

For life on earth.

**Impact Report** 2023-2024



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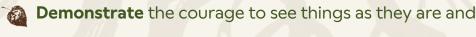


DAR's vision is a liveable future, and our purpose is to regenerate landscapes to improve life on Earth.

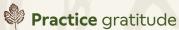
## Values

At Drylands Agroecology Research, we live by our values. Beyond mere slogans, they guide our behavior towards creating social and environmental landscapes where humans, nature, and spirit thrive. They set the context for how we do what we do and help us create the kind of culture we want to be a part of.

#### We strive to:



to act for the greater good



W Listen to understand

Lead by example

**Embrace** transparency & candor

**Value** diversity

Create opportunity through Earth and community stewardship

Align with nature's patterns

Build resilience through holistic interdependence

Leave it better than we found it

## A LETTER FROM THE FOUNDERS

Dear beloved Community,

An immense joy wells inside of us to once again present to you a collection of the year past. For us, we do not take for granted that we can do this. In the earliest stages of the global pandemic, the first inspirations for this work struck us like a lightning bolt. The charge electrified our life together in ways that we never could have imagined.

Looking out our window upon a landscape full of gardens and trees and animals that we love so dearly, one that may have blown away into a desert if not for our care, we let the wind of this inspiration take hold of us. In the last 4 years, this inspiration has carried and pulled and often dragged us along with it.

With astonishment, we have watched this inspiration spread like wildfire, burning through the souls of many. Today we are proud to stand with a growing community of colleagues, families, advisors, organizations, and visionaries that share a common thread - a golden thread of hope for our future as Humanity on Earth.

With amazement we have nurtured but also witnessed the organism that is DAR blossom into something altogether more than the sum of its parts. It has taken on a life of its own, a spirit that travels and moves and grows and evolves. A growing staff. New leadership. New programs. And of course so much to refine. It is very likely that if you are reading this note, you have been a grand part of this story. A story that we together will certainly weave into a happy ending. Or die trying. The beautiful world our hearts know is possible is just around the bend. And we are ever so grateful that you are on this journey with us.



For us, it feels so fitting as we move into a new stage of our lives. As we prepare our home and our world for a new member of our family, the clarity of this work has never been so crystal clear. This work is for the future. This work is so that our children can have a future. Not just any future, but a future worth getting up in the morning for. A future to take pride in, to savor, to relish, to enjoy the sweet victory of laughter that glows on late into a summer night. The taste of fruit off the vine. Together with music and the smell of warm food and smiles. That's what we want our children to remember us by.

In the last 4 years, it has become even more clear to us the distress that so many are facing in this time. It has become even more clear what is at stake. It has become even more clear what we have to gain. But throughout, the Original instructions continue to anchor us: take care of our home, this Earth; take care of each other.

For Life on Earth,

n Vijomenie

DAR

DRYLANDS AGROECOLOGY RESEARCH

Founders, Nick DiDomenico & Marissa Pulaski



# A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of DAR,

Welcome to our 2023 Annual Report. Today, I write to you as the newly appointed Executive Director. In my nearly two years journey from supportive friend, to consultant, to Managing Director, to this moment, I've been privileged to witness and participate in the growth and evolution of a truly revolutionary organization. From the beginning I was impressed with what Nick, Marissa, and the rest of their growing team had already accomplished. And there was more work to do. Together, we've been transforming DAR into the resilient and efficient entity it needs to be to best serve its purpose. With a deep focus on visionary strategic planning, we've worked hard to improve our management & financial practices, team development, and the quality of our programs. And it's paying off: as you will see in this report, we've had our best year yet, and we're poised for an even better one in 2024.

One part of this strategic planning that may surprise some of you is the decision by Nick and Marissa to step out of the Co-Executive Director roles they've held jointly since DAR's inception. It is a change that means a lot for them and for DAR. By dividing the core responsibilities of running DAR among the three of us while leveraging each of our areas of expertise (Land Stewardship for Nick, Cultural Stewardship for Marissa, and Organizational Stewardship for me) we can better focus our energies where they are needed most while still coming together as an Executive Circle for decisions that require our shared understanding.

Speaking of distributed leadership, I encourage you to peruse the names and faces of the leaders comprising the DAR team at the end of this report. Over the past year, we have trained and promoted many of our seasoned staff to pivotal director, manager, and coordinator roles. Additionally, we have recruited exceptional talent where needed, creating a cohesive team poised to tackle what promises to be DAR's most significant year yet.

