



# ECOLOGICAL HEALTH NETWORK

March 2026

---

**We are excited to share the highlights of 2025 and offer a preview of what's on the horizon for the Ecological Health Network in 2026.**

We deeply value the meaningful relationships we've built and remain dedicated to strengthening them. These connections are essential to advancing our mission of accelerating the practice, understanding, and awareness of ecological restoration—vital for both human health and the ecosystems that sustain us.



EHN partner [LARREA](#) from Neuquen, Patagonia Argentina, continue with their research and development of [educational curriculum for restoration of degraded Araucaria forests](#). Shown here are young Mapuche students helping sow tree seeds. Credit: Daniel Pérez.

---

## EHN as a bridge builder

The Ecological Health Network serves as a bridging organization, connecting restoration sites, programs, and people. By bringing together scientists, practitioners, community members, and

others involved in restoration, we help facilitate information and resource exchange and coordinate joint, multidisciplinary and inter-professional research and action related to ecological restoration, human health and wellbeing. As a result, restoration projects are learning from one another, aligning scientific work, identifying important knowledge gaps, and raising awareness among the public and policymakers about the far-reaching benefits of restoring degraded ecosystems.

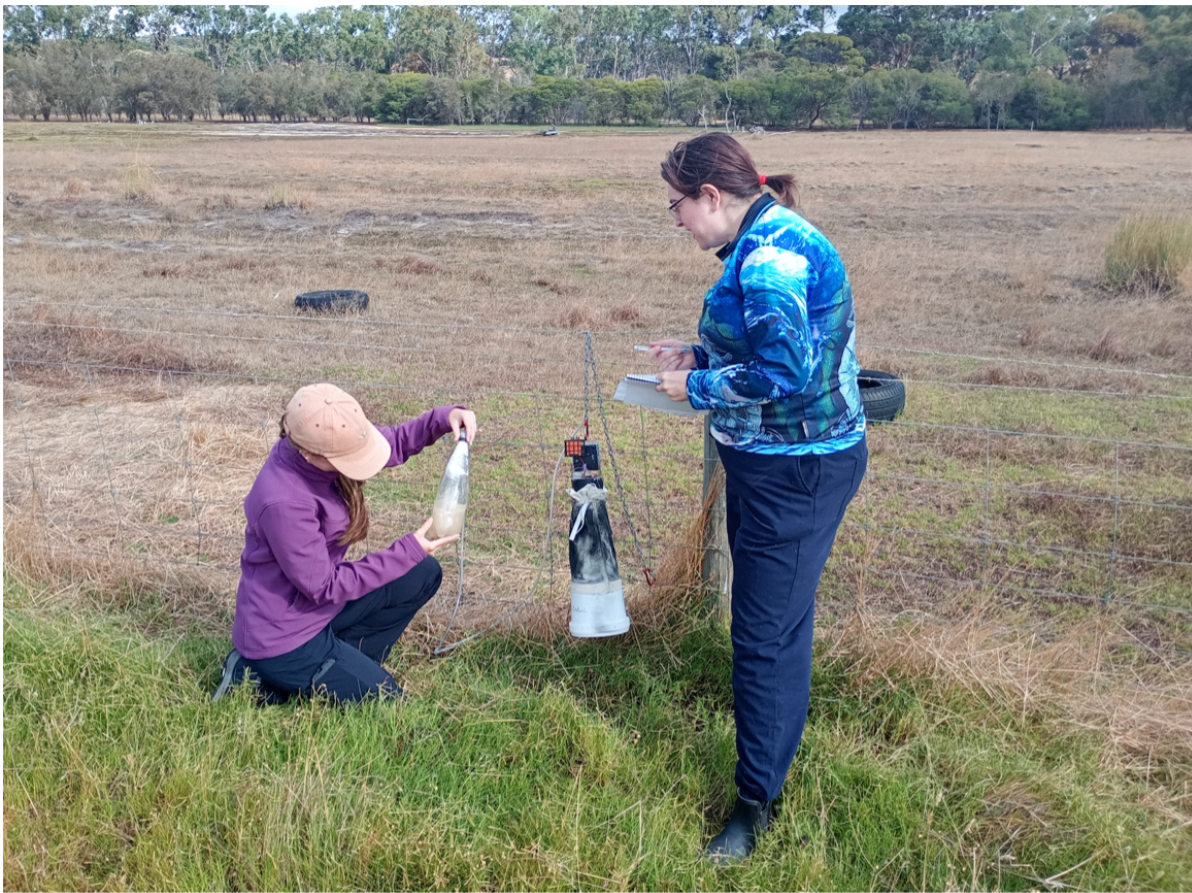
This work is of critical importance, as nearly three-quarters of the Earth's land-based ecosystems and two-thirds of the ocean have been severely altered or degraded. Ecological restoration offers effective ways to reverse some of this harm. It is one of the most hopeful and practical tools we have to help nature recover its health and resilience and to build a healthier future for all.

