

grist



re·de·fi·ning green
(from A to Z)

ANNUAL REPORT



*Grist sets the agenda by showing how green is reshaping the world.
We cut through the noise and empower a new generation to make change.*

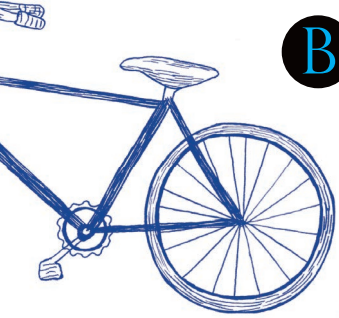
Illustrations by Amelia Bates; Photography by Daniel Penner
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BEACON
IN THE SMOG

grist

BEHOLD, A NOTE FROM ...



...CHIP GILLER, OUR FOUNDER



Grist has been around since 1999—eons in the internet age—and I'm proud to say we have changed the conversation. We yanked the story of the environment out of the sweaty clutches of treehuggers, building a younger, more vibrant movement through irreverence and digital-storytelling savvy. We drew new connections between green issues and art, religion, poverty, food, injustice, and other topics. We punched, always, above our weight class; millions of people around the world have engaged with our content and taken action.

What we're setting out to do now is tell the story of a sustainable, just future and how to get there. Our agenda-setting journalism shows that real solutions are taking shape, that the world doesn't have to concede to climate change, and that everyone can play a role on humanity's winning team. (Tryouts to be held at a date TBD.)

By cultivating storytellers and convening emerging leaders, we are orienting Grist and our audience toward a future that makes sense. Why are we doing this? Because all too often, green communications—yes, even our witty and irreverent ones—have only served to freak people out. But the world needs less freaking out and more figuring out. How do we get from where we are today to a healthier, greener, more equitable future, one defined by livable cities, clean energy, a zero-carbon economy, and a resilient food system?

This isn't a story of the planet—it's a story of humanity, the pickle we're in, and the path to a better world. It's our story, it's your story, and it starts today. Let's redefine green—together.

redefine
(rē-di-fīn):
to reexamine
or reevaluate,
especially with
a view to
change

DIGGING INTO TOUGH TOPICS

At Grist, we pride ourselves on having a healthy sense of humor. But that doesn't mean we shy away from the serious stuff. As we go about our work, we keep these far-reaching questions in mind: How do we power all of humanity with 100 percent renewable energy? How do we reinvent food production to feed 7 billion sustainably? How do we build climate-resilient, energy-efficient, livable cities? How do we remake manufacturing and consumerism for a zero-carbon economy? And how do we ensure that climate "solutions" don't cause harm for the communities in their wake? No easy answers exist, but ideas and innovations do abound—and we're covering as many as humanly possible through the news, investigations, and multimedia projects that comprise our agenda-setting journalism.



EXPERIMENTING WITH NEW IDEAS

Grist began as an email newsletter when the very idea of email was new to most people. We embraced that technology and never looked back, developing a reputation for using cutting-edge tools and approaches to increase the impact of our work, from the early adoption of responsive mobile design to an in-house metrics tool that measures how long people engage with our stories (good news: we keep 'em hooked more than twice as long as the internet average). The swift evolution of the media landscape and of online technology sends a shiver down our spines—in all the

engagement minutes (in-gāj-mənt mi-nəts): the amount of time readers actually spend reading or consuming content, versus simply clicking on a link and wandering off to make a cup of coffee

best ways—because we see scads of opportunities ahead to make it possible for millions of people to access and understand the story of sustainability in a new way. Whether we are livestreaming a conversation with a climate expert or looking for ways to incorporate virtual reality into our storytelling, Grist meets people where they are and makes green come alive.

EVE ANDREWS, Associate Editor

Eve joined Grist as a member of our fellowship program, eager to develop her environmental storytelling skills. She soon climbed the Grist ladder to become a senior fellow, then a staff writer and editor. Eve redefines green through bold reporting on women's rights and culture.

