



Meewasin Valley Authority
2023 - 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Message from the CEO & Board Chair

As we celebrate our 45th anniversary, Meewasin's Board of Directors and management team are thrilled to reflect on another year filled with innovation, progress, and success. We are eager to share Meewasin's achievements and reaffirm our commitment to partnering and planning for a vibrant, healthy valley that supports our growing community.

We are incredibly fortunate to contribute to the enrichment and enhancement of the Valley, guided by the visionary work of architect Raymond Moriyama and The Meewasin Project, Raymond's seminal 100-year plan. Meewasin is more than just a trail—it embodies Raymond's vision of a community united in balancing development and conservation across the stunning Meewasin Valley. His foresight becomes increasingly relevant each day, and we have learned much about the interconnectedness and the tangible and intangible benefits of maintaining this delicate balance.

The region's rapid growth is evident in the increasing use and access to the valley, surpassing early projections. With this growth in mind, we are honored to expand this vision for the next 100 years, considering the diversity of future generations and the needs of our ecosystem.

The Valley and the amenities we cherish today stand as a testament to the power of collaboration. Together, we can continue to partner, volunteer, and donate for a healthier, sustainable future.

Stewarding the Valley with our future in mind,

Andrea Lafond, Chief Executive Officer

Angela Bedard-Haughn, Board Chair



What our Participating Parties have to say:

The Government of Saskatchewan is proud to support the Meewasin Valley Authority and its conservation of the natural and historical features of the South Saskatchewan River Valley. The work of the Meewasin Valley Authority in a fast growing region, is critical to ensuring a meaningful quality of life for existing and future residents of Saskatchewan, as well as welcoming and enriching visitors' minds into the story of our prairies.

- *The Honourable Laura Ross,
Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport*

The Meewasin Valley is integral in the connectivity of our community, quality of life of our residents, as well as sharing the story of place to visitors. Meewasin itself is a story of how alone we can do so little and together we can achieve so much. In a rapidly growing city, the partnership between Meewasin and the City of Saskatoon is vital to a diverse, healthy and vibrant ecosystem and community, now and into the future.

- *His Worship, Charlie Clark,
Mayor, City of Saskatoon*

The University of Saskatchewan's partnership with the Meewasin Valley Authority is critical in aligning our vision to strengthen and advance research and education, contributing to sustainability and well-being of our communities. We want to celebrate Meewasin's continued success in conserving our river valley and look forward to building a vibrant valley for future generations.

- *Dr. Peter Stoicheff,
President, University of Saskatchewan*

Mission

The Meewasin Valley Authority exists to ensure a healthy and vibrant river valley, with a balance between human use and conservation for the benefit of present and future generations.

Vision

A world class corridor.

**Healthy & Vibrant
Sense of Community
Protecting the Legacy**

Meewasin is located on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We humbly acknowledge the traditional caretakers of the land and honour the First Nations and Métis people of this place.

Board of Directors

Government of Saskatchewan

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Marv Friesen, MLA
Gurpartap Kals
Nydia Pobran

University of Saskatchewan

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Kurtis Boyer
Julian Demkiw
Peter Stoicheff, President
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City of Saskatoon

Charlie Clark, Mayor
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David Kirton, Councillor
Shantelle Watson

Advisory Committees

The Meewasin Board of Directors is advised on matters of policy by three committees comprised of members of the public appointed by the board. Public participation in decision making is one of Meewasin's five guiding principles.