## Highlights from our Global Research and Action Network

In early 2025, EHN launched the [Healthy Ecosystems, Healthy People \(HEHP\) Initiative](#) to help strengthen the evidence base for how conserving biodiversity and restoring ecosystems may influence human health (see our new paper in [Environmental Conservation](#)). The initiative began to take clear form and direction when James Aronson and Eve Allen, EHN's US Northeast Program Director, traveled to Australia to meet with Adam Cross and Phil Weinstein (EHN Board Members), Jessica Stanhope (EHN Research Fellow), and Peter Speldewinde (EHN Collaborator) in Perth, Albany, and Adelaide. Potential HEHP sites are now under development with collaborators in Argentina, Brazil, Spain, France, and the United States You can learn more about HEHP on our [website](#).

As a follow up, in December 2025, Peter hosted Jessica and Phil, members of the HEHP Steering Committee, for a workshop in the region of Albany, southwestern Western Australia that also included Keith Bradbury founder and president of [Gondwana Link](#) one of the largest conservation and restoration projects in Australia and a founder member hub of EHN. The purpose of this workshop was to explore ways to lay the needed groundwork to develop a Healthy Ecosystems, Healthy People site in the region of Albany.

In 2026, Peter Speldewinde (EHN Collaborator), supported in part by HEHP seed funding, will continue to collect data on mosquitoes for his study on how ecological restoration of wetlands could help fight the scourge of the mosquito-vectored [Ross River virus](#). One of the best approaches for trapping mosquitoes is to use dry ice, but because of the remote location it is cost prohibitive and logistically challenging to obtain. In this context, students working on the project are currently trialing alternative approaches to mosquito trapping.



EHN pilot funding has stimulated research into the genomics of Ross River virus in the Great Southern region of Western Australia, as well as studies on the most effective attractants for collecting Ross River virus-carrying mosquitoes and the use of mosquito acoustics for preliminary surveys. Students from The University of Western Australia, Cleo Gregory (left) and Chloe Pinker (right), are pictured setting mosquito traps at the edge of Twin Creeks Reserve, adjacent to a salt scald—an area of land where salt has built up in the soil, making it bare and difficult for plants to grow—on degraded land. This work contributes to understanding how restoration may influence mosquito populations as potential disease vectors. Credit: Peter Speldewinde.

### **Other recent good news related to the HEHP initiative**

Jess Stanhope (EHN Research Fellow), with the help of EHN intern Logan Bailey, has recently completed a first draft of a key EHN publication long in the making: *The effect of participating in ecological conservation or restoration on human health and wellbeing: a systematic review*. The other HEHP team members are working on the manuscript and we look forward to sharing this important contribution in 2026.

### **Much is happening in South America as well!**

Last May, EHN supported the convening of 45 participants from Brazil, Peru, and Argentina at its newest member site, [Matutu Reserve](#), located in the highest mountain range of the fragmented and endangered Atlantic Rainforest biome in southern Minas Gerais, Brazil. The gathering, co-sponsored by Matutu and EHN, aligned around a shared vision for launching the regional network, [Alliance for Biocultural Restoration and Ecohealth in Latin America](#).

The Alliance will advance shared priorities including large-scale biocultural restoration, restoration that improves human health, and addressing the growing risk of wildfires—including mega-fires—across Latin America. This threat now affects even the Amazon and the Mata Atlântica (Atlantic Rainforest), ecosystems whose biota have not experienced fire as an ecological force for millennia.



Top left and top right: Participants gathered at the Matutu Foundation in May 2025 for the launch of the Alliance for Biocultural Restoration and Ecohealth in Latin America. To learn more about the vision and aspirations of this Alliance, [read the declaration](#) (in English, Spanish, and Portuguese!). Credit: Matutu Foundation Archives. Bottom right: Shipibo leader Don Mateo (left) and Dr. Dana Sana (UK) presenting on the Shipibo Ethnobotanical Reserves for Biocultural Restoration and Ethnobiomedicine Projects. Credit: Matutu Foundation Archives.



