Envisioning 2030: Turning Ambition into Impact

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

20 YEARS PORTLAND, ME

Gulf of Maine Research Institute

Table of Contents

The urgency of the climate challenge is real, but so is the ingenuity of the people working to overcome it.

A Message From the CEO

I am proud of the progress we made in 2025, the first year of our ambitious new strategic plan. Our vision for 2030 is that communities in the Gulf of Maine and beyond will have the knowledge, resources, and relationships they need to thrive amid rapid change.

Over the past year, I've had the privilege of sharing this vision in living rooms, community centers, media interviews, and public events throughout our region and around the world. I often describe our work in the Gulf of Maine as a blueprint for communities beyond our region—a homegrown model for translating scientific knowledge into impact on some of the hardest challenges facing oceans and the communities that depend on them.

The urgency of the climate challenge is real, but so is the ingenuity of the people working to overcome it. You see it in school cafeterias serving locally caught fish to young students; in apprentices building careers in aquaculture; in coastal towns turning flood hazard maps into community visions and investment plans; in start-ups creating new business models for the ocean economy; and in seafood harvesters helping to shape the future of marine renewable energy alongside the scientists studying it.

At the heart of our work is our core belief that ecological resilience, economic resilience, and community resilience are not competing priorities. More often than not, they are the same thing. As we mark our 20th year on the waterfront, we are building on two decades of momentum and accelerating our efforts to bring this belief to life. Read on to explore our impact over the past year and our vision for what's to come.

Glenn Prickett
President & CEO

A Message From the Board Chair

As I reflect on GMRI's first year operating under a bold new strategic plan designed to channel our ambition for 2030, what strikes me most is just how many people chose to lean in at exactly the right moment. It's a reminder that there are no solutions to the ocean challenges we aim to address without the support of our community.

We are navigating a funding environment that demands both steadiness and flexibility. The donors and partners who stood with GMRI this year—some for the first time, some for nearly two decades—have provided exactly that. Unrestricted gifts, in particular, have allowed our team to keep critical work moving forward without interruption, to respond to emerging needs, and to invest in the people and programs that will carry this work forward to our 2030 goals.

This report tells stories that reflect your impact: offering statewide access to science education, making working waterfronts more climate resilient, driving scientific discovery in partnership with the people who work on the water every day, and so much more. These outcomes exist because of decisions made at kitchen tables, in estate planning conversations, and in boardrooms across this region.

The moment we're in is urgent. It is also full of possibility. Your continued partnership is what keeps this momentum building.

With deep gratitude,

Denise DesChenes
Board Chair

We are navigating a funding environment that demands both steadiness and flexibility. The donors and partners who stood with GMRI this year—some for the first time, some for nearly two decades—have provided exactly that.

Adapting Fisheries & Seafood

Fisheries provide food, jobs, economic opportunity, and cultural connection for communities across the Gulf of Maine and around the world. As ocean conditions change, sustaining these benefits requires helping fisheries and seafood systems adapt. We support communities across the seafood supply chain—from boat to plate—by generating the science, tools, and partnerships needed to navigate a changing ocean. Through ecological research and robust data analysis, we improve fisheries forecasting and inform better management decisions, while working with processors, schools, and retailers to strengthen the seafood economy that coastal communities rely on.

85 countries reached through FishSCORE

$46.7M local seafood purchased by seafood program partners*

100+ research fisheries questions conducted by interns to date

*Data from 2024, announced in 2025.

