



ECOLOGY PROJECT  
INTERNATIONAL

# 2020

## ANNUAL REPORT

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Creating more vibrant, resilient, and sustainable communities



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ECOLOGY PROJECT  
INTERNATIONAL

## MISSION

We inspire youth with nature and empower them with science,  
fostering tomorrow's leaders.

## VISION

We envision a diverse movement building communities that  
cherish and restore the ecosystems that sustain them.







**ECOLOGY PROJECT**  
INTERNATIONAL

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS OFFICERS

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# RESPONSE, RECOVERY & RESILIENCY



The last excursion I took before lockdown was to join a group of high school students from the Bitterroot Valley, in Montana, on EPI's Winter Ecology Program. I watched in awe as young people who had grown up thinking of wolves as the enemies of ranchers engaged earnestly with the writings of one of America's first conservationists, Aldo Leopold. By the time their week in Yellowstone was over, many of these young Montanans viewed wolves as essential keystone predators in a complex ecological web—and as profoundly beautiful creatures.

It was helpful for me to have one last potent reminder of what EPI can do before we entered the most challenging year the organization has faced in its twenty-year history. The pandemic compelled us to cancel every course on the books and to lay off half of our extraordinary staff.

And yet, against all odds, 2020 turned out also to be a year of improbable success stories. Our unflagging staff at Pacuare Reserve worked double shifts to guard nesting sea turtles, and they succeeded. Unable to run courses, our resourceful and creative team in Missoula concentrated on a plan for EPI to emerge from the pandemic stronger than ever, and from their effort were born two promising initiatives to extend and deepen the impact that EPI has on young people. In the Galapagos and Mexico, EPI's leaders courageously continued their work in their communities and charted new programs.

All of this is testament to what makes EPI such an impactful organization: A mission and approach that ties together transformative education, environmental stewardship, scientific research, and cultural diversity. A resilient, idealistic, and deeply committed team. And, as important as all of that, the support of our donors, who stepped up and saw this organization through the toughest year we've seen. Here's to the year ahead.

**AARON HIRSH**  
EPI Board Chair

# EPI LEADERSHIP TEAM

Ecology Project International's strength is derived from programs that honor and celebrate local cultures. Since 2011, EPI has prioritized in-country leadership at each field site - putting management in the hands of those who are best-suited to make agile, informed decisions. This dedication to diverse cultural values throughout the organization – from our alumni to our leaders – has helped fill in knowledge gaps and made us more resilient during this unprecedented time of crisis.



**BRANT WARREN**  
Executive Director



**JOHN KAMMAN**  
Managing Director



**NOREEN HUMES**  
Development Director



**STEPHEN SIMPSON**  
Finance Director



**KYLE WATSON**  
Admissions Director



**MIGUEL FUENTES**  
Regional Program Director



**ANA MARIA LOOSE**  
Galapagos Director



# CARING FOR OUR CORE


## PERSEVERANCE DURING A PANDEMIC

Thanks to more than twenty years of steady and meaningful support of our donors and participants, EPI has built an international team of educators, scientists, and local community organizers, working together to inspire and empower youth through immersive experiences with nature and science.

During the extraordinarily challenging year that was 2020, our goal was to protect what we'd created together, to preserve our capacity to carry on and expand our impactful programs, and to re-emerge ready to work for the communities and critically threatened ecosystems that need us more than ever.

To achieve that goal, we mobilized an agile plan to sustain our team and safeguard infrastructure until we could resume our critical, income-generating programs. *Crucial to that effort was the unrestricting of funds from major donors.*

You've helped us weather this storm and continue to thrive. Thank you.

An aerial photograph of a rugged coastline. In the upper left, a sandy beach is visible with several people standing on it. The middle section of the image shows a dark, rocky shoreline with many small, circular holes or depressions. The lower portion of the image shows the ocean with clear, turquoise water and visible coral reefs or rocky seabed. The overall scene is bright and sunny, with strong shadows cast by the rocks and people.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE  
**82 DONORS**  
WHO GAVE TO OUR  
COVID-19 RELIEF EFFORTS.



# EPI IN THE FIELD

ENGAGING STUDENTS, ALUMNI, & COMMUNITIES

## YELLOWSTONE WILDLIFE & WINTER ECOLOGY

For the 10<sup>th</sup> year, EPI partnered with the Wolf Point School District to provide field science programming for students living on the Fort Peck Reservation. With heavily adapted programming to ensure student safety, six students from the Reservation attended a five-day immersive field science program in early July.

For the 7th year, EPI partnered with MPG Ranch to deliver the Bitterroot Wildlife Internship, a transformative program providing EPI alumni in Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho with an extended, immersive research and conservation service experience. EPI Yellowstone staff adapted the program for CDC COVID-19 guidelines, and 10 interns attended their modified 20-day internship on a 15,000 acre ranch managed for biodiversity in Montana's Bitterroot Valley.

## GALAPAGOS ISLAND ECOLOGY

EPI students worked with the Galapagos National Park to study the ecology and migration patterns of two different species of critically endangered Santa Cruz giant tortoises. Youth also assisted researchers to identify seeds dispersed by giant tortoises, and eradicated invasive plant species. As part of the Reef Environmental Education Foundation's (REEF) community science project, students also conducted roving diver marine biodiversity surveys.

For the seventh year, EPI Galapagos' Mola Mola Eco Club members took action to protect the green sea turtle nests at Tortuga Bay and Puerto Villamil through a collaboration with the Galapagos National Park and Intercultural Outreach Initiative (IOI) to engage community members in sea turtle conservation efforts. With support from the Charles Darwin Research Center, eco club members also carried out a campaign that aimed to increase awareness among island drivers about avian-vehicle collisions.

1. YELLOWSTONE
  2. BAJA
  3. BELIZE
  4. COSTA RICA
  5. GALAPAGOS ISLANDS
- ALUMNI ACTIVITIES

## BAJA DESERT & COASTAL ECOLOGY

EPI Mexico students conducted snorkel surveys in the waters surrounding the Espiritu Santo Archipelago to monitor the diversity of endangered and economically important invertebrates, including outbreaks of the coral-predating sea star, *Acanthaster*, in the Gulf of California.

EPI Mexico offered twelve internships for alumni in Water, Science, and Environmental Education Leadership, including five international scholarships to the Teton Science School. Eight alumni were also trained as leaders for sea turtle monitoring field trips with Grupo Tortuguero. In collaboration with other local nonprofits, Californios Verdes Eco Club members attended workshops in subjects ranging from mangrove forests to dune ecology – further developing their cooperative leadership, science, and communication skills.

## BELIZE MARINE ECOLOGY

At Payne's Creek National Park, students worked with the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE) to record and classify sightings of the threatened West Indian manatee. Roost counts of yellow-headed parrots were also conducted to monitor recovery of this endangered species and the health of the ecosystem. Inland, at Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary, students assisted researchers in setting camera traps to track mammals. EPI groups snorkeled at the Port Honduras Marine Reserve to measure cover and density of seagrass—an important nursery ground and food source for many species, including sea turtles and manatees.