EHN President James Aronson returned to Brazil in October 2025 to continue meetings with Manno França, president of the [Matutu Reserve](#), and head of the Matutu Fire Brigade. Together they made follow-up visits to Piracicaba and São Paulo, for meetings with restoration ecologists Ricardo Rodrigues and Pedro Brancalion; landscape ecologist Jean-Paul Metzger and colleagues at the University of São Paulo; Health and Helathcare researcher Elizeth Leão and her team at the Albert Einstein Research and Teaching Hospital; and Rafael Chaves of the São Paulo State Secretariat for the Environment.

James will return to Brazil in October 2026 to attend the first in a planned series of trans–Latin American thematic workshops organized by the [Alliance for Biocultural Restoration and Ecohealth in Latin America](#), beginning with a focus on the urgent challenge of wildfire risk across the region. These trips are helping to forge a promising path toward new partnerships that foster collaboration that promotes biocultural restoration and advances ecohealth efforts in South America!



James Aronson, Ricardo Rodrigues, and Pedro Brancalion in Piricicaba, Brazil in October 2025.

---

## Bioregional Restoration in North America

In North America, we also continue to make good progress. One of the Ecological Health Network's core programs, and its longest standing project, is the development and coordination of the [Northeast Seed Network](#), which aims to increase the availability of diverse, source-identified native seed and plant materials to meet the growing demand for ecological restoration, sustainable landscaping, and regenerative agriculture in that bioregion, all of which increasingly rely on native plants for stewarding regional biodiversity and a strong connection to place. The network brings together more than 130 partners, including seed farmers, nursery professionals, land managers, Tribal Nations, restoration practitioners, home gardeners, seed bank curators, botanic gardens, and land trusts. It currently spans 13 U.S. states, from Virginia to Maine, and extends into Atlantic Canada. Learn more about our partners and members on our [Network Directory Map](#).

Since its [launch in 2023](#), the network has catalyzed six sub-regional partnerships and hubs, implemented training and educational initiatives, developed shared protocols and standards for growing native plant material, and initiated planning for shared seed supply infrastructure. These efforts are already increasing species diversity in commercial nurseries, strengthening the use of regionally adapted genetics, and creating new livelihood opportunities for growers, including farmers and nursery owners. **Read more about our 2025 accomplishments and what lies ahead for 2026 our latest [Northeast Seed Network newsletter](#).**



Left: Northeast Seed Network members and partners gathering in May 2025 at Oak Spring Garden Foundation in Upperville, VA. Participating organizations include: [Ecological Health Network](#), [Clifton Institute](#), [Virginia Tech](#), [University of Maryland](#), [Oak Spring Garden Foundation](#), [The Nature Conservancy](#), [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#), [Natural Heritage Program/Virginia Pollinator Smart Program](#) and [MARSB](#). Right: Restorative Landscape Coalition gathering for their third in-person workshop in November 2025 at Bartram's Garden in Philadelphia, PA. Participating organizations include: [Virginia Tech](#), [Ecological Health Network](#), [Pinelands Nursery](#), [Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens](#), [Ecological Health Network](#), [Native Plant Trust](#), [Bartram's Garden](#), [Mt.Cuba Center](#), [The Ecotype Project](#), [Highstead Foundation](#), [Oak Spring Garden Foundation](#), and [Mt.Cuba Center](#).

## Looking ahead to 2026

In 2026, the [Northeast Seed Network](#) will focus on developing educational resources for members and helping to support virtual and in-person webinars and workshops. With funding from [Partners for Climate Action Hudson Valley](#), over the summer and fall, we will be able to support, in collaboration with NSN partners, **nine in-person gatherings and on-farm workshops** from West Virginia to Maine to increase knowledge around seed collection, cleaning, and production. These events will help strengthen relationships across our regional alliance of seed partnerships and hubs. For more information, view our [calendar of events](#). EHN will also be co-facilitating the creation of a Regional Seed Strategy, with other members from the [Restorative Landscape Coalition](#), a Northeast Seed Network working group composed of the region's leading botanic gardens, arboreta, seed banks, and allied organizations. Coalition partners include [Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens](#), [Native Plant Trust](#), [Bartram's Garden](#), [Mt. Cuba Center](#), [Highstead Foundation](#), [Oak Spring Garden Foundation](#), [Virginia Tech](#), [Pinelands Nursery](#), the [Ecotype Project](#), among others. The Regional Seed Strategy will help ensure our region has the diverse, source-identified native seed and plant material needed for activities like forest and grassland restoration, watershed protection, and wildlife habitat. By aligning partners around shared priorities, best practices, and clear implementation pathways, it will strengthen national visibility and demonstrate the Northeast Seed Network's capacity to steward significant investment.