KNOWLEDGE **TO ACTION**

Advancing Climate-Resilient Fisheries Worldwide

Through FishSCORE2030 (Fisheries Strategies for Changing Oceans and Resilient Ecosystems by 2030), a global initiative endorsed by the UN Ocean Decade, we work with partners including the Environmental Defense Fund to strengthen fisheries resilience in a changing ocean. The project connects scientists, managers, and fishing communities

KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION

Monitoring our Home Watershed to Understand Species Shifts

This year marked our 11th year of nearshore ecological monitoring in Casco Bay. More than 50 sampling trips at 161 locations generated more insights into shifting species populations, habitat loss and recovery, and the appearance of new species. This summer, we added marine bird observations to our beach seine surveys in western Casco Bay. Seabirds depend on the ocean for their food, making them useful indicators of ecosystem conditions. It was also our first full year with an in-house molecular lab, which enabled us to process 692 environmental DNA (eDNA) samples in-house, including samples taken during Casco Bay monitoring.

to share knowledge and develop practical tools for climate-resilient fisheries. The network now includes more than 670 members representing roughly 450 organizations across 85 countries. In May 2025, we convened a global workshop in Maine, bringing practitioners from 12 countries together to discuss how best to bridge the gap between theory and context-specific, practical action.

> *GMRI's cutting-edge research, combined with EDF's science-to-policy approach and global perspective, helps ensure FishSCORE2030 tools and strategies are grounded in science and are also ready to be applied across diverse fisheries.*

Kristin Kleisner
Associate VP and Lead Senior Scientist, EDF

STORY SPOTLIGHT

Bringing Local Seafood to New England Cafeterias

School cafeterias are powerful entry points for shaping lifelong healthy eating habits in students, and seafood represents one of the most nutritious foods you can put on a cafeteria tray. By introducing students to local seafood at a young age, our Sea to School program helps build both current and future demand for Gulf of Maine species, ensuring that students grow into informed consumers who support local food systems. For many immigrant, refugee, and asylee families, seafood is also a familiar staple, and culturally relevant recipes can create a sense of connection and belonging in the cafeteria. Throughout multiple taste tests where students could try anything from Congolese coconut lime Acadian redfish to seven-spice Iraqi fish, an average of 75% indicated they loved the new dishes.

Read more:

Building Climate-Ready Communities

The best climate adaptation strategies reflect a deep scientific understanding of climate impacts and are grounded in community values. We believe it is critical to gather the information that communities are asking for so they can make informed on-the-ground decisions that keep their needs top of mind. By developing fine-scale flood hazard information and pairing that data with local voices, we help businesses and communities develop tailored climate-action plans and make informed investment decisions. By providing climate and data literacy education to school-age children and co-developing lesson plans with educators across New England, we are preparing the next generation of community leaders to thrive in a changing climate.

196 sea level observation sites established to date

38 community engagement events & presentations

$1.6M secured for community resilience projects

KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION

Developing Localized Flood Information with Communities

Maine has committed to managing 1.5 feet of sea level rise in 2050 and 4.0 feet in 2100. What does this mean about flood risk to communities' local coastal infrastructure and ecosystems? By installing a network of tide gauges across the state, facilitating conversations within communities, engaging educators, and producing flood preparedness resources, we are building social and technological infrastructure to expand the collection of local data and leverage it for building coastal resilience.

CASE STUDY SPOTLIGHT

Days Ferry Landing

In Woolwich, repeated storms damaged the historic bulkhead at Days Ferry Landing, a site essential to fishing access, emergency response, and community life. Our team helped the town secure federal hazard mitigation funding and structure in-kind contributions to meet the required match—unlocking a path to rebuild the bulkhead at no direct cost to the town while strengthening it for the future.

KNOWLEDGE **TO ACTION**

Overcoming Financial Barriers to Climate Action

Time after time, our conversations with municipal officials, blue economy business leaders, wharf operators, and even concerned coastal community members reveal one major barrier to taking climate action: figuring out how to pay for it. Our climate financing capacity aims to overcome this obstacle by providing the support and building the capacity needed to get capital flowing—and in the process, turn reports on the shelf into shovels in the ground.