Development Review

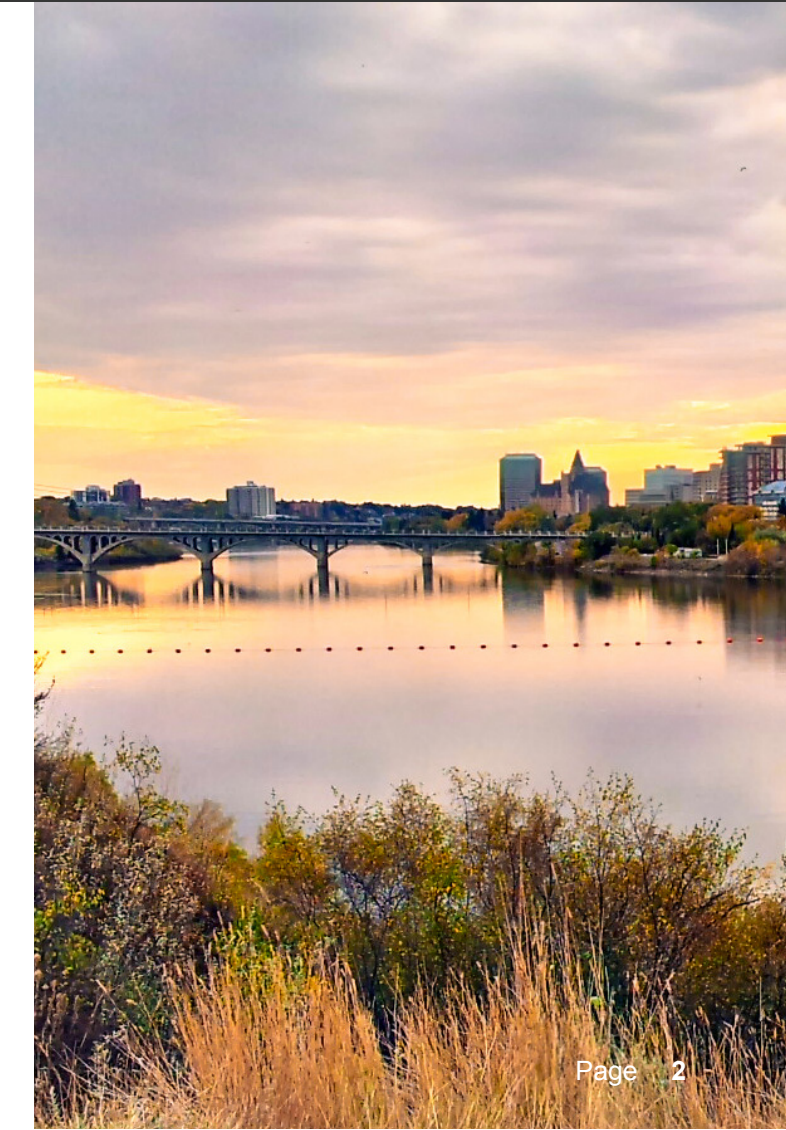
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Matt Wolsfeld





“My cathedral was to pursue truth and that was the Meewasin...This is closer to a cathedral than a cathedral itself.”
 - Raymond Moriyama

Remembering Raymond Moriyama

The Meewasin team and board were deeply saddened by the passing of renowned Canadian architect Raymond Moriyama. In 1978, Moriyama led a team to explore the natural and cultural resources of the river valley in the Saskatoon region. The completion of this work resulted in the 100-year Meewasin Valley Project, the visionary plan that Meewasin still uses today. This report began with Raymond’s statements that “something really exciting could be developed in the Saskatoon area” and that “an unusual community enhancement opportunity exists for this and future generations.” Raymond could not have been more right. Today, our region enjoys one of the most publicly accessible riverfront corridors in North America, through the middle of the largest city in Saskatchewan, that supports biodiversity, and a high quality of life for residents and visitors. Moriyama’s passion for the organization continued over the next four decades, as he advocated, supported, and shared the story of a prairie city that got it right.



Healthy and Vibrant

Resource Management

In 2023, Meewasin’s resource management team undertook focused initiatives on ecological monitoring, conservation planning, and invasive species management. Leafy Spurge Flea Beetles were released across four Meewasin sites as a biological control method to target the noxious weed Leafy Spurge. Efforts were also made against European Buckthorn, Nodding Thistle, and Baby’s Breath with significant contributions by the Friends of the Valley Volunteer Program. Additionally, the team monitored and banded Tree Swallows, expanded bat monitoring initiatives, installed wildlife-friendly fencing, and organized planting projects with school groups and volunteers. We also continued our urban beaver management efforts by protecting riparian tree canopies and educating the public on the importance of beavers in the river valley.

