

HEADWATERS: THE RIVER FIELDS 2024 IMPACT REPORT

Celebrating 65 years of protection, advocacy, & education: The river connects us all!





FRONT COVER IMAGE OF
WOLF PEN BRANCH MILL
FARM BY **JOHN NATION**

INSIDE COVER IMAGE OF
GARVIN BROWN PRESERVE
BY **JOHN NATION**



MISSION

River Fields protects, preserves, and enhances the natural, cultural, agricultural and scenic resources on both sides of the Ohio River between Westport and West Point, Kentucky, for the benefit of the public.

VISION

All people in our region revere and enjoy the Ohio River Corridor's natural and cultural environment.



BOARD OF TRUSTEES VICE PRESIDENT, JIM HAYNES

Dear Friends of River Fields,

As Vice President of River Fields's Board of Trustees, I couldn't be more overjoyed to share with you our organization's impressive 2024 accomplishments. I am so proud of all River Fields has done and continues to do.

We fill a unique and critical role of protecting our beautiful Ohio River Corridor and its stunning cultural landscapes, advocating for smart and forward-thinking development practices, and educating and engaging our public on issues that matter to us all.

I believe I speak for all of us on the Board of Trustees when I say I am honored to serve River Fields in its work to protect the river and its natural and cultural wonders. Please enjoy this report, and thank you for supporting River Fields.

Sincerely,

James Haynes, Vice President

River Fields Board of Trustees



IMAGE OF GARVIN BROWN PRESERVE
BY **JOHN NATION**



**PRESIDENT AND CEO,
KRISTIN FAUREST**

Dear River Fields community:

In May of this past year, Meme Sweets Runyon retired after 38 years leading this organization. It's been an honor and the great challenge of a lifetime to follow her formidable legacy while setting about building my own. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your unwavering support during our time of transition this past year.

For me, this is all very personal. I grew up on the river – our house backed right up to it – it was my best friend, babysitter, and playground. I think being able to access, enjoy and appreciate the river's natural and cultural heritage is a right. That's the personal, emotional, inner child part of it for me. But as a grownup, now I know more. I have a long history working for nature-based nonprofits to educate, communicate, advocate, and protect natural and cultural treasures. It's my vision and my dream to use that experience to take River Fields into its next phase of life. We've always acted to protect, engage, and educate around the river, but we're now at a critical time and juncture, and as the new leader of River Fields I'm excited about 2025 and beyond.

It's a pivotal time to be doing this work. There is significant renewed interest in the Ohio River right now owing to a lot of groups collaborating together to effect positive change, and River Fields is part of that present and future. As I look over all we achieved in this last year – the year of our 65th anniversary! – I am filled with optimism and determination for the future of River Fields and the beautiful places it stewards and protects.

In gratitude,

Kristin Faurest, Ph.D, President and CEO, River Fields



ABOUT US

River Fields makes an outsized impact with a compact staff, an active working board, and devoted community partners and volunteers.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Jim Haynes, Vice President

Robert Griffith, Secretary

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HONORARY TRUSTEES:

Sallie Bingham

Laura Lee Lyons Brown

STAFF:

Kristin Faurest, Ph.D., President and CEO

S. Owen Ronald, Advocacy and Conservation Counsel

Tina Adams, Administrative Assistant and Bookkeeper

Ashley "Alli" Cassitty, Development and Events Associate

Special thanks to Vanessa Castle, former Development and Events Associate, for her service.

OUR FOCUS IN THE COMMUNITY

River Fields works in three areas:

Preservation and conservation, advocacy, and education. Some of our key impacts for 2024:

PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION:

• Stewarded, in perpetuity, 2,300 acres of meadow, farm, forest, shoreline, and historic structures protected by conservation easements in Jefferson, Oldham, and Shelby counties



• Partnered with the Kentucky Heritage Council to ensure protected properties received appropriate renovations and restorations – guaranteeing that these properties are modernized without sacrificing their historic character

• Finalized a new conservation easement on 100 acres in Southwest Jefferson County, forever protecting a forested watershed from development

• Joined the Natural Resources Conservation Service's EQIP program, initiating renaturalization of several properties along the river, eliminating monoculture turf, removing invasives, and enhancing with wildflowers and native grasses

EDUCATION:

• Documented the beauty of River Fields's natural and cultural landscapes in more than 350 images by photographer John Nation

• Collaborated with local agency Kertis Creative to create an educational short film about River Fields work

• Published a new bimonthly educational

newsletter, *The Current*, and posted inspiring and engaging educational content on social media multiple times weekly

• Presented public programs on wildflowers, historic architecture, tree identification and other topics, and also created new slate of programming for 2025 that more than doubles previous years' programming and engages new communities

• Initiated research partnerships with University of Louisville instructors and students for ecological surveys, invasive species removal, and interpretive educational content

• Gave educational presentations to Louisville Sustainability Council, Sierra Club, Bellarmine University, and several other community groups