Indeed, 2024 is already shaping up to be an extraordinary year for DAR, marked by larger land projects, enhanced research capabilities, enriched community programming, the ongoing development of our Folk Farm, and the inauguration of our new Agroecology Incubator Program—a training initiative designed to disseminate DAR's work wherever it is needed. We are honored by your continued support and invite your participation in our numerous tree plantings, social gatherings, tours, workshops, and more.

For the Earth,

James M Edwards





## **OUR WORK**

A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in Colorado, Drylands Agroecology Research (DAR) is a collective of farmers, activists, scientists, educators, designers, and researchers working to holistically regenerate our land and the life that it nurtures. DAR uses regenerative design to transform degraded landscapes into thriving, relationship-dense ecosystems that revitalize soil, restore hydrological cycles, sequester carbon, support biodiversity, provide abundant food and resources, and support thriving human culture and livelihood. Our theory of change is that by transforming barren lands into havens of healthy ecology, food, commerce, and community, DAR is creating a model for reversing cultural and ecological degradation. The replication of these microecosystems on a grassroots, community level is the key to the resilient, systemic cultural change that will restore our relationships with each other and with the Earth.



All of DAR's work starts with relationships with the land and community.

We see land restoration as a critical foundation, and we are simultaneously designing and weaving cultural regeneration, education, and research to regenerate landscapes and improve life on earth.















## OUR PILLARS





**Cultural Stewardship** 



**Education** 



Research





## LAND STEWARDSHIP

### In 2023 we...

Prototyped our Agroecological Incubator Program (AIP) and Foundations of Agroecology Course to train more land stewards, pair them with land partners, and nurture the next generation of leaders in regenerative agriculture.



## 164 acres

of thriving agricultural ecosystems under management, with plans to expand across thousands more acres.

#### Over 7,000 trees, shrubs, and perennials planted



### +66 acres

of regenerative livestock grazing implemented, enhancing soil health and optimizing agricultural land use.

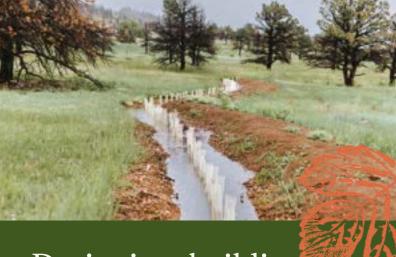
### 850

850 perennial medicinal plants planted in an Agrivoltaic Retrofit Partnership with The Nature Conservancy, Colorado Agrivoltaics, and Boulder Housing Partners.



### 5 new

agroforestry projects implemented this year, strategically incorporating silvo-pasture systems projected to sequester an impressive 142 tons of carbon annually upon maturity.



Designing, building, and monitoring landscape scale regeneration for private and public landowners.

We pioneer strategies that restore degraded, desertified, unproductive landscapes into thriving ecosystems that are agriculturally abundant. We start with terra-formed earthworks systems that reboot hydrological cycles, creating landscapes that absorb water and carbon. Then we plant these with functional agricultural ecosystems that are resilient in the face of drought, fire, flood, and climate instability. Finally, incorporating Holistic Livestock Management accelerates soil building, boosts ecosystem health, and helps feed our communities.





### **CULTURAL STEWARDSHIP**

### In 2023 we...

Launched Youth New Moon Circles, "First Moon," in collaboration with Community Roots Midwife Collective & Harvest of All First Nations, focusing on Indigenous youth coming of age & entering puberty.

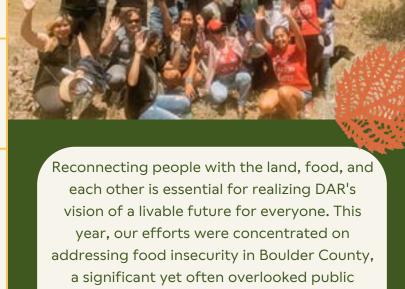
**Hosted 3 trainings** for the Ancestral Womb Postpartum Care (AWPC) program, as well as Cerradas postpartum care ceremonies at Elk Run Farm.

Established a women and Indigenous-led medicinal herbal garden at Yellow Barn Farm, to support postpartum care practices & and local herb production.

Developed a garden plan and grew and delivered veggie starts in collaboration with our Shoshone relatives at Wind River Reservation for the inaugural season of their Food Sovereignty Garden.

Saved and shared diverse bioregional and droughttolerant seeds with our community members and relatives on different reservations including the first nations peoples Arapahoe, Shoshone, Shawnee, Cheyenne-Arapaho, Taos Pueblo.