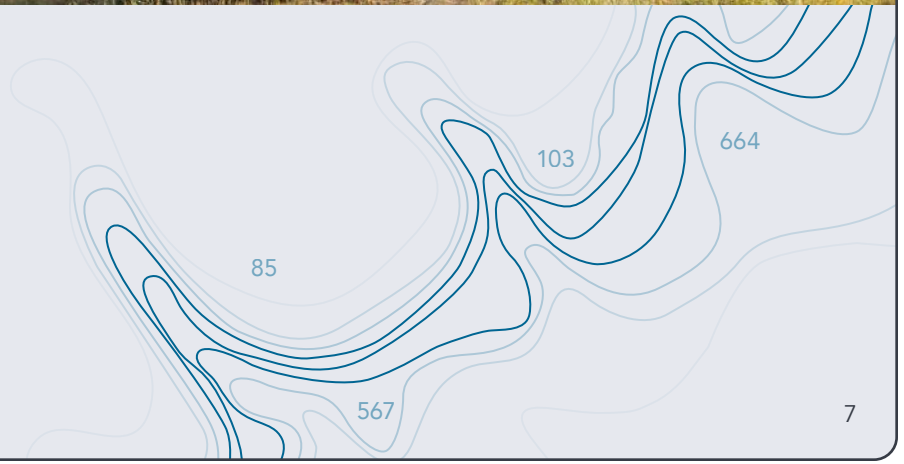
COMMUNITY SCIENCE SPOTLIGHT

Coastal Flooding: Storms and Sea Level Rise

Help your community gather important flood impact data and inform resilience decisions.

As someone who focuses on the science, design, and regulatory aspects of coastal projects, when it comes to grants, I'm no expert. Without Nikki's (GMRI's Climate Finance Specialist) efforts, we would be dead in the water. Her ability to grasp the needs of the project, and to organize them into the specific criteria to fit within grant funding requirements, is what made this project possible.

Tim Forrester
Woolwich Community Member & Director of Coastal Resources Flycatcher, LLC



Developing the Blue Economy & Supporting Working Waterfronts

Coastal economies in the Gulf of Maine are entering a phase of accelerating opportunities while undergoing a multitude of social and environmental changes. Enabling business and technology growth that benefits our economy while ensuring access for communities who have historically relied on the ocean for their livelihoods is key. By connecting research across natural and social sciences to inform resource management, supporting young blue economy businesses, protecting working waterfronts, and conducting workforce training programs, we are building communities, ecosystems, and economies that can thrive together.

2000+ Marine Resource Education Program participants to date

22 aquaculture apprentices across 3 cohorts

37 blue tech startups supported

KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION

The Next Wave of Maine's Blue Economy

You are the people to help us think about how to move into the future.

Chellie Pingree
US Representative

The 2025 Blue Economy Investment Summit convened public officials, investors, researchers, and entrepreneurs from 13 of Maine's 16 counties, as well as D.C., Canada, and Norway, to explore how the region can translate ocean innovation into durable economic growth. Hosted in partnership with the ClimateTech Incubator at Northeastern University's Roux Institute, this year's event examined how the region is catalyzing growth across the North Atlantic. The summit highlighted that our region possesses all the elements that indicate it is well-prepared to become a globally-competitive cluster: scientific depth, entrepreneurial energy, strong community trust, and a growing pipeline of innovative companies.

KNOWLEDGE **TO ACTION**

20 Years of Empowering Fishermen to Engage in Fisheries Science and Management

Since 2005, GMRI has facilitated the Marine Resource Education Program (MREP), a nationally recognized training program that prepares fishermen, managers, scientists, and other fisheries stakeholders to navigate and participate in complex fisheries management processes. It reached new heights this year as it expanded to include all eight federally managed fishing regions across the U.S. as well as piloted an aquaculture program to further support diversification of fishing opportunities.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Supporting Coastal Infrastructure that Benefits All of Maine

Although the Penleys call the inland county of Oxford home, they understand that Maine's economy and identity have long been shaped by the coast, much like their own lives. Dick's family roots reach back to Georgetown Island and Wendy's upbringing near the water on Long Island instilled in them both a lifelong appreciation for the communities and livelihoods shaped by working waterfronts.

From their lived experiences, the Penleys know how the loss of working waterfront ripples far beyond the shoreline—affecting jobs, supply chains, and the economic vitality of communities across the state. Their support helps protect these essential coastal spaces, ensuring that Maine's waterfronts remain active, accessible, and productive for the people and industries that depend on them today and into the future.