81,500 Beetles Released



Canadian Prairies Prescribed Fire Exchange



In 2023, the Canadian Prairies Prescribed Fire Exchange (CPPFE) made notable progress in promoting prescribed fire as an ecological management tool. Key achievements included two Training and Exchange (TRES) events: a 5-day live fire training in Saskatoon with 45 participants from 21 agencies, and the Manitoba Tallgrass Prairie & Aspen Parkland TRES, conducted with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, which trained 30 students from 11 agencies. Additional activities included workshops with the Saskatoon Public School Division, volunteer fire departments, and land management groups, as well as guest lectures at educational institutions and presentations at major conferences. Community engagement was further strengthened through events like the Elder's Fire Gathering.

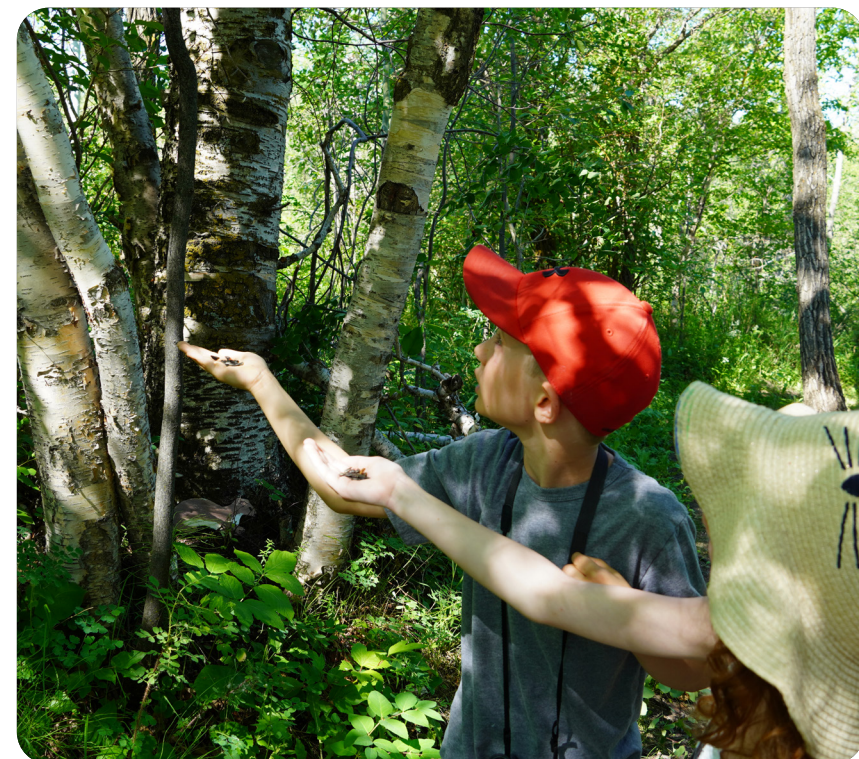
458 Total hectares burned



Sense of Community

Education in the Meewasin Valley

Meewasin continues to focus on providing curriculum-connected, land-based learning opportunities. In 2023-24, the Education & Experiences Team worked closely with local school divisions to offer outdoor learning at Beaver Creek Conservation Area and the Northeast Swale in all four seasons. The demand for programming remained high, reaching over 2,800 students. Meewasin is grateful to supporters and sponsors of our education programming, including the Community Initiatives Fund (CIF) and the Association of Saskatchewan Urban Parks and Conservation Agencies (ASUPCA).



GreenStep Certified!

GreenStep Sustainable Tourism
Silver Certified
BUSINESS 2024-2026

In 2023, Meewasin completed an assessment with GreenStep Solutions Inc. and earned a silver certification as a sustainable tourism provider for 2024-2026, aligning with our Tourism Strategy to enhance sustainability initiatives and market Meewasin as a sustainable tourism provider to the community and potential visitors. GreenStep, which has certified hundreds of Canadian businesses across all tourism sectors, helps organizations measure and improve their sustainability performance.

Expanding Our Tourism Portfolio

Since 2021, Meewasin has been developing and piloting high quality sustainable tourism experiences that showcase the beauty of the Meewasin Valley. In 2023, our tourism portfolio expanded to include seven unique experiences, attracting 675 guests. These offerings range from dark skies adventures at night to breakfast with the birds at Beaver Creek Conservation Area, walking tours, and winter skating experiences in Downtown Saskatoon. These experiences highlight the people and landscapes that make Saskatchewan special, while supporting Meewasin's ongoing conservation and education efforts.