In early 2026, we partnered with [The Nature Conservancy](#) (TNC) to develop a Priority Native Tree Species lists for forest restoration across the 18-state [Appalachian region](#). This project is building on work that we did with TNC in 2024 to co-create a [Priority Native Tree Species List for New York State](#). This effort brings together scientists, nursery professionals, Indigenous horticulturists, and land managers to address tree seed and sapling supply bottlenecks and help scale up restoration across one of North America's most biodiverse, climate-resilient, and carbon-rich landscapes.

With support from the [Volgenau Climate Initiative](#), we will co-lead a national research effort with the [Savanna Institute](#) to better understand and tree seed supply-demand networks for working lands and forest restoration. We will examine how tree seed is collected, processed, and distributed, identify bottlenecks and capacity gaps, and better understand how relationships across the supply chain influence tree seed availability, diversity, and quality. The resulting national assessment will provide actionable recommendations to strengthen coordination, advance shared adoption of improved seed standards, guide targeted investments where market mechanisms are insufficient, and build a more resilient tree seed system for working lands and forest restoration.



Red maple (*Acer rubrum*) and pine (*Pinus* spp.) saplings from the Saratoga Tree Nursery, Saratoga Springs, New York. Credit: Eve Allen.

## Advancing Restoration Through Scholarship and Stories

Alongside advancing collaborative research and networking initiatives, we support publication and dialogue that strengthens the evidence base for ecological restoration while also elevating practical insights from the people assisting the recovery of degraded and damaged ecosystems around the world. [Learn more on our publications page.](#)

The [Natural History of Ecological Restoration blog](#) is “a natural history notebook” that EHN has been co-curating with [Missouri Botanical Garden](#) and the [Restoration Ecology Lab at Virginia Tech](#) for the past decade. Through this blog, we aim to share stories about the people, places, organisms, institutions, and interactions involved in ecological restoration projects to help accelerate the restoration movement and a global transition towards a culture of restoration.

We are actively looking for more contributors. **If you have a great idea for an NHER blog post, use this [form](#) to send us a pitch with a brief description.** For guidance on pitching an NHER story, review our [author guidelines](#).

Our ongoing Special Theme in the journal [Environmental Conservation](#), focused on Conservation and Restoration for Healthy Environments and People will be accepting submissions until 30th June 2026. This theme explores integrative thinking and on-the-ground solutions to conservation and ecosystem restoration initiatives that – regardless of labelling – contribute to arresting and reversing the environmental disasters of the Anthropocene, and their human health and wellbeing consequences. A broad range of papers will be considered, and we particularly encourage those that advance multidisciplinary collaborations in the science and practice of conservation and restoration for health. **Read the editorial [here](#).**

## We are grateful for your partnership and participation

We look forward to another year of working towards our mission of accelerating understanding and awareness among scientists, policymakers, practitioners, and the general public, of the feasibility and potentially enormous long-term benefits of ecological restoration for human health and the ecosystems on which we depend.

We are a young and small nonprofit organization, yet we feel we have begun to make meaningful impact—especially in two areas: advancing research that explores how restoring degraded ecosystems may improve human health, and building collaborative networks that connect restoration efforts by supporting and coordinating regional to global partnerships that are advancing the science and practice of ecological restoration.

Next year, we will celebrate ten years since our founders, James Aronson, Laura Orlando, and Neva Goodwin, came together with a simple but ambitious vision: to build a global network that could weave together ecological restoration, regenerative practices, and human health. From the beginning, EHN has been rooted in collaboration, drawing strength from the meaningful relationships and discoveries that emerge when people work across disciplines, professions, ways of knowing, and geographies.

As EHN grows, so do the ways we collaborate. Sometimes it's through field visits, workshops, and convenings, other times through joint writing projects, data sharing, or carrying out collaborative research. What remains constant is our commitment to listening, learning, and helping to build bridges across cultures and continents.



*Passiflora trisecta*, northern Peru. Credit: Thibaud Aronson

Every contribution, no matter the size, plays a vital role in helping us achieve our vision of an ecologically healthy relationship between humanity and the biophysical environment. We are deeply grateful for all the support and contributions we receive. It has allowed us to hire new staff members to sustain and expand our efforts. **Read more about the EHN Team [here](#).**

**Make a Donation**

*The Ecological Health Network is a registered public charity with the I.R.S.  
Our EIN is 85-3484507.*

Connect with us!



Ecological Health Network, Inc. | 11 Lowell St | Cambridge, MA 02138 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!