FELLOWSHIPS IN THE NEWSROOM

Launched in 2014, the Grist Fellowship Program provides the chance for early-career journalists to spend six months honing their skills at a national news outlet and deepening their knowledge of green issues—and their very definition of green news. We hire writers with diverse backgrounds who bring a variety of skills to the table, from traditional reporting to multimedia whizbangery. In exchange, we offer exposure to the leading sustainability thinkers and theories of our time, real-world experience at a fast-paced news site, and the occasional pie potluck.

fellow (fe-lō),
synonyms:
friend, comrade,
partner, associate,
coworker, colleague

As next-generation storytellers, our fellows are uniquely suited to report on the path to a sustainable, just future; they have reported on everything from tiny houses to regional food systems, from clean-energy battles to the psychological impacts of climate change. We are eager to expand this successful program with an eye toward creating new opportunities at Grist and seeding a national storytelling network.

Below: Grist Fellows Raven Rakia, Suzanne Jacobs, and Clayton Aldern.



GATHERING CHANGEMAKERS



GRIST / SHUTTERSTOCK

The sustainable future is coming into view, and the people building it are hard at work in communities across the country. A city councillor in Boston, a pastor in Minneapolis, an organizer in Oakland ... the list goes on. Grist is committed to drawing the world's attention to the thousands of innovators, organizers, and visionaries developing and implementing sustainable solutions and to the very real promise they represent. Through online and offline convenings, we elevate people making change—especially those who hail from outside the conventional environmental movement—and generate momentum for the future.

HOW WILL OUR WORLD LOOK IN 100 YEARS?

IDEAS FROM OUR TEAM:



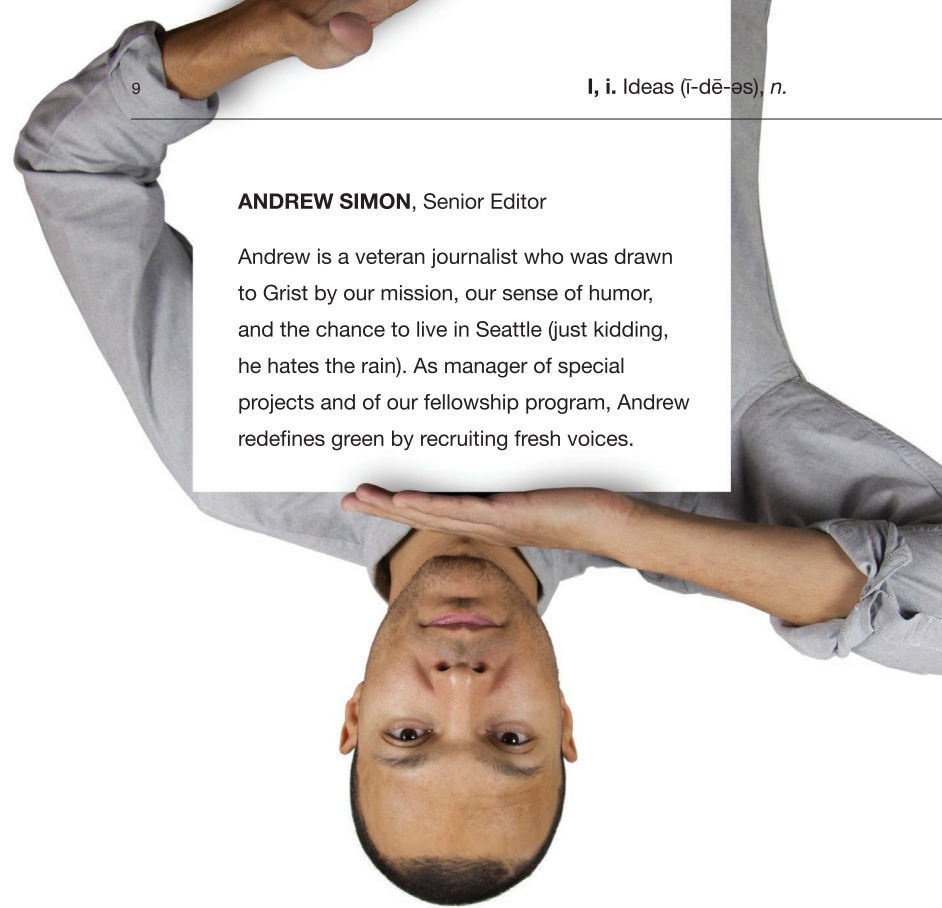
"Folks in the future will still be dealing with the consequences of climate change (that's not going away anytime soon). But with any luck, they'll have cast aside fear, doubt, and denial in favor of working together to adapt and cope, embracing a world that makes sense."

"THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT FIGHTS FEWER BATTLES. REFINERIES HAVE SHUT DOWN; TRANSPORTATION RUNS ON ALTERNATIVE ENERGY; LEAD CONTAMINATION IS UNHEARD OF; GREEN SPACE IS MORE EVENLY DISTRIBUTED; AND ASTHMA IS A DISTANT MEMORY. THE BIG SIGNS OF PROGRESS AROUND CLEANER AIR, SOIL, AND WATER BENEFIT EVERYONE EQUALLY."



ANDREW SIMON, Senior Editor

Andrew is a veteran journalist who was drawn to Grist by our mission, our sense of humor, and the chance to live in Seattle (just kidding, he hates the rain). As manager of special projects and of our fellowship program, Andrew redefines green by recruiting fresh voices.



"The world is now running on 100 percent clean energy from wind, solar, and smart hydropower."



"Does this implanted virtual-reality chip make my neck look fat?"

"We'll have a food system that produces healthy, inexpensive food to meet basic human needs."

"You can buy birth control at 7-11. In Big Gulp cups!"

"Sprawl is a thing of the past. Instead, we built complete streets that accommodate all modes of transportation."

From left: Executive Editor Scott Dodd; Staff Writer Heather Smith; Video Producer Daniel Penner.

JUST THE FACTS

Founded: 1999

Headquarters: The Emerald City of Seattle, Washington

Motto: A beacon in the smog

What we publish: Website, emails, social-media feeds, and syndicated content jam-packed with news, interviews, explainers, and advice

1999 audience: 100

2016 audience: 2.5 million monthly

Employees in 1999: 1.5

Employees in 2016: 30, in Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Boston, New York, and Washington, D.C.

Honors on the books: Heinz Award, National Conservation Achievement Award, Population Institute Global Media Award, Independent Publisher Book Award, James Beard Award runner-up, *TIME* Hero of the Environment.

CODY PERMENTER,
Social Media Manager

Cody has reinvigorated Grist's social-media efforts with an injection of strategy and smarts since arriving in late 2015. Whether he's hosting a Facebook Live event or stoking discussion on our latest story, Cody redefines green with digital savvy and down-home Texan charm.

PHOTO BY GABRIEL AVILA-MOONEY / SHUTTERSTOCK

KNOWLEDGE IS SOCIAL POWER

450,000: Facebook and Twitter followers in 2016

15: Percent growth in followers vs 2015

94: Percent growth in engagement (likes, shares, retweets) vs 2015

9,021,380: Minutes people spent watching Grist videos on social media in one month in 2016

17: Years of viewing time that amounts to

250: Average number of Grist social posts each week

52: Tabs open on our social-media manager's monitor at any given time



LOOK, WHAT LOVELY...

“proof that covering one of the most pressing concerns of our time can be fun”

“a moving piece”

“a terrific piece”

“Grist could have spun the issue and profited off the resulting traffic. But they didn't. They pushed against the biases of their base.”

“dares to be different”

“an excellent deep dive”

“trustworthy”

“an excellent post on the deep uncertainty of our future”

“a great exploration”

“details the impact the GOP majority is likely to have on the climate battle”

“takes political reporters to task”