"Over the past 40+ years we've seen privatization, gentrification, and a minimization of the working part of the waterfront. The working Maine mentality that we adore so much is, 'Well, we can do it. We've always done it. We'll fix it,' but it's not a complete awareness of just how urgent the situation is. That's where GMRI linking into this work for us is so critical."

Wendy and Dick Penley

Supporting Low-Carbon Solutions

Energy solutions in the Gulf of Maine, including marine renewables, grid resilience, efficiency improvements, and coastal electrification, offer environmental, economic, and societal benefits to the region. By characterizing nature-based energy solutions, helping fishermen improve their gear's energy efficiency, and convening core stakeholders including fishermen, developers, and scientists to co-design solutions, we can work toward a lower carbon future together.

1st publicly available electric boat charger launched in Casco Bay

10 electric vehicle chargers installed on the waterfront

32 fishermen interviewed to inform fisheries and offshore wind coexistence decisions

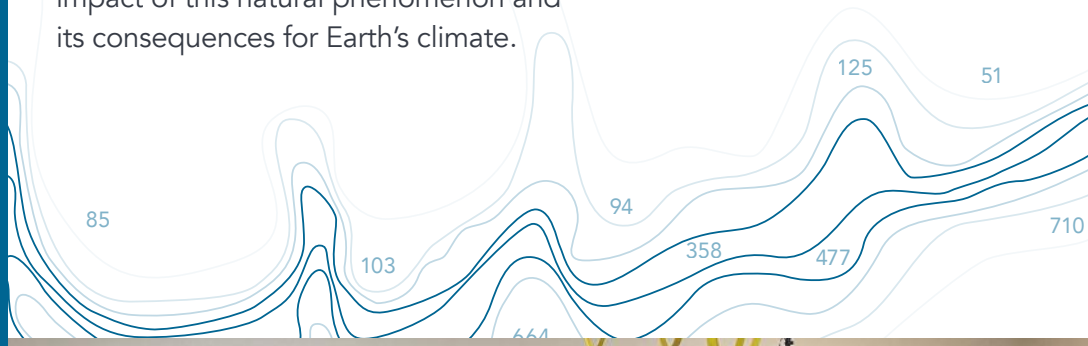
KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION

Understanding Natural Carbon Solutions

Carbon dioxide is the most prevalent greenhouse gas produced by human activities, trapping heat in the atmosphere and contributing to the planet's warming. The ocean acts as a powerful carbon sink, naturally sequestering carbon through its biological carbon pump. Our scientists are conducting work to quantify the impact of this natural phenomenon and its consequences for Earth's climate.

> *The biological carbon pump is a planetary-scale climate regulator. It's one of the most important, and least visible, processes helping to stabilize Earth's atmosphere.*

Jérôme Pinti
Senior Scientist, Biological Oceanography



PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

Converging Energy Efficiency, Economic Development, and Climate Preparedness

> *By combining the City's planning and policy work with GMRI's scientific expertise, we're creating practical solutions that protect our working waterfront, grow our economy, and prepare Portland for the future.*

Mark Dion
Mayor of Portland

This year, we formalized our partnership with the City of Portland, positioning Maine's largest city as a national leader in coastal climate adaptation. The collaboration has already advanced several infrastructure investments, including renovating Wright's Wharf by raising the bulkhead height to protect against flooding, adding additional berthing spaces to increase working waterfront access, and piloting an electric boat charging station in partnership with the Greater Portland Council of Governments, the Island Institute, Aqua SuperPower and Maine Ocean Farms. Together, these efforts strengthen climate preparedness while supporting economic activity on the waterfront. Recognizing that energy efficiency is a first line of defense in lowering carbon emissions, further electrification of the waterfront continued in our parking lot, where 10 electric vehicle chargers were installed.