**Provided fresh farm shares** to support the health of our staff as well as Indigenous Elder shares guided in collaboration with Spirit of the Sun.



1,936 lbs

health issue in an area known for its wealth.

Astonishingly, 12.8% of the county's residents,

many of whom are children under 18, face food insecurity. Our Food Solidarity Gardens initiative has been a key part of our response.

**of fresh produce delivered** to food relief organizations in Boulder County.







4,359 lbs

of fresh vegetables and traditional grains harvested from our Food Solidarity Garden at Yellow Barn Farm



Appointed the first Herbal Manager and volunteer lead for the AWPC garden, with weekly volunteer days funded through grants.





In 2023...

60 families enrolled across our programs and camps.

\$68,000

awarded in scholarships

20

middle schoolers empowered in our Youth Stewardship program & Gaia Theory class

### 3 new

advisory board members

Offered childcare at 3 lively DAR fundraisers and all events, prioritizing family integration

## 80 community members

celebrated a heartfelt spring graduation ceremony with us



Built a new yurt deck and shade structure and overhauled our yurt.



In response to the critical need in our community for land-based, outdoor education, DAR offers Folk Farm School: a nature-based, child-led education program that supports children 2.5 - 14 years old. Folk Farm School is a developmentally appropriate education system inspired by Forest Schools adapted to a farm ecosystem to inspire connection to land, food, culture and social systems.

Folk Farm programs are available during the normal school year and through our varied summer camps.







## DAR's Main Experimental Design

Drylands Agroecology Research is dedicated to regenerating degraded drylands by designing, implementing, and studying agricultural ecosystem that mimic healthy natural ecosystems

Our research program helps us understand the ecosystem services our landscapes provide - that is, how successfully they mimic the functions of natural ecosystems.

## DAR's two questions around our main experimental design are:

- How can we understand the functions of a healthy ecosystem and assess ecosystem health?
- How well are our agroecological strategies, both installation and management, working to build healthy ecosystems?

Read on for this year's summary research report...



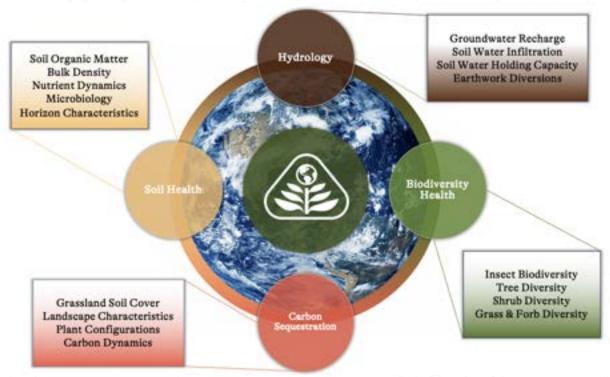
DAR's research program studies the impact of scaled agroecology on hydrology, carbon sequestration, biodiversity, and soil health. This research helps us to better understand and refine our design and implementation, train land managers in effective ways to evaluate the health of their own landscapes, and to communicate the overall research on the ecological impacts of dryland agroforestry systems.



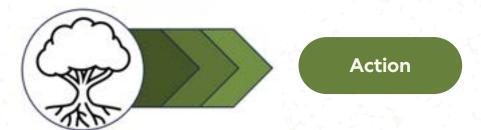


## Resilient Ecological Systems



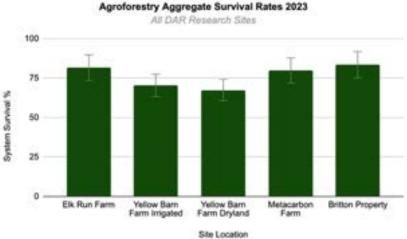


#### Tree & Shrub Survival

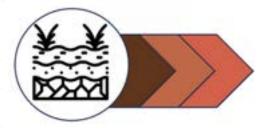


To date, DAR organization has planted 8,732 trees and shrubs in our dryland terrace systems across 5 landscapes. Based off our tree & shrub census for 2023, total survivability rests at 76.49% across all research sites. Through this action, this begins the catalyst for ecosystem regeneration.