## COSTA RICA SEA TURTLE ECOLOGY

Prior to the closure of Costa Rica's borders due to COVID-19, Pacuare Reserve staff provided research and conservation service opportunities to local and visiting students, teachers, volunteers, ecotourists, research assistants, and interns. Notably, a group of dedicated research assistants stayed at the Reserve throughout closures to assure the safety of sea turtles, nests, and hatchlings –contributing to their protection in perpetuity.

One hundred young adults, all belonging to local organizations that promote social development for youth participated in EPI's Matina Youth Camp. Pacuare Reserve staff provided opportunities for team-building across communities through these conservation activities. In addition, nine children from the Escuela de Atención Prioritaria de Matina and their parents joined Pacuare Reserve's first-ever, "Leaders in Sustainability Program," implementing tenets of the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

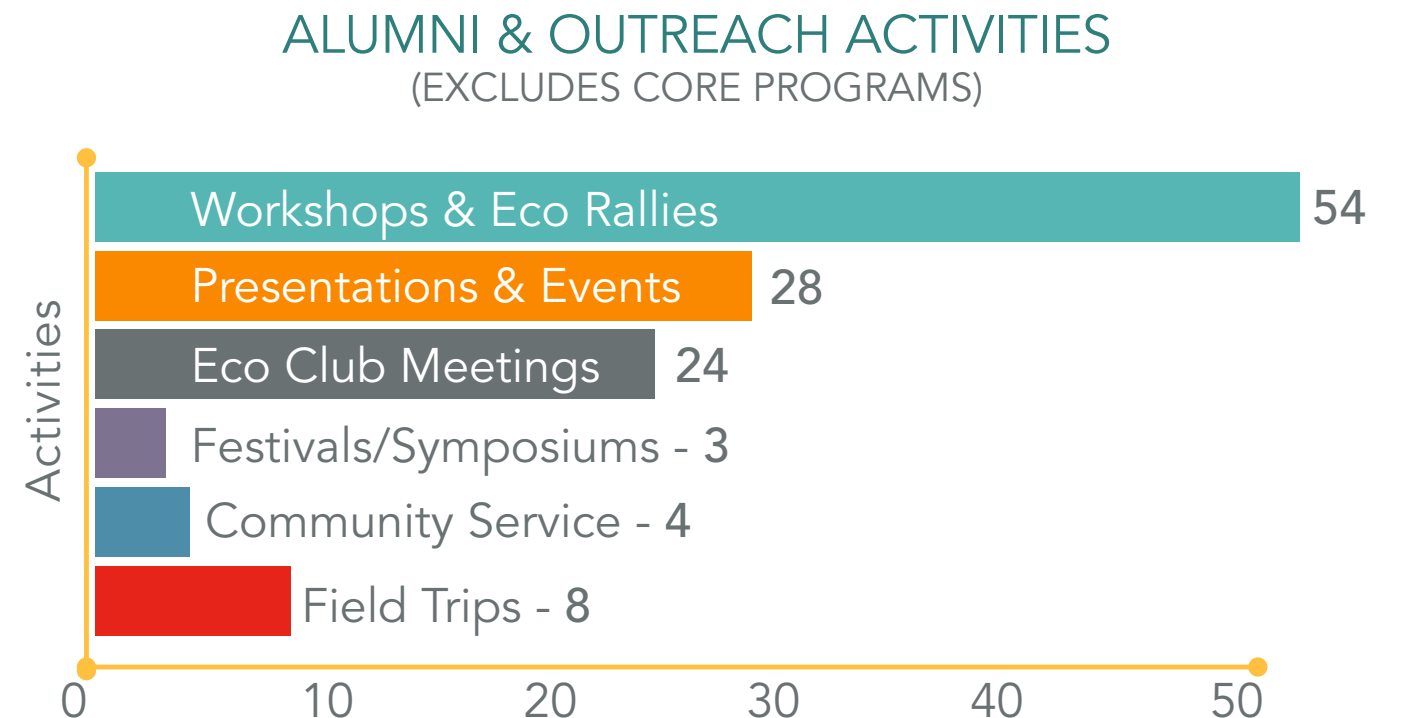


# GLOBAL PARTICIPATION

In 2020, EPI engaged **6,551** participants in our field courses, community events, workshops, eco club activities, field trips, and community service projects. More than **6,300** of these participants were local, and of these local participants, **3,117** were students participating in field experiences.

Across EPI's five program sites, students in our multi-day field courses experienced an average of **16%** growth in environmental literacy, with a notable **38%** increase in knowledge of environmental action strategies.

Prior to shut-downs imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, EPI engaged more than **3,000** local community members in conservation-themed events and educational opportunities in 2020.



Thanks to our supporters,  
**EPI Reached**  
**6,551**  
 field-course participants  
 & increased  
 environmental literacy\*  
 by an average of  
**16%**

*\*Represents the average increase in environmental literacy (knowledge, competencies, and dispositions) from pre-course to post-course in all EPI programs.*

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

**Alumni Activities:** Opportunities to increase environmental leadership roles for alumni within their community/school/workplace—most participants in these activities will have participated in an EPI core field program

**Community Service:** Volunteer service work taking place in the community at large, led by EPI staff and/or alumni

**Core Programs:** EPI's flagship multi-day courses, partnering students and scientists in the field at every program site

**Eco Club Meetings:** A gathering of EPI alumni and other local youth to collaborate or plan future alumni/community activities

**Eco Tour:** Field courses or short trips for adults and families

**Field Trip:** Short (1-3 days) alumni excursions into the field to participate in research and observation

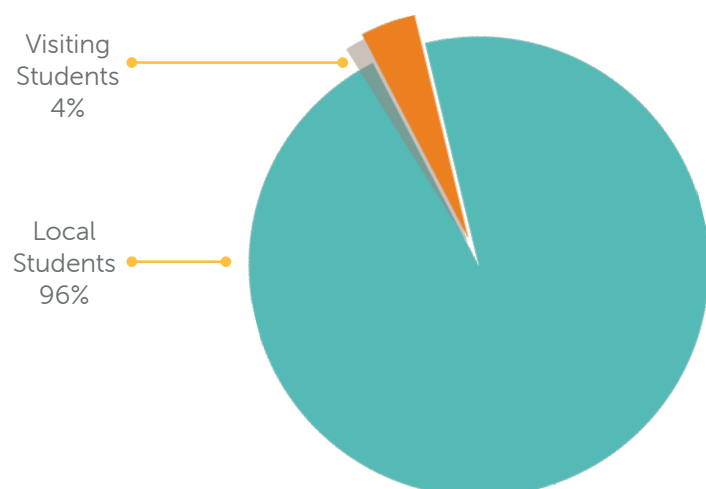
**Festivals & Symposiums:** Gatherings coordinated by EPI staff and volunteers that attract large numbers of participants, families, teachers, school administrators, partners, and community members.