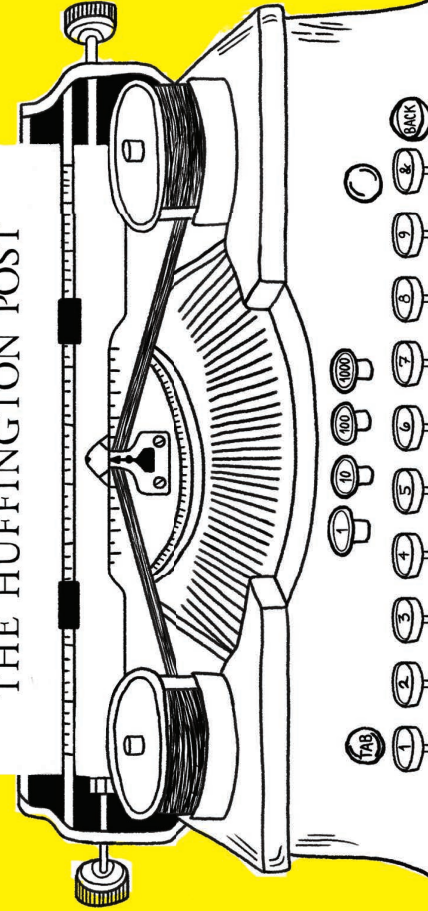
Vox

WIRED

The New York Times

GLAMOUR

THE HUFFINGTON POST



... MEDIA CITATIONS

When other media outlets cite our work, we know we're achieving our goals of reaching a broad audience and shaping the conversation.

NOW A FEW WORDS FROM ...

WE ARE WORKING ON
REDUCING THE CARBON
FOOTPRINT OF OUR CITY.
YOUR ARTICLES ARE
ALWAYS HELPFUL!

YOU'VE INFLUENCED MY EATING HABITS.

I AM A TEACHER
AND I USE GRIST
TO RESEARCH
CLIMATE CHANGE
FOR MY CLASS.

GRIST HAS BEEN A SOURCE
OF INFLUENCE EVER SINCE I
BEGAN READING ITS ARTICLES.
I AM 17, AND AN ASPIRING
ECOLOGIST, HOPING THAT I
WILL SOMEHOW FIND A WAY
TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE
WAY HUMANS INTERACT WITH
THEIR ENVIRONMENT.

YOU HAVE
CONVINCED ME
THAT I MUST
TAKE ACTION.

IF GRIST DIDN'T MAKE
ME LAUGH SO HARD,
I'D PROBABLY SCREAM.

I SHARE WHAT I LEARN HERE
WITH EVERYONE I CAN,
INCLUDING ELECTED OFFICIALS.



*We inspire 65 percent
of our readers to take action!*

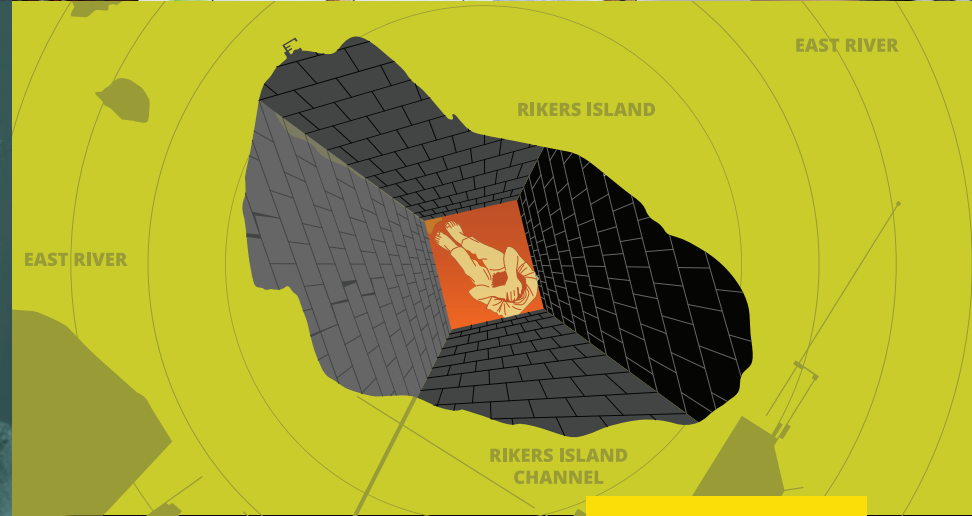
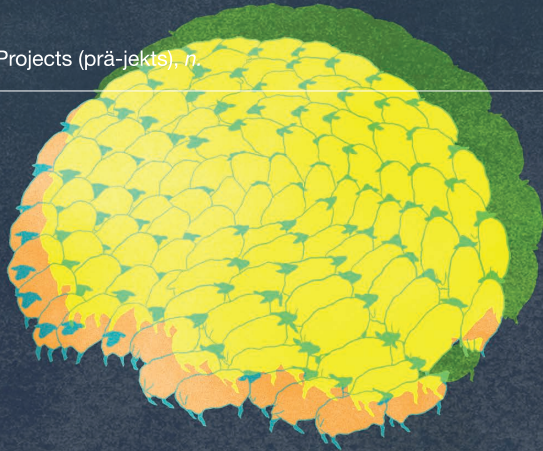
... OUR READERS

I'M AN ORGANIC
FARMER FROM THE
NETHERLANDS
AND I READ GRIST
ALMOST DAILY.