Location	Number of Trees/ Shrubs Planted To Date
Elk Run Farm	1057
Yellow Barn Farm Irrigated	1893
Yellow Barn Farm Dryland	3772
Metacarbon Farm	840
Britton Property	1170



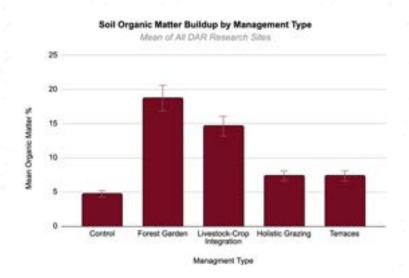
#### Organic Matter



#### Action



Soil organic matter plays a crucial role in initiating soil health processes. The persistence of trees and shrubs, along with the buildup of trophic levels, supports long-term biodiversity. In DAR's cultivated systems, incorporated soil organic matter in the forest garden and implementing livestock rotation in cropping systems have resulted in the highest accumulation of organic matter for 2023.

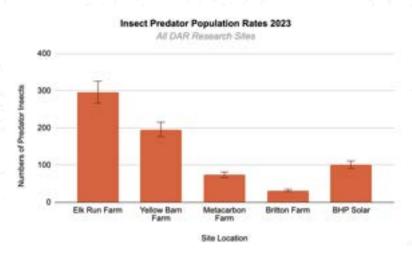


#### Predator Insect Diversity Survey

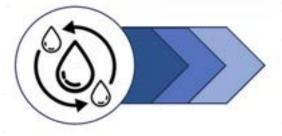




Insects are the most responsive signal to ecosystem stability changes. When considering the health of the systems DAR builds, we use insect diversity as an indicator of this. The top indication for a healthy ecosystem is diversity of wasp and other predator species. A varied predator population signifies abundant and diverse lower-level species, indicating a healthy ecosystem.



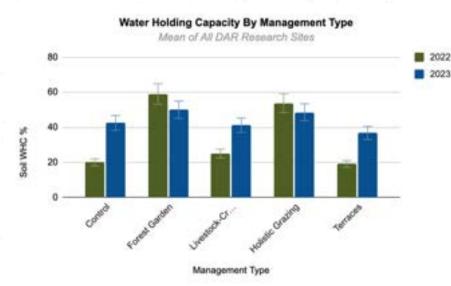
### Soil Water Holding Capacity



#### Action

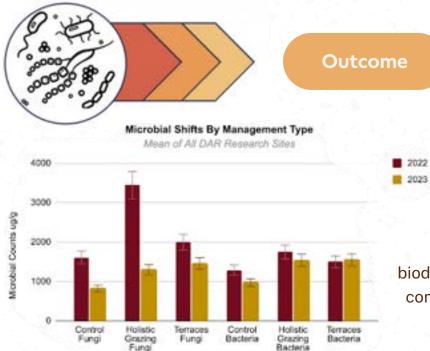


Soil water holding capacity is a vital indicator of soil and ecosystem health as it reflects the soil's ability to retain moisture, which is crucial for supporting plant growth and microbial activity. This, in turn, supports diverse plant and ecosystem communities by providing habitat and food sources for various organisms while preventing erosion and nutrient leaching.



\*Currently we are seeking capital to support rigorous research considering our agroforestry models effects on landscape hydrology. Please inquire if interested in supporting this.

#### Microbiology Community Shifts



Management Type

The diversity of plants and animals enriches microbial habitats through root exudates and litter, enhancing soil health. Organic matter provides essential nutrients for microbial growth and diversity.

Trees with their deep roots and decomposing litter, bolsters soil fungal communities, promoting resilience and biodiversity in the ecosystem. in turn fungal communities store vast amounts of carbon while stabilizing ecosystem diversity aboveground.

#### Carbon Sequestration

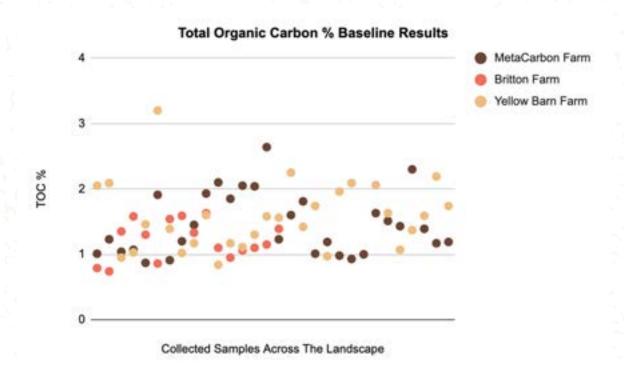




#### Outcome

The complex interplay between diverse plants, animals, and microbial communities enriches soil habitats and enhances soil hydrology and organic matter accumulation. This, in turn, facilitates carbon sequestration as OM serves as a reservoir for carbon storage within the soil. This collaborative ecosystem function not only aids in mitigating climate change through carbon sequestration but also creates a stable environment conducive to supporting ALL life on earth.