**Outreach:** Activities intended to reach a broader local audience who haven't yet or can't participate in our core programs

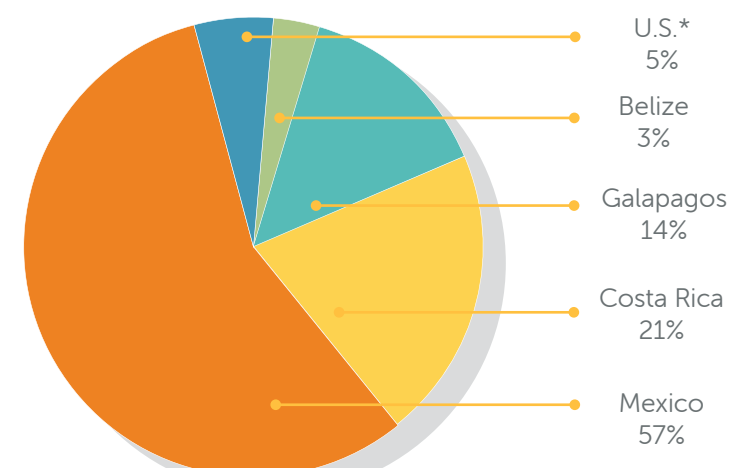
**Presentations & Events:** Educational opportunities for the public or a specific group of EPI constituents led by EPI alumni, staff, and scientific partners

**Workshops:** Short-term curriculum-based activities that take place in the field or other locations outside of a school

## LOCAL & VISITING STUDENTS (CORE PROGRAMS)



## PARTICIPANTS BY COUNTRY (ALL EPI ACTIVITIES)



\*U.S. includes both visiting and local students in Yellowstone, and all Eco Tour and Teacher Fellowship participants



# 20 YEARS

EPI CELEBRATES TWO DECADES OF CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP

This spring, we surveyed past participants from 20 years of EPI's programs. We asked our alumni about their dispositions toward the environment, science, critical thinking skills, and social-emotional learning topics.

Responses across all categories of environmental literacy improved significantly. We see, first-hand, that the level of dispositions and confidence in abilities grows during a course and responses from alumni show that it is a lasting change – continuing to grow long after their course experience.

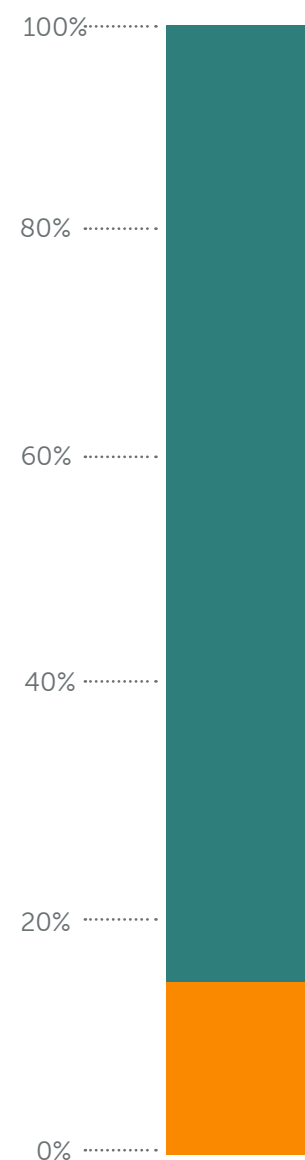
Most of the responding alumni (63%) are enrolled or have a college degree of some kind. Of those alumni, more than 65% indicated that their experiences with EPI influenced their education decisions and more than 86% pursued an education that allows them to have an impact on fields of science and conservation.

DID EPI HAVE AN IMPACT ON HOW I SEE MYSELF AS A LEADER IN MY COMMUNITY? TOTALLY. THANKS TO MY EPI EXPERIENCES, I DISCOVERED WHAT REALLY FASCINATES ME, AND GAINED A NEW VISION OF LIFE. I'VE DEDICATED MYSELF TO HELPING MY COMMUNITY. CURRENTLY, THOSE EXPERIENCES HAVE HELPED SHAPE MY ACADEMIC APPROACH AND I KNOW THAT THEY WILL CONTRIBUTE GREATLY TO MY CURRICULUM IN THE FUTURE (AND IN FACT THEY ALREADY HAVE!)

- ARATH, 19, LOS CABOS, BCS.

"Has your education allowed you to make an impact on the fields of science and conservation?"