I'M CONSIDERING GETTING
OUT OF THE OIL INDUSTRY
AND GETTING INTO
RENEWABLE ENERGY.

I ORGANIZED A
PEOPLE'S CLIMATE
MARCH IN MY CITY
BECAUSE OF
WHAT I SEE ON
GRIST.





From top left, clockwise: Climate on the mind: A Grist series; Video explainer on feeding the world while fighting poverty; A sinking jail: The environmental disaster that is Rikers Island; Grist 50: The 50 people you'll be talking about in 2016.

PROJECTS OF WHICH WE ARE QUITE PROUD

Our special projects team wrangles big topics into beautifully told stories with a purpose. Whether we're explaining the ins and outs of organic agriculture or profiling the faces of today's environmental movement in our Grist 50 list, our goal is to start conversations and inspire change.

special project
(spe-shəl pră-jekt):
1) a planned piece of work that requires extra effort and time
2) an all-out, no-holds-barred, doughnut-fueled, crazy-making-but-ultimately-worth-it collaboration at Grist

RACHEL, OUR BOARD CHAIR ...

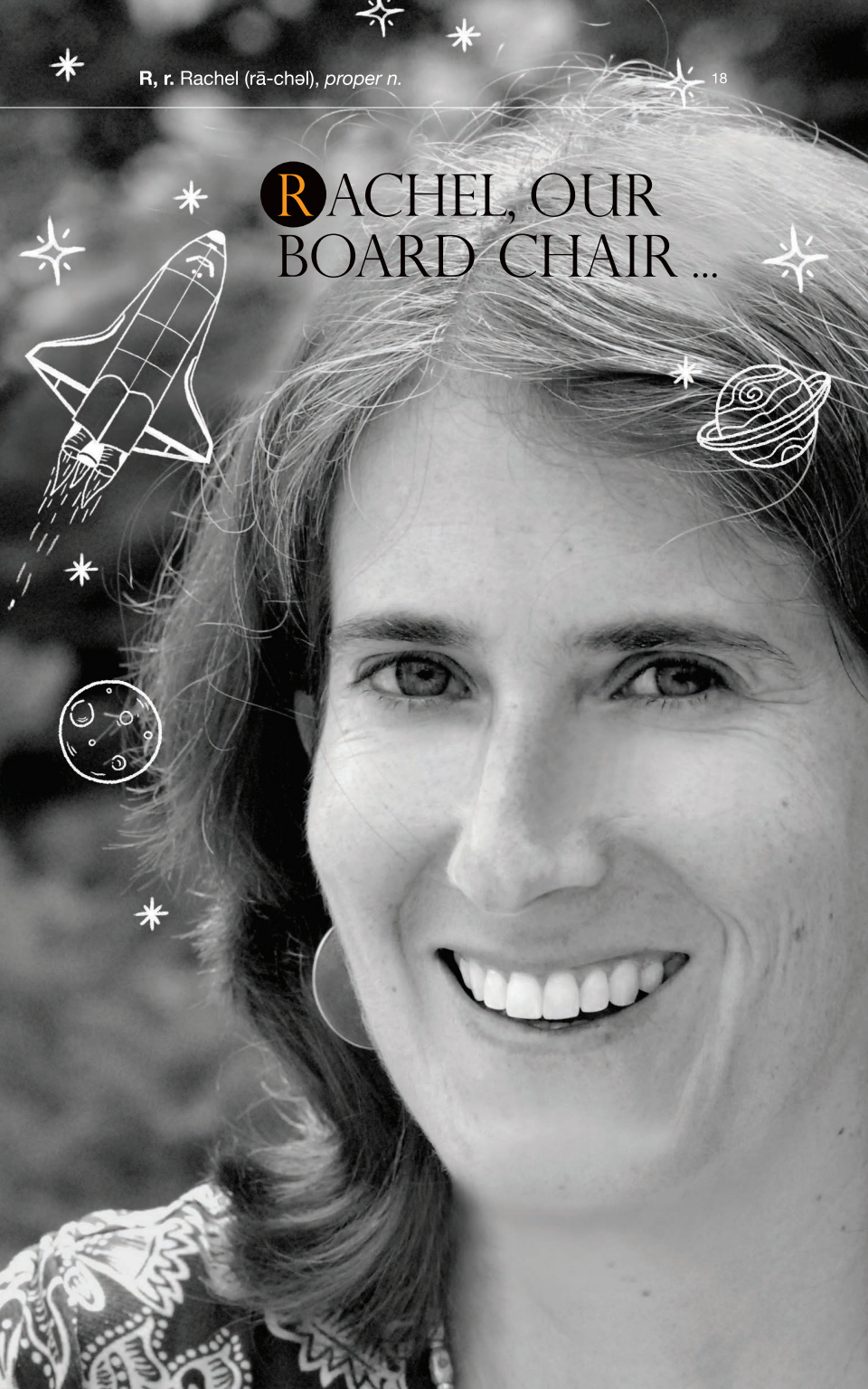


PHOTO BY PEG SKORPINSKI

... SAYS A FEW WORDS

When I was younger, I hated to make plans. This meant that I ended up sleeping in a few train stations, airports, and other unsavory places when traveling. But now that I'm a college professor and Chair of the Grist board, planning is an inescapable—and frankly, kind of enjoyable—part of my life. And I have to say, the plans we've been making lately around here are truly energizing. I've been on the Grist board for eight years, heading it up for the past four, and Grist has accomplished some impressive things during that time: doubled our monthly audience to more than 2.5 million readers; created partnerships with mainstream media outlets that put climate and sustainability news in front of millions more; and helped shape the conversation among the press and policymakers. Since our founding, we've helped bring the climate crisis to the fore in many ways.