KNOWLEDGE **TO ACTION**

Reducing Cod Bycatch with the ULOT Net

Atlantic cod bycatch remains a significant challenge in the fishing industry, particularly in regions like the Gulf of Maine. With strict quotas in place, fishermen face economic pressures when cod are unintentionally caught while targeting other species. Since 2017, we've collaborated with colleagues from academia and the fishing industry to develop nets that reduce fuel consumption and improve catch selectivity. Ultra Low Opening Trawl (ULOT) nets cut cod bycatch by 48% without impacting the catch of target species. This year, we launched our third round of ULOT refinements, further adapting the gear to operate effectively across multiple bottom types. Six additional fishermen have modified the net for their specific fishing conditions, and we are working to quantify catch performance and calculate return on investment. These metrics will help fishermen understand both the conservation and economic benefits of adopting this gear.

Research Highlights

50 publications in peer-reviewed journals

10 undergraduate summer internships supported

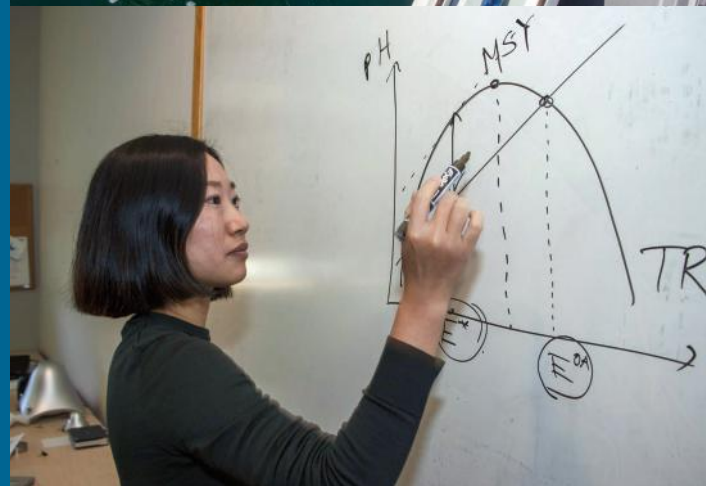
54 active grants and contracts

Dive into the details in our research progress update:

Across disciplines, research in 2025 focused on understanding rapid ocean change, resolving connections between atmospheric, oceanic, and ecological processes, and translating scientific insights into tools and knowledge that inform decision-making. We expanded our expertise to better address ongoing ecosystem changes, adding capacity in Physical Oceanography, Spatial Dynamics, and Coastal Dynamics.

We turn knowledge into action, using the tools of science to enhance our understanding of complex issues and engaging with communities to co-develop durable solutions.

Janet Duffy-Anderson
Chief Scientific Officer



SPOTLIGHTED PUBLICATIONS

Global distribution, quantification, and valuation of the biological carbon pump
By: Jérôme Pinti and co-authors
Published in: Nature Climate Change

Contrasting species distribution model predictability under novel temperature conditions
By: Andrew J. Allyn, Katherine E. Mills, Alex Kerney, Dylan Pugh, Riley Young-Morse and co-authors
Published in: Diversity and Distributions

Innovations in the climate assessment development process
By: David R. Reidmiller and co-authors
Published in: Climatic Change

Spatial density and habitat associations of Atlantic cod on the Northeastern US Continental Shelf
By: Katelynn Lankowicz, Graham Sherwood, and co-authors
Published in: Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences

Education Highlights

17,576

students engaged across all our educational programs

1,400

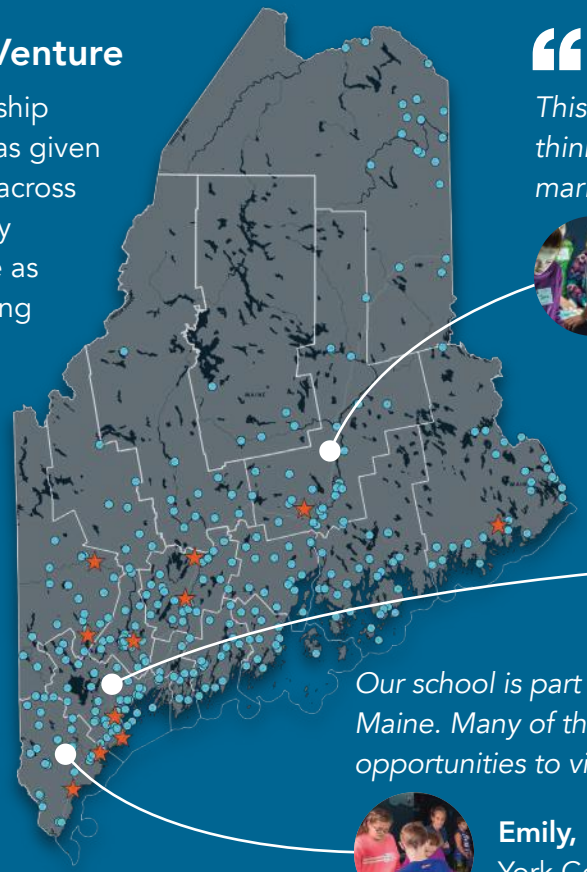
educators supported via resources, curriculum, and connections

20 Years of LabVenture

For 20 years, our flagship education program has given 5th- and 6th-graders across Maine the opportunity to experience science as scientists do—by asking questions, analyzing data, and drawing conclusions.

Participating Schools in LabVenture:

- ★ Annual attendance since 2005
- ● Has participated between 2005-2025



This made me so excited that I have been thinking about going to college in the field of marine science.

Thomas, Student
Penobscot County

I think LabVenture was the only hands-on ocean education I really had and I remember just being blown away.

Zoe, Alum
Cumberland County

Our school is part of large district in rural, interior southern Maine. Many of these students do not have a lot of opportunities to visit the seaside, let alone a real, working lab.

Emily, Educator
York County

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Expanding Access to Science, One Classroom at a Time

As LabVenture marked its 20th year and surpassed 175,000 students served, Tom's of Maine's support ensures that students across the state have access to high-quality science experiences during a formative moment in their education, building curiosity and confidence that can shape future learning and career paths.

Tom's of Maine is dedicated to protecting nature for future generations. Such an important piece of that is how we support the next generation of stewards of our planet. What we love about the LabVenture program is that it's increasing awareness and enthusiasm for science, which is such a critical part of how we build this next generation.

Michelle Waring
Steward for Sustainability and Everyday Good, Tom's of Maine

The Impact of Giving

Planning for the Future They Believe In

Bud and Cheryl Higgins

For Bud and Cheryl Higgins, giving began as a way to support the future they hoped to see—one shaped by knowledge, opportunity, and healthy communities. Through more than twenty years with the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, they've seen how their values can be turned into action in the world around them.

Bud's connection to the coast began early, hauling lobster traps as a child and learning firsthand how livelihoods depend on the health of the water. Today, he finds encouragement in work that focuses not just on problems, but on possibilities. "Change is inevitable," he reflects, "so to change proactively and in good directions is absolutely fundamental." What inspires him most about GMRI is seeing science translated into real outcomes—healthier waters, new opportunities in the blue economy like aquaculture, and a future shaped by learning and adaptation.

For Cheryl, the connection began in the classroom. Bringing her students to LabVenture, she saw how hands-on science could spark curiosity without intimidation. And the educational opportunities didn't stop there, she says, "it's not just the education of the future generations who are going to run the world, but we, as adults, have learned so much at the programs that we've come to. We're lifelong learners, and we certainly found a home at GMRI for that."

As they look to the future, their legacy plans reflect a simple philosophy: they aim to continue supporting the region they adore and the potential it holds far into the future. Or, as they describe it, to "transmit their love of this region" in ways that inspire innovation and stewardship in the next generation.