● YES ● NO

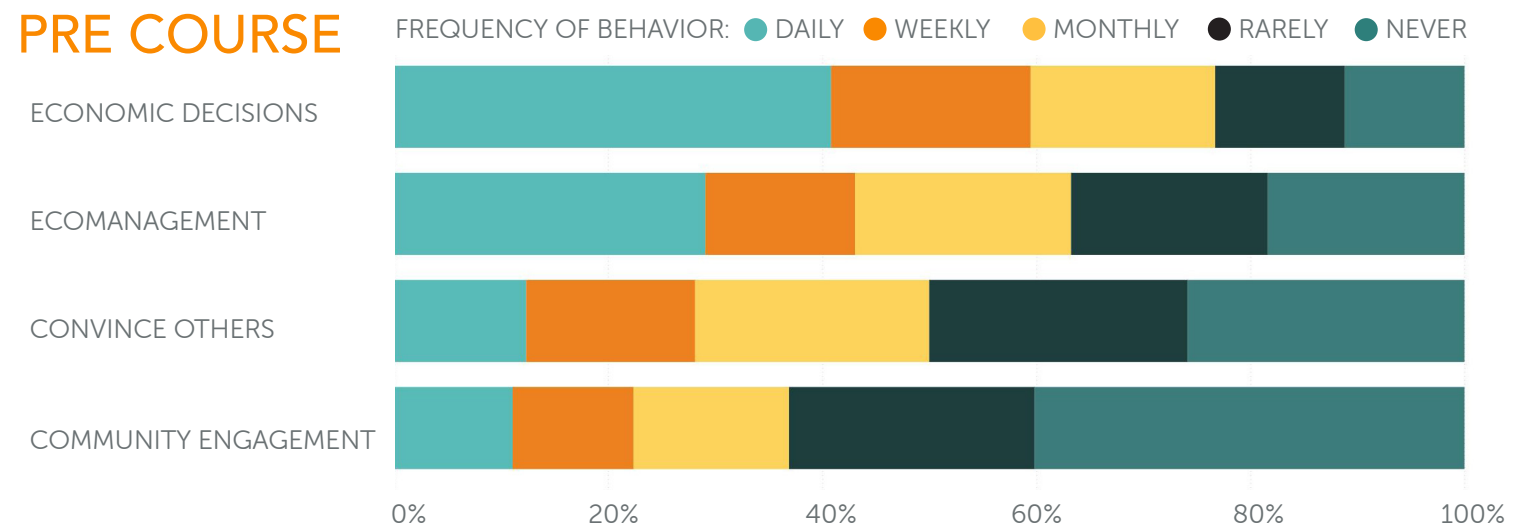


## EPI'S IMPACT ON BEHAVIOR

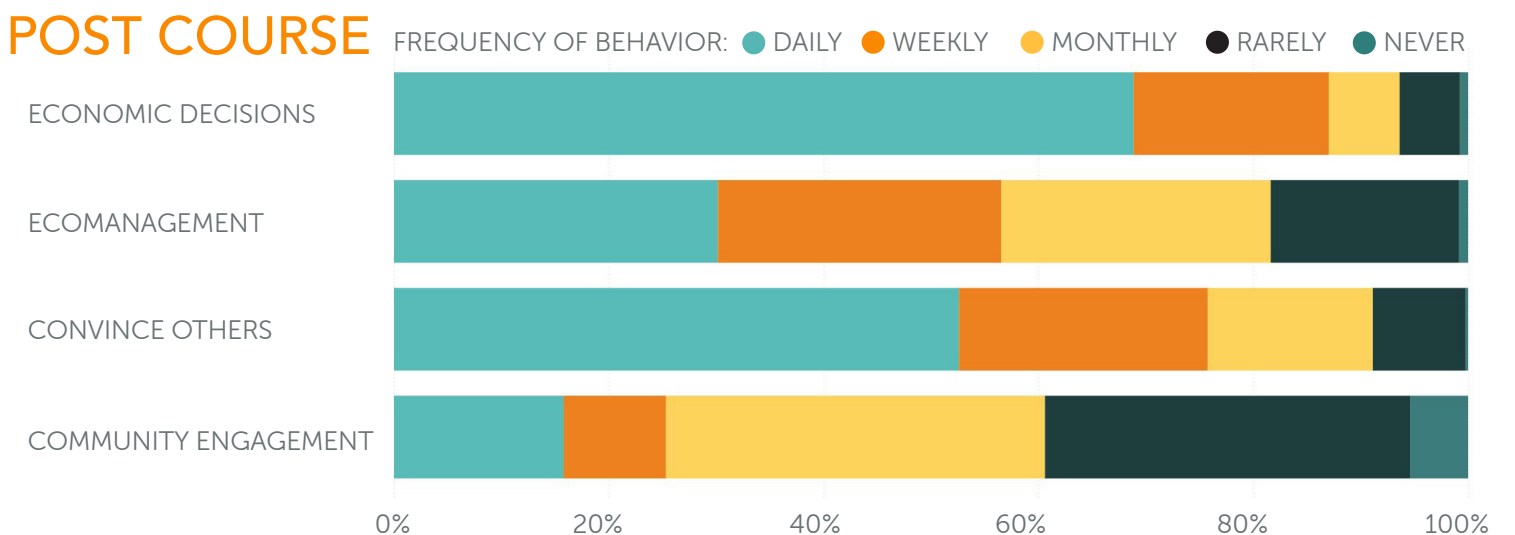
The frequency of environmentally-friendly behaviors increased substantially in all categories. Our alumni are taking actions every day to conserve water and power, pick up litter, compost organic waste, work in their communities, and convince others of the importance of environmentally-friendly behavior.

The most notable improvement is the increase in frequency of efforts to persuade others of the importance of the environment and conservation. Before a course, the majority of students indicated they engaged in this behavior monthly or rarely. Post course, a majority of alumni indicated that this was a daily behavior, second only to personal actions that could be taken to protect the planet. This is a powerful sign that we're being successful in our mission to empower youth to be active participants in, and advocates for, sustainable communities.

### PRE COURSE



### POST COURSE





# ADRIANA

## EPI'S COLLEGIATE SCHOLARSHIP PROMOTES CLIMATE STUDIES IN MEXICO

Adriana Hernandez has been in EPI Mexico's orbit since 2013 when two events – a Californios Verdes activity at a local community garden and a field course invitation at her high school – coincided to introduce her to the world of EPI.

It was there, on a unique student program on an island in the Gulf of California, that she found the encouragement to immerse herself in all that EPI had to offer, and excited to know more about nature and her Baja California Sur surroundings.

Adriana jumped head-first into EPI Mexico's field and community opportunities for the next three years. She joined the Californios Verdes Eco Club; participating in sea turtle monitoring programs, sea lion and whale shark activities, Yo Amo Balandra rallies, Conociendo tus Raíces, cultural exchanges, and Whale Ecology courses.

She also volunteered 380 social service hours to EPI's operations team. Her dedication and enthusiasm was apparent, and in 2015, she was offered an internship with EPI's Outreach Coordinator. This experience, which she describes as full of learning and joy, led her to ask herself an important question at a pivotal time in her educational path, *"What do I want to do with my life?"*

EPI had instilled a desire to protect the environment, and her experiences had given her the competencies to utilize environmental education and scientific research to do it. But, facing an unsure financial situation, she took a year off to consider her future.

When she found a university program in Colima, MX – nearly 700 miles away – that partnered her interest in science, the environment, and an emphasis on managing risk on field-based environmental education programs, she thought she'd found the perfect fit. But the geographic distance posed additional financial hardships for her family. Through EPI's Collegiate Scholarship, Adriana found the financial support needed to turn the opportunity into a reality.

*"EPI supported my education from my very first field course. When this economic situation arose, EPI continued to support my education by providing this scholarship. Today, my parents and I are deeply grateful for the opportunities that – although I've worked hard – I would not have been able to do without EPI."*

Adriana completed her program in 2020 and plans to specialize in environmental communication; involving education that promotes environmental protection with

