Trombley      |
| Beverly Beal     | John "Jeff" Lindemann | Christopher Urquhart |
| Karen Church     | Gloria Moore          | Don West             |
| Keira Eschete    | Ann Pratt             | Chris Wilkens        |
| Nicole French    | Sheila Robinson       | Tom Wilkens          |
| Laura Garnett    | Linda Schlegel        | Linda Wilson         |
| Mary Kachoris    | Maryah Sprague        |                      |

Collaboration  
CORE VALUE

# FINANCES AT A GLANCE

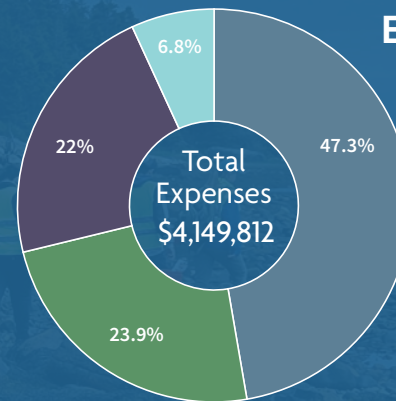


## Support and Revenue



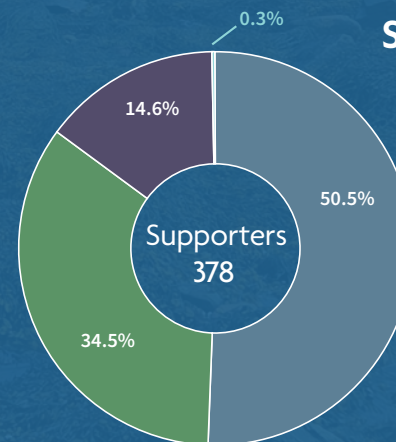
- Contributions..... \$1.9 million
- Federal & State Grants..... \$1.1 million
- Program Services..... \$0.9 million
- Investment & Other Income... \$0.04 million

## Expenses



- Science & Education..... \$2.0 million
- Program Services..... \$1.0 million
- Management & General..... \$0.9 million
- Fundraising..... \$0.3 million

## Sources of Funds (% in Dollars)



- 333 Individuals
- 22 Foundations
- 14 Businesses/Corporations
- 9 Partner Organizations

Our final 2025 audited financial statement will be available later in 2026 at [schoodicinstitute.org/about-us](http://schoodicinstitute.org/about-us).

SUPPORT

# CONSERVATION SCIENCE FOR PARKS, PEOPLE, AND THE PLANET



VISIT US ONLINE AT  
[SCHOODICINSTITUTE.ORG](https://www.schoodicinstitute.org)



Photo by David Manski