But all that pales compared to where Grist is going next. Over the coming year, we're going to apply our expertise in raising awareness of *problems* to raising awareness of *solutions*. We'll leverage our position as a nonprofit news leader to make people aware of the real promise the future holds, spotlighting the path to a more just, healthy, and sustainable world. Through offline convenings, intensive newsroom training, investigative journalism, and innovative uses of emerging technologies, we'll do everything we can to demonstrate that a different kind of future is truly within reach.

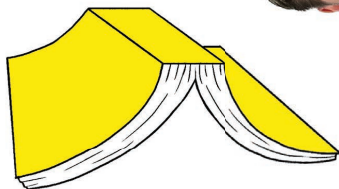
It won't necessarily be an easy shift to make—inside Grist or in the world at large—but the stakes are too high to stick with business as usual. It's time to make a plan that moves humanity forward—and that's the kind of planning I can get behind.

— **Rachel Morello-Frosch**, *Grist Board Chair*
Professor of Environmental Science, Policy, and Management,
University of California, Berkeley

THIS IS A LOOK ...

FY2014 OPERATING REVENUES

Grants: **\$1,965,281**
 Major Donors: **\$1,018,197**
 Reader Support and Other Gifts: **\$207,890**
 Advertising/Earned Income: **\$205,747**
 In-Kind Donations: **\$117,347**
 Miscellaneous: **\$20,272**
TOTAL: \$3,534,734



FY2014 OPERATING EXPENSES

Program: **\$2,502,551**
 Management: **\$362,281**
 Fundraising: **\$489,560**
TOTAL: \$3,354,392

FY2014 PROGRAM EXPENSES*

Editorial: **\$1,361,021**
 Reader Expansion: **\$538,799**
 Tech and Design: **\$602,731**
TOTAL: \$2,502,551

(*Subset of Operating Expenses)



Bekah Cardwell, Director of Finance and Administration

... UNDER THE COVERS OF OUR BOOKS

FY2015 OPERATING REVENUES

Grants: **\$1,992,712**
 Major Donors: **\$1,751,985**
 Reader Support and Other Gifts: **\$223,731**
 Advertising/Earned Income: **\$296,178**
 In-Kind Donations: **\$51,726**
 Miscellaneous: **\$16,987**
TOTAL: \$4,333,319