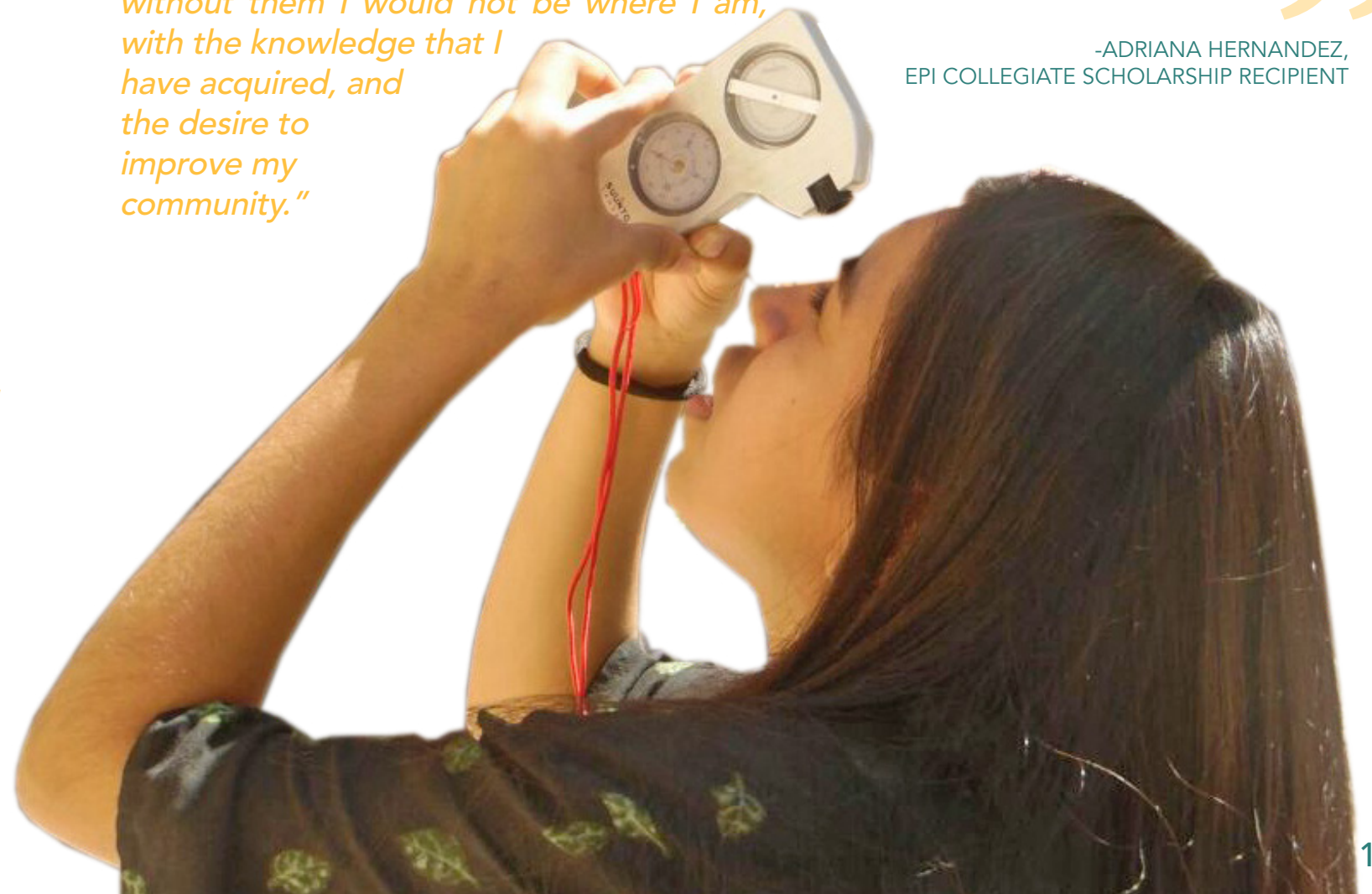
an emphasis in risk management to combat climate change. She hopes to do this by synthesizing the results of various ongoing community projects and social movements that have the potential for great impacts on society and the environment.

In addition to finalizing her thesis, Adriana is currently working with EPI to bring knowledge she gained in Colima to her La Paz community by creating a manual of strategies that seeks solutions for water-stress.

*"I want to thank all the people behind this scholarship; EPI, for being an institution that channels young people to be scientists and people active in the conservation of the environment and our community. And to the donors who allow all this to be possible, without them I would not be where I am, with the knowledge that I have acquired, and the desire to improve my community."*

“SCIENCE IS A WONDERFUL AND DIVERSE WORLD, WITHOUT ANY GENDER; SO DON'T BE AFRAID TO TRY DIFFERENT AREAS. ON THE CONTRARY, THIS WILL ALLOW YOU TO RECOGNIZE WHICH ONE IS OF INTEREST TO YOU. DARE TO IMMERSE YOURSELF AND DISCOVER YOUR PASSION, DO YOUR BEST, BE CURIOUS, INVESTIGATE, AND ABOVE ALL BELIEVE IN YOURSELF.”

-ADRIANA HERNANDEZ,  
EPI COLLEGIATE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT





# FUTURES IN STEAM

## MOTIVATING COSTA RICAN GIRLS TO PURSUE CAREERS IN SCIENCE

In 2020, with the support of the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica, EPI received a grant under the “Funding for English Language, STEAM, and Entrepreneurship” program to support 300 girls from communities in Limón and Los Santos.

### GOALS:

- Improve participants’ scientific knowledge and skills
- Empower and inspire Costa Rican girls from underserved areas to pursue further STEAM education

EPI created a comprehensive program that focused on developing participants’ STEAM skills and introducing youth to career and education opportunities in science-related fields. Despite COVID-19 conditions, we provided a program that allowed participants to appreciate nature, identify environmental research problems, and develop innovative solutions to communicate their results to the general public. Twelve schools were selected to participate in the program and 30 girls, ages 14 to 19, from each high school were invited to be part of the experience.

**Empowering Girls for a STEAM Future** focused on improving the scientific competences of participants. The fully virtual program was conducted with synchronous and asynchronous sessions and had a goal of improving participants’ Scientific Competences, motivating them to continue their studies at a university level to pursue STEAM-related careers.

Students developed projects that were focused on climate change effects, conservation of species, waste management, deforestation, excess use of agrochemicals, and waste/trash removal that the students felt impacted their local communities. Some of these projects were presented at the virtual Biociencia event and the general public were invited to ask questions and inquire more.

### RESULTS:

300  
GIRLS

16  
VOLUNTEER MENTORS

22  
ADJUDICATORS

44  
PROJECTS

14.5%  
IMPROVEMENT IN  
SCIENTIFIC COMPETENCIES

6%  
OVERALL IMPROVEMENT IN  
ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY INDEX





# 2020

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

### TOTAL REVENUE

**\$2,946,417**

↓ from 2019: \$4,950,644

### TOTAL EXPENSES

**\$3,217,516**

↓ from 2019: \$4,725,340

### Assets

Current Assets	\$865,834
Property & Equipment	\$1,567,436
Other Assets	\$797,692
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$3,230,962</b>

### Liabilities & Net Assets

Current Liabilities	\$1,170,378
Long-term Debt	\$1,125,617
Net Assets	\$934,967
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$3,230,962</b>

Figures as of August 31, 2020

EPI COMPLETELY CHANGED MY LIFE. IT MADE ME A MORE MINDFUL TEENAGER, AND INSPIRED MY LEADERSHIP SKILLS.  
-PAMELA, LOCAL COSTA RICA PARTICIPANT

## REVENUE

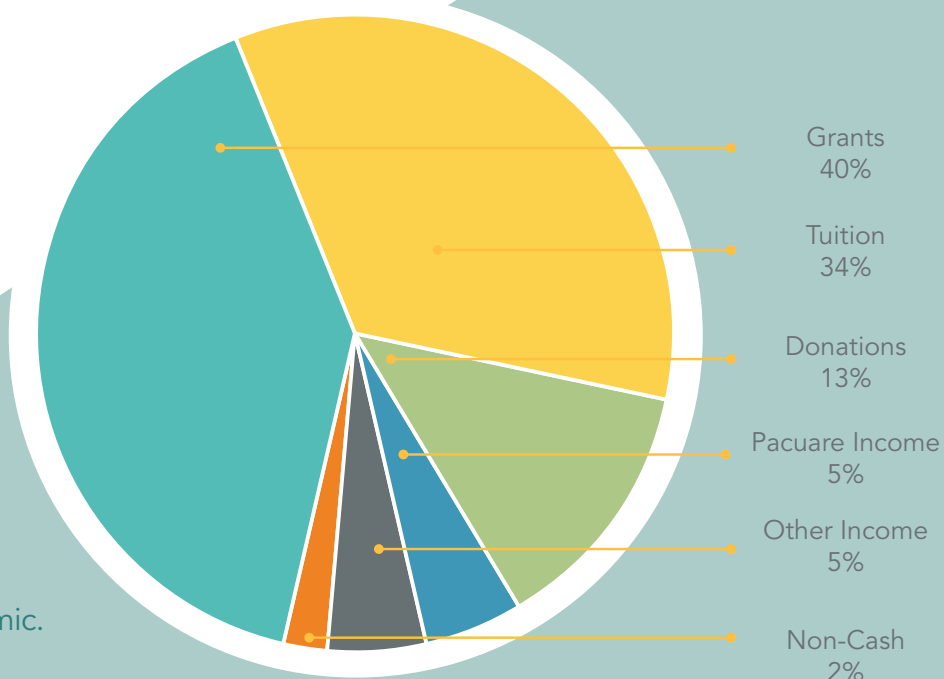
Historically, EPI is a highly sustainable, tuition-driven organization. In 2019, 64% of our annual operating budget was covered by paying students and other earned income.