> *Change is inevitable. So to change proactively, and in good directions, is absolutely fundamental.*

THE GULF OF MAINE LEGACY SOCIETY

Considering the legacy you would like to leave for your family and your community is a deeply personal and powerful decision. We can look to the future, together. Scan the QR code to learn more:

Flexibility That Fuels Impact

Craig Wheeler & Origin Spring Foundation

Craig Wheeler and his family's foundation, Origin Spring, are typically very intentional about directing their philanthropy to project-based work. Their giving is guided by clear criteria: does the work address climate challenges, and does it help preserve or create jobs? But this year, when many nonprofits were faced with widespread funding uncertainty, the family made a deliberate exception—one rooted in the belief that enabling an ambitious vision for the future requires resilient organizations.

Drawing on his experience leading organizations through difficult periods, Craig began thinking less about specific projects and more about what it takes for institutions to maintain momentum toward their goals through uncertainty. "I was trying to imagine what it would be like sitting in the CEO chair when deep cuts were being made in GMRI's traditional funding sources," he recalls. "So, I reached out to GMRI's leadership and asked them if it would be helpful if we shifted our 2025 donation to give them the discretion to fill the holes."

It required Craig to temporarily suspend their foundation's charter rules, but ultimately, the family agreed that shifting from directed to unrestricted funding wasn't a departure from the foundation's mission; it was an extension of it. Craig explains that while they usually fund projects, the family agreed that this moment called for something different. "If these organizations don't survive, you will lose the benefits of their work to date and severely limit future progress toward many important goals."

The decision reflects the family's trust in GMRI, their belief in its community-driven approach, and the importance of ensuring that organizations working toward long-term solutions have the resources to keep advancing their work. "In so many areas, you need a community-oriented program to really make a difference. That's where GMRI excels."

For Craig, the move also aligns with the foundation's broader philosophy. Named for the idea of a spring at the headwaters of a river, Origin Spring seeks to spark change that grows outward. "If we do things right, that drop becomes a stream, becomes a river," he says. "We're trying to be the origin of the spring—putting the money in so you can get the river flowing."

In a moment when flexibility can determine whether critical work continues or stalls, the choice to trust and to adapt may be the most impactful investment of all—helping ensure that progress underway today can continue building toward what comes next.

> *You need a community-oriented program to really make a difference. That's where GMRI excels.*

Craig with his wife Lynn

2025 Financial Update

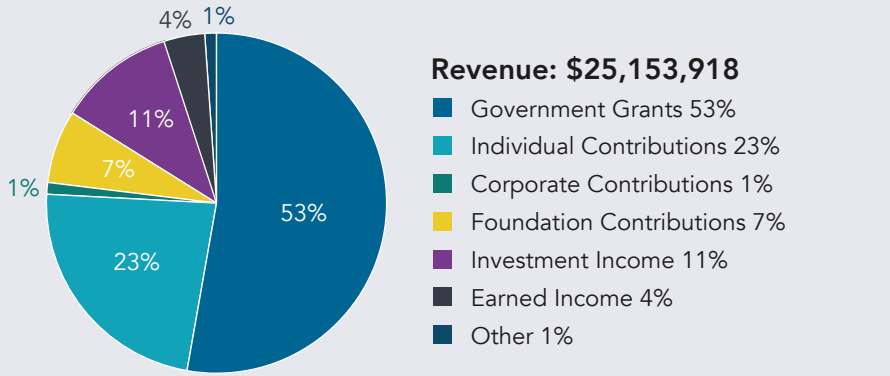
The Gulf of Maine Research Institute maintains a strong and resilient financial foundation, supported by a diversified mix of revenue sources and a healthy liquidity position. Our FY2025 revenue totaled $25.2 million, driven by $13.4 million in government grants and contracts, $7.6 million in contributions, and $4.1 million from other sources. This balanced revenue portfolio reduces dependency on any single source and supports long-term stability. Our financial resilience is further reinforced by operating reserves totaling $10.8 million. This provides the Institute with flexibility to maintain consistent program delivery.