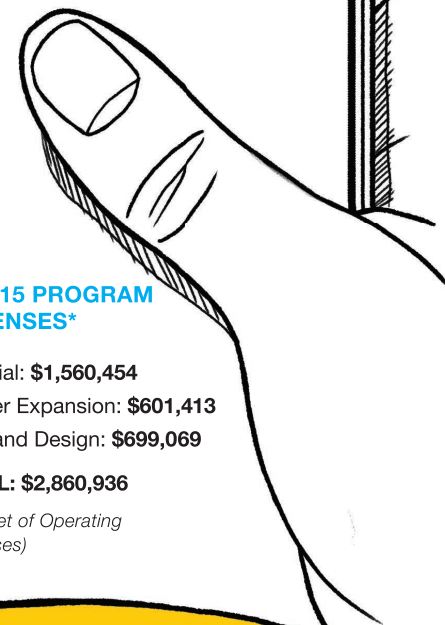
FY2015 OPERATING EXPENSES

Program: **\$2,860,936**
 Management: **\$431,110**
 Fundraising: **\$524,263**
TOTAL: \$3,816,309

FY2015 PROGRAM EXPENSES*

Editorial: **\$1,560,454**
 Reader Expansion: **\$601,413**
 Tech and Design: **\$699,069**
TOTAL: \$2,860,936

(*Subset of Operating Expenses)



Grist's fiscal year runs Oct. 1–Sept. 30. Year-end surpluses, anticipated during board-approved budgeting processes, were used to build up a reserve fund.

VERY GENEROUS SUPPORTERS

We are definitively grateful for the generous financial and in-kind contributions of the following individuals, foundations, and others during fiscal years 2014 and 2015. Limited space in this book prevents us from listing smaller donations, including the thousands of gifts we receive from our wonderful readers every year. We thank you all, from A to Z!

For more information or to make a donation, please visit www.grist.org/give

or contact:

PATRICK SCHMITT
206.876.2020 x210
pschmitt@grist.org

GRIST
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donor (dō-nər):

- 1) a person who gives
- 2) our hero!

FY14 and FY15 (\$1,000+)

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WE CAN'T THANK THEM ENOUGH

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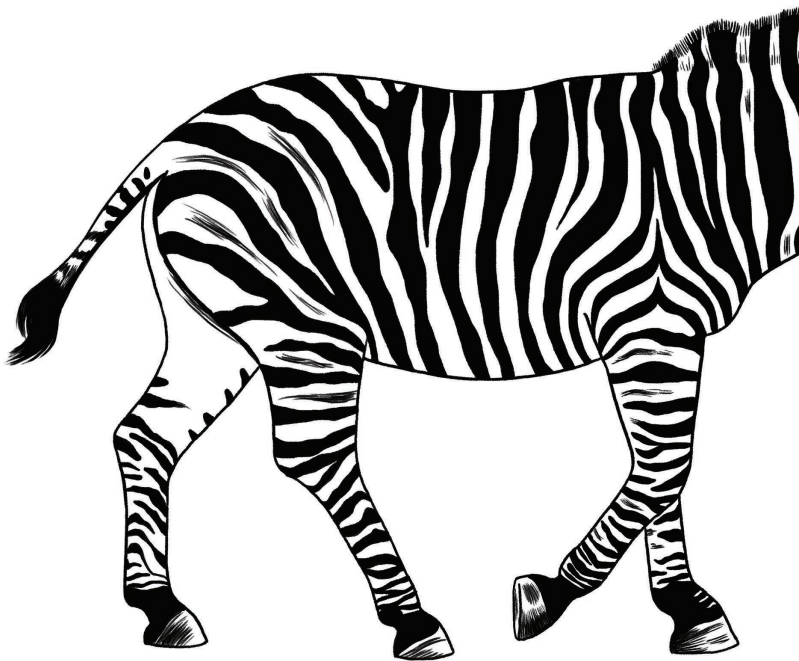
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... YIELD BIG HEARTS AND BRAINS

Z END.
ZAT'S ALL,
FOLKS.



grist

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