The cancellation of more than 120 student courses due to COVID-19 had a dramatic impact on this funding structure, and in 2020, this earned income potential fell to 44%.

## DIVERSE RESOURCES

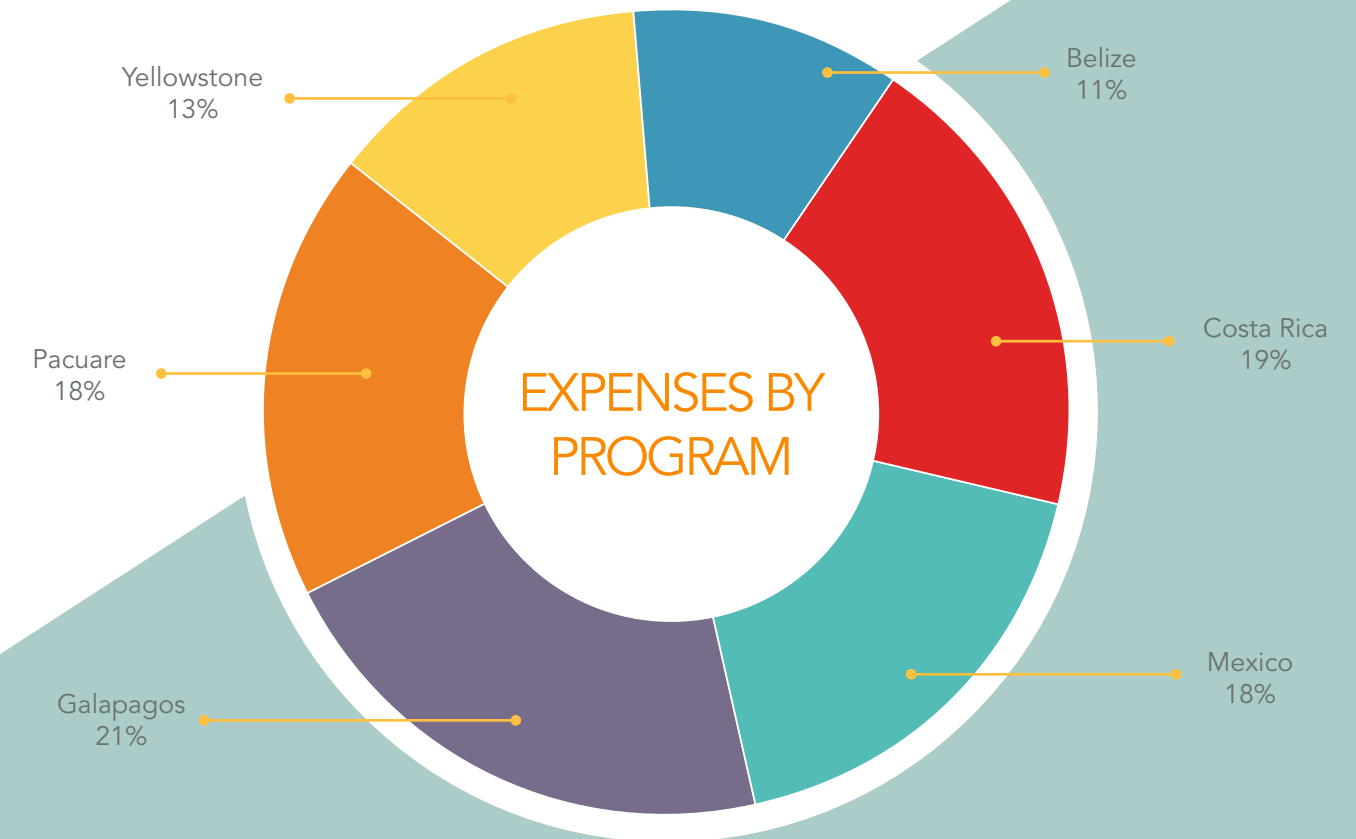
The historic diversity of our revenue sources not only promotes sustainability of our activities, but was also critical in the organization's ability to survive the pandemic.

## FY2020 REVENUE SOURCES



## EXPENSES

We operate as a lean organization, with 73% of every dollar covering direct program expenses. All of our expenses, including core mission support, are essential to producing robust, life-changing programs.



We group our expenses into three main categories:

- Direct Program Expenses: The size of each program budget is determined by a variety of factors, including number of participants, activities, and length of courses
- Core Mission Administrative Support: Includes Finance, HR, Systems, and Board Oversight
- Core Mission Fundraising Support: Allowed 96% of our participants to be under-served students

The growth and effectiveness of our work depends on a solid core. Investing in these core support services is prudent and essential for long-term success.