7 Unique experiences

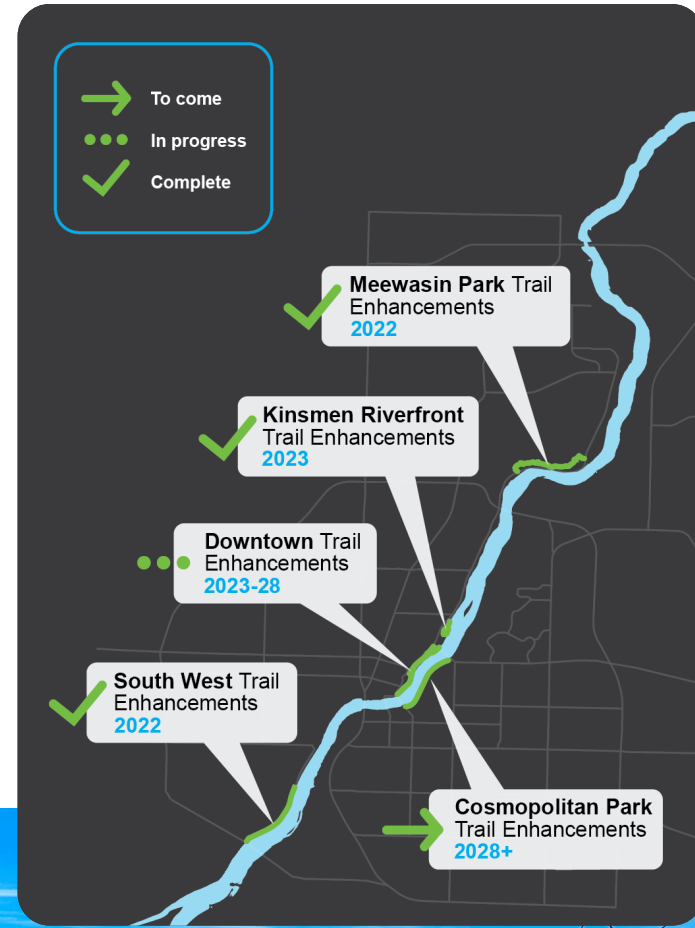


Meewasin Trail Enhancements

Meewasin continues to enhance our trail network to better accommodate user volumes, reduce barriers to access, improve accessibility and safety, update amenities and signage, and enhance interpretive opportunities. In 2023, construction was undertaken in Kiwanis Memorial Park South, from the Broadway Bridge north to the Bessborough Gardens. The project included widening the primary trail, replacing site furniture, adding new signage, creating two new river lookouts, installing a new drinking fountain with water bottle filler and dog watering tray, adjusting irrigation, repairing adjacent sod, and planting shade trees.

Planned construction for 2024 includes the Kiwanis Promenade behind the Bessborough Hotel. Detailed design for the remainder of Kiwanis and the Kinsmen Link is nearly complete and will proceed to tender and construction as funding allows.

2 Million+ Trail visits annually



Kiwanis Memorial Park South



Friends of the Valley



Friends of the Valley has had an exceptionally busy year, with an increase in activities and volunteers. Our volunteer program welcomed 190 new volunteers, bringing our total to over 800 individuals who dedicated an impressive 12,738 volunteer hours to Meewasin.

This year, we introduced new activities, including BioBlitz events at Beaver Creek and the Northeast Swale, with more planned for the future. We also organized tree wrapping events, garbage clean-ups, tree and shrub plantings, native grass and wildflower plantings, and continued our efforts to remove invasive species such as Baby's Breath, European Buckthorn, Nodding Thistle, and more.

We successfully ran more than 80 programs, allowing volunteers to explore the Meewasin Valley while providing invaluable work and support. Our heartfelt thanks go to the Grandey Family Foundation for their generous funding, which makes it possible for us to offer so many programs and activities.