In 2023, we began a decade-long study to assess carbon stock dynamics, focusing on how our holistic grazing methods contribute to carbon sequestration over time. We extend our gratitude to Cool Boulder for their funding partnership in this edeavor.



## Click here to read the full report.

## MEET OUR COLLABORATORS











YELLOWBARN FARM

METACARBON FARM BOULDER HOUSING PARTNERS









BOULDER COUNTY











SPIRIT OF THE SUN



CULTIVANDO LATINX NON-PROFIT









PEACEJAM



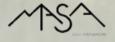




COMMUNITY ROOTS MIDWIFE COLLECTIVE



**NATURERX** 



MASA SEED FOUNDATION

## MEET OUR COLLABORATORS











SOIL BOULDER

ONE TREE PLANTED

**BOULDER** PERMACULTURE MAD CAPITAL!

**NAROPA** UNIVERSITY





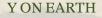


UNITED **ECOLOGY** 



KISS THE **GROUND** 







**WISH GARDEN HERBS** 





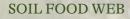


**ECDYSIS** 



**COLORADO** SCHOOL OF CLINICAL HERBALISM







**RSONAR LAB** 







LAYER FARMS



**MOXIE GRAINS** 

THE EASTERN SHOSHONE FOOD **SOVEREIGHNTY INITIATIVE** 

**CONTRARIO GRAZING GUILD** 

IN COMMUNITY WITH FOOD

## PARTNER HIGHLIGHTS







We are thrilled to announce that after three years of building relationship, DAR and YBF have formed a Strategic Alliance that will guarantee our partnership for years to come. And it should be no surprise: from the start, our relationship has been deep, rooted in a shared vision of a regenerative future and our love for the land.

In 2023 we strengthened the bond between us with a variety of shared programming. We kicked off the season with a massive tree planting on Earth Day. Braving the snow, over 300 people showed up from around the globe to help us plant nearly 4,000 trees and shrubs. As the season warmed, we rotationally grazed our second herd of cows (we're now on our third!) to help revitalize the native prairie grasslands there. We also ran another year of our Food Solidarity Garden at YBF. This time adding a medicinal herbs section and sharing our yield with new program partners to help address food insecurity in Boulder County. Our Folk Farm campus for older children and our summer camps continued thriving at YBF, and we rounded off DAR's presence there by moving our administrative workspace to the Yellow Barn itself. As our scaled demonstration site and our home away from home, it is safe to say that Yellow Barn Farm has become our most valued partner.







DAR had the great pleasure of working as a contractor with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in the installation of the Boulder Community Housing Project Solar Array Agri-Voltaics Retrofit through the Catalyst Fund. The goal of this project was to use passive water-harvesting earthworks under an established solar array to take advantage of runoff from rain, snow, and condensation on the solar panels to support the revegetation of deeply degraded soil. At the invitation of TNC, DAR performed site assessment, created a design, implemented the design, and collected baseline research data. The project is a beautiful micro-representation of using passive water-harvesting to revegetate degraded land with native and medicinal herbs. Projects like this help us explore methods to accomplish this type of regeneration at scale.

# Your Impact









Donations	\$361,010
Grants	\$524,985
Folk Farm	\$205,011
Land Stewardship	\$226,925
Other Program Income	\$12,295

\$12,831

**Events** 

Development	\$110,882
Administration	\$185,328
Payroll	\$261,251
Programs	\$794,836

# Thank You

to all our donors and volunteers. We couldn't have done it without your support. And a special thanks to The Roots Network, our monthly giving program and to all of our donors who have chosen to be anonymous. We greatly appreciate your care.

Individuals: Aaron Perry Adam Engle Adrian Zelski Alden Daniels Alex Markevich Alexa Hapgood Alexa Rosenthal Alexandra Durigan Allison Hamm Amedina Amy Ippoliti Amy May Anastacia Archibeque Angela Giustina Anna Baeten Anna De<u>Biasi</u> Anne & Carlos Salinas Annie Massa Antoinette Wolfe Aurora Adams Aviva Grossberg Barry Brown Barry Dunn Ben Fenton Bernard Cyr

Bill Spencer Brandi Stanley Brenda Baker Brenna Simmons-St.