**73%**

OF EPI SPENDING IS DIRECTED TO EDUCATION AND CONSERVATION

Direct Expenses:  
Program Operations  
73%

Core Mission Support:  
Administration  
19%

Core Mission Support:  
Fundraising  
8%



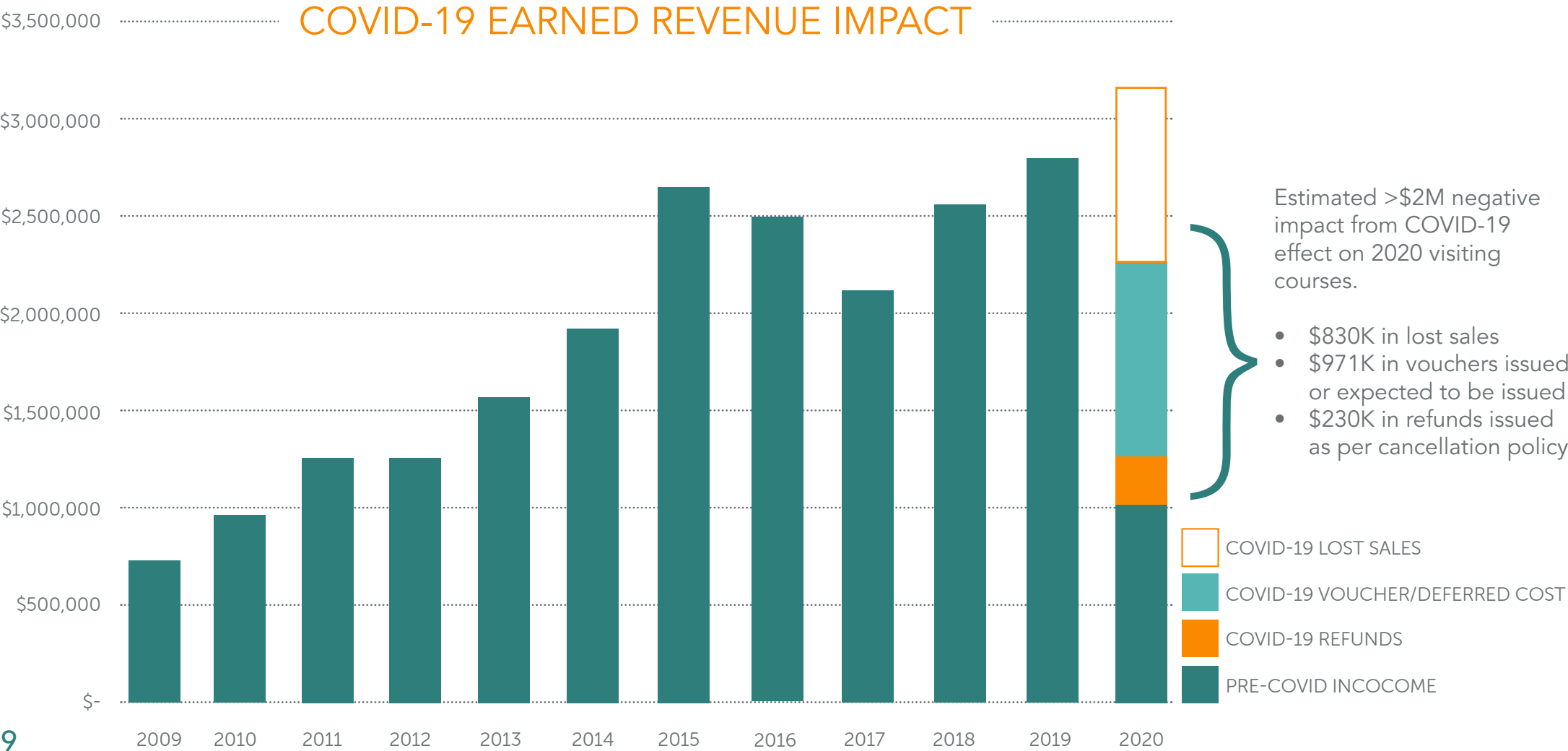


# COVID-19

## EARNED REVENUE IMPACT & RECOVERY

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, EPI joined the one in three nonprofits that experienced a critical upending of traditional revenue structures. Seemingly overnight, EPI became an organization that relied almost exclusively on fundraised support. Despite early projections for a record-setting year, beginning in April of 2020, we cancelled or postponed more than 120 field courses – resulting in a greater than \$2M reduction in our projected revenue. Additionally, the loss in visiting student tuition posed cascading curtailing to revenue-generating activities not captured in the chart below.

Uncertainty surrounding the future of student travel additionally impacted our ability to run our Spring campaigns, an indicator of further reduced future student enrollment. In response, potent-but-nimble decisions were made to ensure a sustainable future for EPI.



# FORGING A PATH TO RECOVERY

- We mitigated these deep financial losses by significantly restructuring EPI’s staffing and programming:
- As of April 2020, 50-60% reduction in staff (FTE)
  - \$1.75M reduction in expenses for remainder of FY20 - a reduction of 66%.
  - Local and visiting programming cancelled for the remainder of 2020

## ORIGINAL VS. REDUCED EXPENSES





# Every Egg MATTERS

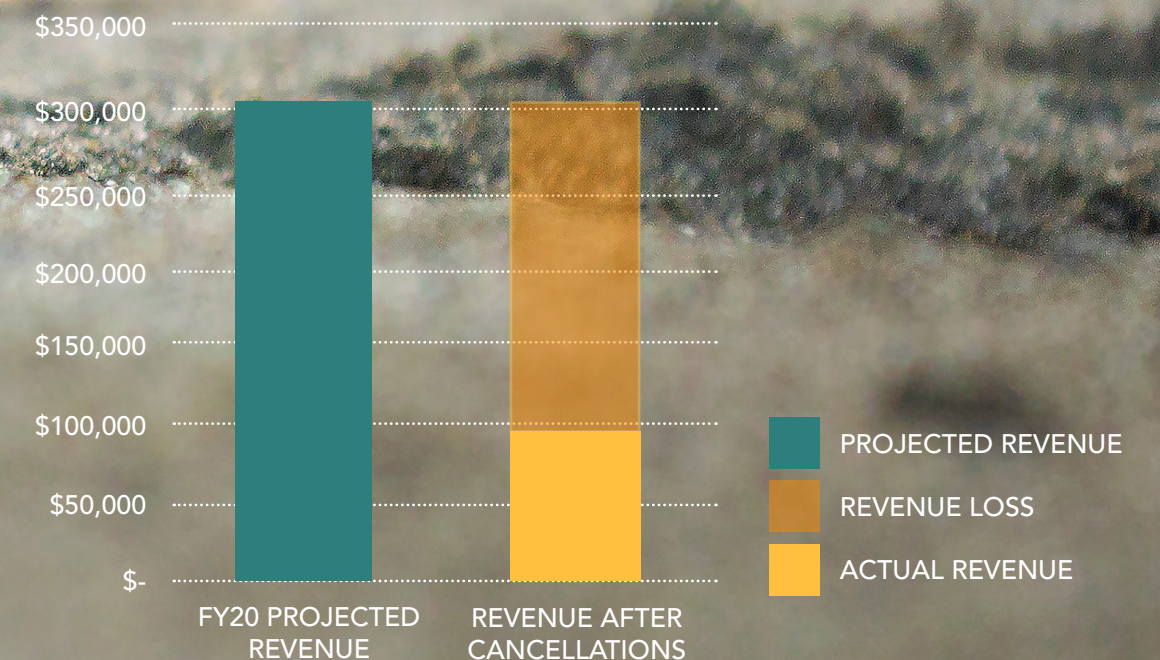
DONOR-SUSTAINED SEA TURTLE RESEARCH DURING A PANDEMIC

Like many in the global community, Costa Rica's tourism industry faced uncharted waters with the outbreak of COVID-19 – delivering an acute blow to Pacuare Reserve. The closure of Costa Rica's borders reduced the Reserve's projected revenue by more than \$214K. In response, EPI launched an international fundraising campaign to sustain sea turtle research activities, preserving our capacity to protect every egg.

Throughout the nesting season, a dedicated cohort of local and international research assistants sheltered in place at Pacuare Reserve to provide ongoing protection for nests, eggs, and hatchlings. Staff and volunteers often worked more than 80 hours per week and monitored up to 8 miles each night. In 2020, the Reserve monitored 515 sea turtle nests, saved more than 54,601 eggs, and successfully released 22,275 hatchlings. Because of this ceaseless protection, Pacuare Reserve experienced the loss of just 4% of its nests – compared to other regional nesting sites who saw 70% of their nests lost to human predation.