12,738 Volunteer hours

Public Facilities

Beaver Creek Conservation Area and the Cameco Meewasin Skating Rink @Nutrien Plaza remain popular attractions for residents and visitors. Beaver Creek operated year-round, Wednesday to Sunday, welcoming 23,668 visitors in 2023-24. The site continues to be a hub for Meewasin's public outreach, offering programs like Eco-Adventure Camps, Grazing Demonstrations, guided tours, volunteer events, and tourism experiences. The rink operated from December 20 to March 10, welcoming over 17,000 visitors, with new features this season including a perimeter fence and a customer interface for improved skate and helmet distribution. Meewasin's Sip & Skate returned for the 2024 season with five events, drawing around 80 guests, including a sold-out Valentine's Day event. We want to thank our additional sponsors, City of Saskatoon, DNTYXE and FCL Employee Giving Committee.

17,000+ Visitors to the rink





Tourism Spotlight: *Supper with a Shepherd*

Grazing Dinners were a highlight of the 2023 tourism season. Hosted with local chefs from Odlá, these dinners provided guests with a locally-sourced, three-course meal amidst the stunning autumn surroundings at Beaver Creek Conservation Area. Featuring a guided hike through native prairie with Meewasin's Renny Grilz and a stock dog demonstration with Shepherd Jared Epp, these events raised awareness about the natural landscapes Meewasin strives to protect. Special thanks go to Odlá and Stumbletown Distilling for their support, as well as the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association and RBC Tech for Nature. These events will return in Autumn 2024.

New Self Guided Hike at Saskatoon Natural Grasslands

Visitors to the Saskatoon Natural Grasslands will notice new signage as they explore the area. With support from RBC Tech for Nature, 13 QR codes were placed throughout the site in 2023, connecting visitors to the Meewasin App. This is the second self-guided hike in the Meewasin Valley, with the first installed on the Yellow Trail at Beaver Creek Conservation Area in 2022. The Meewasin App provides a unique opportunity to share interactive content with trail users, and plans are underway to add an additional self-guided hike at Beaver Creek Conservation Area in 2024.

Download the Meewasin App today!



Protect the Legacy

National Urban Park

Meewasin and Parks Canada, with participation from a regional steering committee, continue to explore the potential designation of a national urban park in the Saskatoon region. Formed in 2022, the committee is made up of representatives from Meewasin, Parks Canada, the Government of Saskatchewan, the City of Saskatoon, the RM of Corman Park, Saskatoon Tribal Council, Métis Nation—Saskatchewan, the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon North Partnership for Growth, and Wanuskewin Heritage Park.



It is expected that if designated, the park will be governed under a version of the existing Meewasin Valley Authority model. Close collaboration with local partners and stakeholders will shape the park's vision, boundaries, governance, and the role of Parks Canada. Meewasin is anticipated to act as 'Site Manager', coordinating park operations with a new committee of regional stakeholders overseeing the requirements to maintain the park's status. Meewasin's Board will continue to hold legal and governing authority for its jurisdiction and operations, while Parks Canada will have decision-making power over the designation and maintenance, including federal funding.

Potential benefits of national urban park designation for the Saskatoon region include economic benefits through job creation, recreation, and tourism; conservation of nature and enhancement of climate resilience; reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples; connection and inclusion; and increased partnerships. Next steps include developing a business plan for the potential park to understand a cost/benefit analysis of the potential designation.



Meewasin's 43RD Annual Clean-Up Campaign - Presented by Nutrien

This year's Clean-Up Campaign was bigger than ever, with 2,860 participants dedicating over 7,000 hours to cleaning up the Meewasin Valley. We received strong support from the Saskatoon community, with over 60 groups, organizations, and schools participating in this year's Clean-Up. We are immensely grateful to our supporting partners who make the clean-up campaign possible, including Nutrien, Loraas, Trans Canada Trail, and the City of Saskatoon.

7,000+ Hours dedicated to Clean-Up Campaign

SRRA Makes a Marathon Sized Commitment to the Meewasin Trail

The Saskatoon Road Runners Association (SRRA) made an incredible commitment of \$250,000 towards significant improvements to the Meewasin Trail. This generous pledge will have a positive impact on the Trail, benefiting the community's well-being and promoting active living. The seating node at the southern end of the Southwest Trail, featuring benches with motivational running quotes, serves as a tangible representation of the SRRA's commitment. It's not only a place for runners to enjoy but also a symbol of the positive impact that partnerships like these can have on the community.