ADVOCACY:

- *Successfully co-led, with the Kentucky Waterways Alliance and the Sierra Club, a community-wide effort to stop a barge repair facility at an ecologically-fragile site near Six Mile Island.*
- *Worked with business owners on River Road to select beautiful native plantings to improve ecological health and also conceal construction impacting the aesthetic enjoyment of the Scenic Byway.*
- *Served as active members of the Ohio River Way, the Kentuckiana Underground Railroad Project, and the Ohio River Coalition.*
- *Served as a consulting party to the Congressional Ohio River Caucus and an endorsing signatory to the Caucus's proposed bipartisan legislation for the Ohio River Restoration Program.*
- *Led opposition to the demolition of and advocated for historic interpretive signage for two buildings in James Taylor/Jacob School, a historic Black neighborhood along River Road under threat from destruction and redevelopment.*



River Fields is one of the oldest river organizations and their whole process of dedicated initiatives to preserve natural land, and agriculture, and the cultural assets – that's what it's about.

-DR. DAVID WICKS, OHIO RIVER WAY, RIVER CITY PADDLESPORTS, AND UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE



These acres not only provide a conserved core of property surrounded by development, but also form their own watershed. Our love of the property quickly made us think about the future it might have after us – River Fields is the right protector for our property.

-EVERETT CULLER AND DEANNA ESTES-CULLER, OWNERS, DAISY HILL CONSERVATION EASEMENT

When you look at the overall impact River Fields has on our community, it's significant - that long term view of a natural city, a green city, is in part made because of River Fields's commitment. How we think about the South end of Louisville, how we think of the Indiana shore, the Portland Wharf, Shawnee Park, this stretch up here by 12 Mile Island: River Fields is the only organization that's connecting all of that.

-DR. DAVID WICKS, OHIO RIVER WAY, RIVER CITY PADDLESPORTS, AND UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE

I would love to have a city that has a lot of wildlife and that is thinking about the environment whenever they're doing new things. I want a city that puts the environment into perspective before they do anything else.

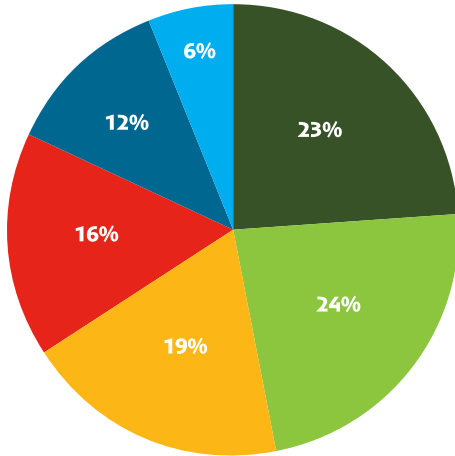
-ALLISON KORONKEVICH, STUDENT, DUPONT MANUAL HIGH SCHOOL, ON HER SERVICE PROJECT SITE, RIVER FIELDS'S GARVIN BROWN NATURE PRESERVE

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

How much we raised in 2024: **\$486,554**

River Fields received no public taxpayer funds in 2024. Nearly all our funding comes from our supportive and generous public.

BREAKDOWN OF EXPENDITURES:



- LAND CONSERVATION
- PROPERTY & EASEMENT STEWARDSHIP
- ADVOCACY
- DEVELOPMENT
- EDUCATION & COMMUNITY RELATIONS
- MANAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE



SUPPORT RIVER FIELDS

Our small staff and working board rely heavily on our public to support our work by donating. Please support us today by:

- *Making one-time or monthly tax-deductible donations to support our operations or specific projects*
- *Honoring or remembering a loved one by supporting River Fields in honor or memory of a loved one*
- *Donating stock or other assets*
- *Remembering River Fields in your will or trust*
- *Helping our operations through In-kind donations, such as gently-used laptop or desktop computers*



RIVER FIELDS: A VOICE FOR THE RIVER

Since our founding in 1959, we have grown to be the largest and oldest river conservancy on the 981-mile stretch of the Ohio River.

MISSION

We protect, preserve, and enhance natural and cultural resources on both sides of the Ohio River between Westport and West Point, Kentucky for the benefit of the public.

VISION

We envision a community in which the natural and cultural environment of the Ohio River and its corridor are revered and enjoyed by all.

THE RIVER FIELDS PROMISE TO OUR COMMUNITY

We are permanently committed to:

- Protecting scenic views and stewarding lands along the Ohio River Corridor through 2,300 acres of conservation easements and 65 acres of publicly-accessible natural space on the river
- Advocating to decision makers for a long-term vision for sustainable land and water usage in our community
- Supporting historic preservation of cultural landscapes
- Educating and engaging the public in all the above

Learn more by visiting riverfields.org or by contacting us at info@riverfields.org.



YOU CAN MAKE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION HERE:

<https://riverfields.org/donate/>

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