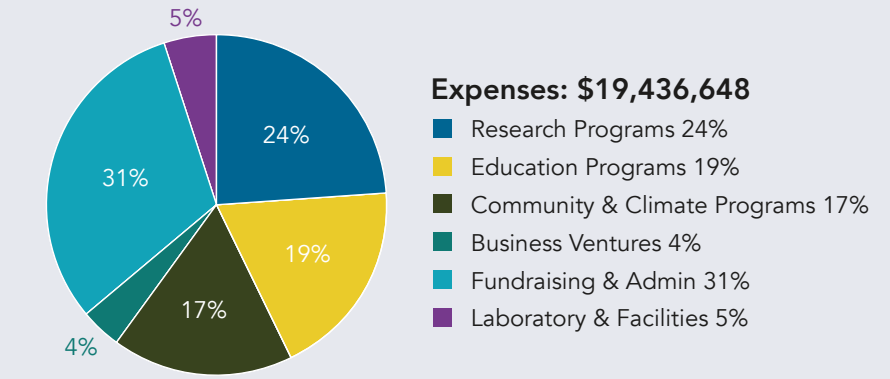
GMRI's endowment plays a vital role in ensuring long-term financial stability and mission sustainability. As of June 30, 2025, the endowment's market value totaled $19,375,047, reflecting disciplined stewardship and adherence to our Board-approved Investment Policy Statement. The annual distribution to support operations is 4% of the trailing 12-quarter average market value, providing a stable and predictable source of support for ongoing operations while protecting the endowment's long-term growth.

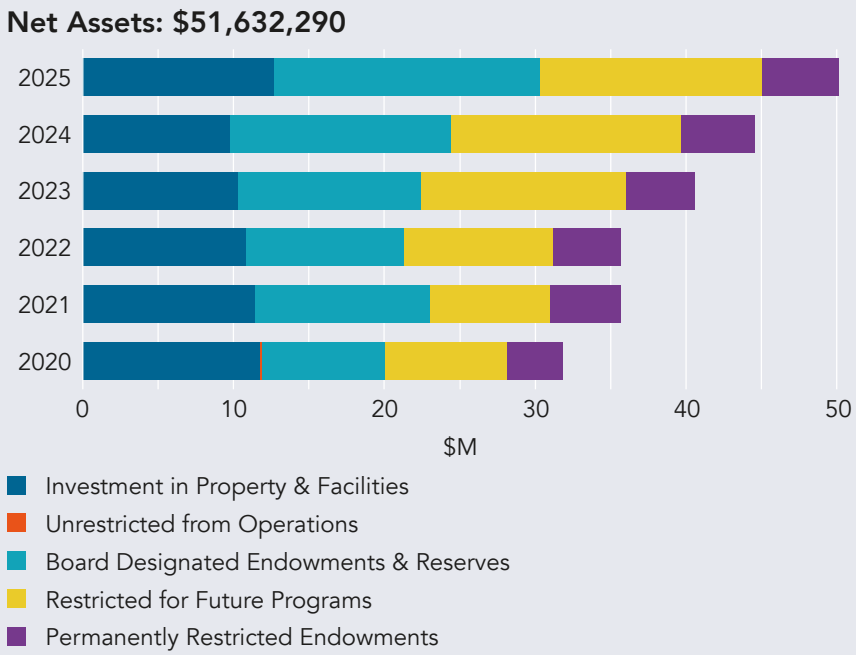
As we continue our mission to develop and deliver collaborative solutions to global ocean challenges, we remain committed to disciplined resource management. With strong liquidity, diversified revenue streams, and mission-centered program investments, GMRI is well-positioned to sustain ongoing operations and advance long-term strategic goals.

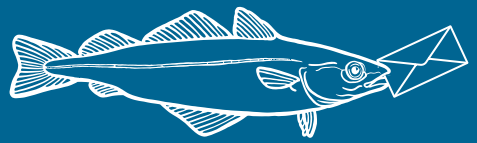
GMRI's audited financial statements are reported on a consolidated basis with its subsidiaries.

Sarah Clifford
Director of Finance









Join Our Community

gulfofmaine

GMRI

gulfofmaineresearchinstitute