Southwest Trail

Southwest Trail

5 Years of Accomplishments: 2019-2024

Healthy & Vibrant

Maintain and enhance the health of the river valley corridor to support our growing population and preserve biodiversity for future generations:

- Developed a valley-wide monitoring framework
- Created Resource Management Plans (RMPs) for Maple Grove and Wanuskewin
- Conducted a baseline inventory for Beaver Creek Conservation Area
- Modernized land securement tools, resulting in 7 protected areas and the designation of 9 Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs)
- Partnered in establishing the Canadian Prairies Prescribed Fire Exchange (CPPFE)

Sense of Community

Coordinate and endorse a broad range of seasonal opportunities for citizens and visitors to connect with the river valley, learn about its history and significance and enhance its use:

- Added and improved 7km of Trail in key areas, including Southwest, River Heights, Kinsmen Riverfront, and Kiwanis South
- Launched the Friends of the Valley
- Introduced the Meewasin App, highlighting Indigenous connections to the land
- Expanded the K-12 education portal with curriculum-aligned resources
- Developed a tourism master plan and piloted 7 new tourism offerings

Protect the Legacy

Strengthen relationships, drive innovation, leverage expertise, and advance advocacy and reconciliation to effectively steward the river valley corridor:

- Defined 2019-2024 strategic goals, governance workplan, and KPIs
- Negotiated new and/or updated agreements with STC, USask, CoS, and School Divisions
- Launched the More Than A Trail Fundraising Campaign
- Enhanced brand and communication strategies
- Developed a talent management framework, including annual employee surveys



New and Improved Meewasin Trail Guide

Significant updates have been made to the Meewasin Trail Guide. The new look aligns with the design of the Primary and Secondary Trailhead signs found throughout the Valley. Updates include the addition of the Southwest Trail alignment to the map, a refreshed look for the guidebook itself featuring sites along the trails and throughout the Meewasin Valley, up-to-date washroom facility information, and expanded trail loops covering the 107 km of trail.

Meewasin's Conservation Efforts Recognized Worldwide

Meewasin is recognized worldwide for its leadership in conserving the natural resources of the 6,700 hectares of the Meewasin Valley. Thanks to a great team, volunteers, support from tourism experiences, and funding from donations and partners, Meewasin has not only kept pace but advanced in conservation efforts. We are excited to announce Meewasin's inclusion in the Cornerstone Parks program, alongside other members like Stanley Park in Vancouver, High Park in Toronto, and the Darlington Ecological Corridor in Montréal. The Cornerstone Parks program is Canada's only national network dedicated to maximizing the impact and influence of Canada's large urban parks. Park People created the program in recognition of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by organizations working in large urban parks across Canada.



Funding Overview

For the 2023-24 fiscal year, Meewasin's statutory and participating party funding remained relatively steady, but two-thirds of the total funds came from short-term sources. With population growth and increasing restoration and conservation needs, Meewasin relies heavily on donations, grants, and other revenue opportunities. This approach has been particularly beneficial for capital projects and campaigns but is time-consuming and unpredictable. Securing more long-term funding would help Meewasin manage capacity challenges. We continue to strive to maximize and leverage core funding for community projects.

Endowment Funds

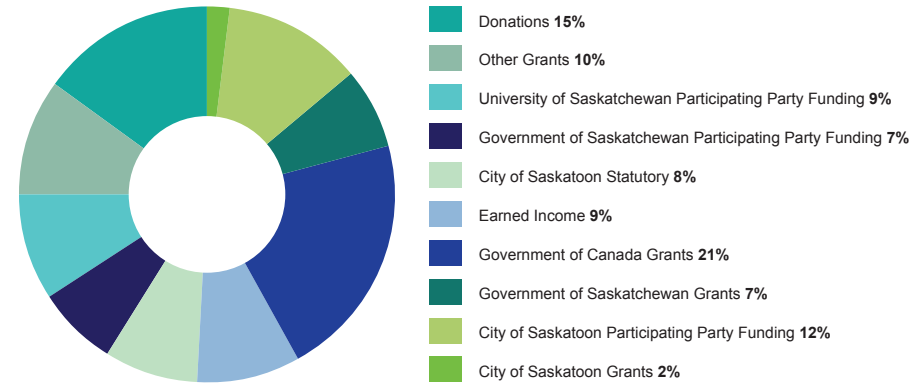
The Saskatoon Community Foundation manages Meewasin's endowment funds. As of December 31, 2023, the funds included:

- Meewasin Naturally Fund: \$1,156,114
- Susan Lamb Fund: \$37,645
- Wes Bolstad Fund: \$27,307

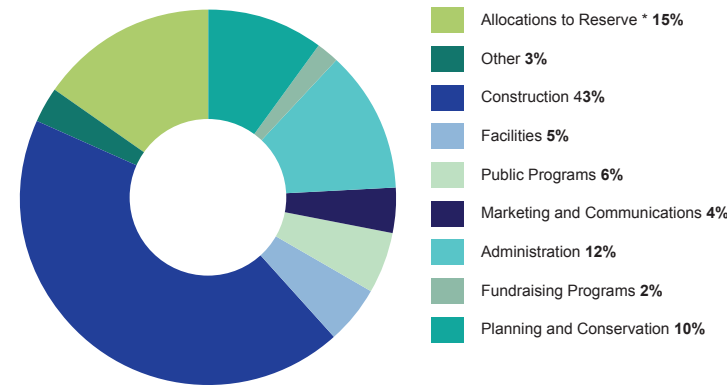
These total \$1,221,066 and continue to grow through contributions and planned gifts. Revenue from these funds supports strategic operations and priorities across Meewasin's three mandate areas.

With the dissolution of Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin (PFSRB) in March 2024, a new agency fund was created at the Saskatoon Community Foundation. Proceeds from the PFSRB Fund will support a prairie water conference and Meewasin's educational programming annually. The intent is to promote awareness, stewardship, and sustainable use of the Saskatchewan River Basin ecosystem and heritage.

Meewasin Source of Funds \$7,039,131 for the year ended March 31, 2024



Meewasin Expenditures \$7,039,131 for the year ended March 31, 2024



*Allocations to Reserve include results of fundraising activities allocated to future projects



Donors we thank you!

2023-2024 Donors (over \$250)

- Sue Allan
- Lauren Allen
- Dr. Darwin Anderson
- Jack & Wendy Andrews
- Arnie Arnott
- Lauren Aussant
- Scott & Tracy Banda
- Phyllis & Ernie Barber
- Les Bartel
- BASF
- Angela Bedard-Haughn
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- Katherine Manning
- Phyllis Wilson
- Yi Xu
- Andrea Ziegler
- Pat Zimmer
- Gail Zink
- Douglas Zolinsky
- Karen & Gerry Zurevinski

Participating Party Funding

- City of Saskatoon
- Government of Saskatchewan
- University of Saskatchewan

Grants

- ASUPCA
- Canadian Institute of Forestry
- City of Saskatoon
- Federated Co-operatives Ltd.
- Government of Canada
- Government of Saskatchewan
- Park People
- RBC Foundation
- Saskatoon Community Foundation
- SK Community Initiatives Fund
- TD Friends of the Environment
- Tourism Saskatchewan
- Trans Canada Trail
- Tree Canada Foundation
- Weston Family Foundation

Corporate Sponsorships

- NUTRIEN
- Sask Cattlemen's Association
- Downtown Saskatoon DTN YXCE
- Cameco

Special Friends & Planned Givers

- Dr. Darwin Anderson
- Ina & the late John Brockelbank
- Gwen & Guy Charman
- Susan & Ron Lamb
- Anita & Graham Langford
- Terri Lemke
- K.W. & Dora Nasser
- On Purpose Leadership Inc.
- Paul Lavoie & Bill Peterson
- Saskatoon Road Runners Association
- Jack & Sylvia Vicq



Join these community champions and support a healthy and vibrant place for generations to come, where people connect with the land, with the cultural history, and with each other.



meewasin.com



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@MeewasinValley



Meewasin Valley Authority

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