Onge Brett KenCairn Bruce Goldstein Byron Kominek Cara Tyminski Carol Fisher Carol Myers Catherine Hunziker Catherine Levenberger Catherine Milburn

Celia Perarnaud Chappell Marmon Charles Stein & Lyra

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Cynthia Johnson

Colin Williams Colleen Marland Loose Courtney Warner Cristina Bordes

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Daniel Zafar Daniela Escudero Danyel Addes Dave Fletcher David DeBiasi

David Robinson Dayna Schueth Debbie Lane

Deborah "Verona" Rylander Capobianco

David Markham-Gessner

Del Jolly Devon Wycoff Dionisia Hatzis Duncan Gilchrist Emily KenCairn

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Karen McCormick Kate Miller

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Kathryn Cumbo Kathy Wiseman Katie Doyle Myers Kay Murphy

**Keats Dormont** Kennedy Hines Kimberly Decker Kristen Caldwell

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Marielle Grenade-Willis

Mary Pulaski Mary Schellhammer Mary Spencer Marya Pulaski

Matthew Duffy Megan Lennox Melissa England

Michael Haggin Michael Hentschel Michael Petrilli

Michael Shube Michelle Boucher Mike Schroll Mom & Dad Scharf

Morey Bean Nancy Matthews Natalia Browne Natasha Blank Nicholas Connell Nicholas Welch

Nick DiDomenico Sr Nicole Brown

Nicole Todd Patrick Taylor Pedro Urbina Peggy Delaney

Philip Wolf Phillip Cory Rachael Scala

> Rebecca Shoag Rende Brockwell

Robert Gill Robert Gordon Rodney Bolls Roger Menell

Ross Wiseman Ryan Madson Sabrina Dokas

Sabrina Tran Sammi Kate

Sandra Firmin Saoirse Jordan McCallum

Sara H Bercholz Sarah Larrabee Sarah Salsich Scott Bogatz Seleyn DeYarus Seth Rose Shana Parker Shannon Lang

Sid Payne Skyler Kriese Skyler Sun

Sharon Pulaski

Sola DiDomenico Sonja Leix Sophia BoeDecker Stacey Swetil-Rust Stephanie Dobbie

Stephanie Halligan

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Vera Moreno-Hamm Vicki Nichols Goldstein Victoria Stockman Virginie Jordan

Warren Ross William Spencer William Stonehocker

Yasmin Suarez Shaddox Yoshi Aono

Zachari Winters

#### Foundations & Grants:

Boedecker Foundation Boulder County - Climate Innovation Fund

Boulder Parks and Rec

Cemex

Cody Oreck - The Orchard

House

Colorado Finance & Housing

Authority

Community Foundation **Boulder County** 

Engle Family Charitable

Fund Gaea Foundation

Living Forest Project **Longmont Community** Foundation

Mighty Arrow Naster Family Fund NRCS - EOIP One Small Planet One Tree Planted Panorama Global

Petterfly Foundation Reweaving The Web

Richard Reed Foundation Tumbleweed Fund

Union Pacific Foundation Woodard & Curran

Foundation

Wright-Ingraham Institute Zero Food Print

The Three Sisters Fund

## Meet the Team



**James Edwards Executive Director** 



**Nick DiDomenico** Co-Founder and Director of Co-Founder and Director of Land Stewardship



Marissa Pulaski Cultural Stewardship



**Ryan Madson** Director of Operations



Carlos Piñeiro Carrascal Land Stewardship Project Manager



**Jessica Walters** Director of Folk Farm



**Amy Scanes-Wolfe** Director of Agroecology Incubator Program



Rachel Beglin Director of Elk Run Farm



Nelson Heider-Kuhn Director of Research



**Anthony Levy** Land Stewardship Specialist and Business Manager



Mariah McCreary Events Manager



**Amanda Craig** Office Manager



**Briana** Cohen Grants Manager



**Bella Delaney** Admin for Cultural Regeneration & Grant Writer



Anastacia Archibeque Lead of AWPC Garden



Michelle Witte Folk Farm Teacher



Sara June Kielty Folk Farm Teacher



Talluba King Folk Farm Teacher



**Ashley Kulik** Folk Farm Teacher

#### **Board of Advisors**

Anna Baeten, Ktisis Capital Brett KenCairn, City of Boulder Aaron Perry, Y on Earth Suzanne Spiegel, Fundraising Advisor Suz Byers, Financial Advisor Rosalind Wiseman, Advisor to Folk Farm Alexa Rosenthal Colleen McCloskey, Advisor to Folk Farm Rachel Josephs, Advisor to Folk Farm

#### **Board of Directors**

Virginia Jordan Vera Moreno-Hamm **Barnabas Kane Nick DiDomenico** Marissa Pulaski



you and your beloveds!

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