We are deeply indebted to our research assistants, staff, and volunteers for their deep dedication to the wildlife at Pacuare Reserve. We are also profoundly grateful to our Every Egg funders, whose support of sea turtle research forged a path through and beyond the pandemic.

PACUARE RESERVE REVENUE LOSS





# YOUR 2020 GIFTS

Our 2020 supporter lists include gifts made during the calendar year: January 1 - December 31, 2020.

**Defender (\$295,000+)**  
FOUNDATION/CORPORATE  
Anonymous Donor Advised Fund at the Chicago Community Foundation  
International Community Foundation - Candeo Fund  
The Builders Initiative & ICF Alumbra Innovations Foundation

**Benefactor (\$100,000-\$249,999)**  
FOUNDATION/CORPORATE  
Edward L. Anderson Jr. Foundation  
Paul M. Angell Family Foundation  
Bridgemill Foundation  
State of Montana COVID Relief Grant

**Protector (\$50,000-\$99,999)**  
FOUNDATION/CORPORATE  
Alumbra Innovations Foundation  
Anonymous  
Gurinas Trust  
Houston Zoo, Inc.  
International Galapagos Tour Operators Association

**Champion (\$10,000-\$49,999)**  
FOUNDATION/CORPORATE/GOVERNMENT  
Anonymous  
The Brock Foundation  
Cross Charitable Foundation  
Education for Sustainability:  
Invasive Species - FEIG  
Foundation to Decrease World Suck  
The Lightfoot Foundation  
Llewellyn Foundation  
M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust  
Oak Hill Fund  
Siemens Stiftung Foundation  
State of Montana Business Adaptability Grant  
State of Montana School-aged Child Care Grant  
State of Montana Social Services Grant  
U.S. Embassy-Costa Rica  
The William H. & Margaret M. Wallace Foundation

INDIVIDUAL  
Anonymous  
Michael & Rocio Haas  
Dana Lurie & Dalila Vargas  
Christy & Donaldson Miele  
Lorraine Pankratz

IN-KIND  
Google  
Podio  
Salesforce  
**Forerunner (\$5,000-\$9,999)**  
FOUNDATION/CORPORATE  
AMB West Community Fund  
Fundación CRUSA  
The Lightfoot Foundation  
Park County Community Foundation  
The Ida & William Rosenthal Foundation  
Wells Fargo

INDIVIDUAL  
Rebecca Schultz  
Melinda J. Wilson Donor Advisory Fund  
Philip Zarri & Lisa Rooney-Zarri

IN-KIND  
Adaptive Insights, LLC  
National Forest Foundation

**Steward (\$2,500-\$4,999)**  
FOUNDATION/CORPORATE  
Cinnabar Foundation  
First Interstate BancSystem Foundation  
First Interstate Bank of Missoula  
PLUS Foundation

INDIVIDUAL  
David & Charl Kappel  
Rebecca Lambert  
William Maimone & Leslie Durboraw  
Stephen & Annette McCarthy  
Beverly McNamara  
Sandy & Kevin Phillips  
Si White

**Community Leader (\$1,000-\$2,499)**  
FOUNDATION/CORPORATE  
AmazonSmile Foundation  
Birding Experiences  
Equinix, Inc.  
foundry10  
Good Food Store  
It's American Press  
Kaiser Permanente  
Microsoft Matching Gifts Program  
Missoula Community Foundation  
onXmaps, Inc.  
Total Quality Logistics, LLC Matching Gifts Program

INDIVIDUAL  
Trent & Kimberly Baker

Dale & Karen Barry  
Janel Crawford & Johannes Meerjanssen  
Karen & Ken Dial  
Linda Frey & Noah Goldberg  
Porter & Bridget Henson  
Buzz & Lisa Hines  
Pamela & Willie Hodges  
Jonathan Hops  
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We are deeply grateful to our Leadership Circle. These individuals have named EPI as a beneficiary in their wills. Their living example of commitment to the improvement of our planet creates inspiration and hope for a bright future.

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## COVID-19 IMPACTS ON EPI STAFF

In response to the financial impact that the COVID-19 pandemic posed to revenue-generating operations, we were forced to furlough 50% of our Missoula staff in April and another 10% in May. Our international staff was also reduced by 60%.

Remaining staff worked with families, teachers, and schools to reschedule courses, create new COVID-19 safety protocols in preparation for a return to the field when restrictions lifted, and coordinate fundraising efforts to ensure that EPI could weather these monumental hardships.



# STORIES

## FROM THE FIELD

### YELLOWSTONE'S LESSONS ON PERSEVERANCE

Even though they had been going to the same school for years, most of the students had not said more than three words to one another before meeting in the school parking lot to embark on their journey to Yellowstone. And now, they were talking like they had been friends for years. It is crazy how much one can learn about one another when you don't have the world of technology distracting you.

Before long, we were snowshoeing up a steep hill to get a better look at a herd of bison. The hill seemed to be never-ending as we grew close to a peak only to see another up ahead. Every student's feet were sore and tired, but we kept going up and up the hill until we finally reached the top. I threw off my pack and collapsed into the snow alongside my classmates. We were exhausted. We all sat in the snow silently. But then the silence was broken, and we heard it – the low, quiet snorting of a bison plowing through the snow. As I watched the bison graze, I removed my snowshoes and stepped into the deep snow that lay beneath me. I wanted to feel what the bison felt. I, too, wanted to take on obstacles head-on. From that day, I vowed to live like a bison. *I would be strong yet gentle, stubborn to the point of never faltering on my beliefs, and I would be a force of nature to be reckoned with.*

On our last day in Yellowstone, we ventured down to the river that lay below the lodge. I watched the water rush over the rocks and disappear. I found myself envying the river. The river lived a nomadic life; full of constant motion and movement. It flowed and flowed until an obstacle arose, and then it would chart a new path and keep flowing. I wanted to be as dedicated to my purpose as the river was to its. But dedication is hard to come by. In a world where people change so much, it's hard to find many people as dedicated as the river. Even in the harshest of environments, the river would keep flowing. I realized that even though I could not be the river, I could let the river guide and inspire my life. *I would adapt to hostile environments, push through and erode the obstacles that stood in my path, and never give up until I got to where I was going.*



**BY JENNY STOKER**, EPI Yellowstone Alumna, 2019 & 2020 - *I am currently attending the University of Montana-Western to pursue a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. My life was changed forever by my experiences with Ecology Project International in Yellowstone. I loved my first experience in 2019 so much that I applied and went again in the early months of 2020. My love for nature was heightened by all of the breath-taking aspects of Yellowstone. As an elementary teacher, I plan to integrate love and respect for Earth's natural beauty into my classroom, and I am unbelievably grateful for the experiences that I have had with EPI. I hope to pass on the passion for Yellowstone that I have developed because of them.*







EPI SHOWED ME WHAT I WANTED TO DO  
FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE; CONTRIBUTE MY  
GRAIN OF SAND TO THE CONSERVATION OF  
THE PLANET.

-KAREN, LOCAL GALAPAGOS ALUMNI IN 2014

