



**2024 Annual Report**



**Arranged By: Raymond Bieri III**

# RC&D Council Overview

Since 1967 The Shawnee Resource Conservation & Development Area, extends across the lower 16 counties of Illinois.

In order to accomplish organizational goals, we strive to maintain strong partnerships with other organizations in our conservation area. Through these partnerships, and with the help of our talented and skilled Project Coordinators, we are able to create measurable change for the better, in Illinois.

## Mission Statement

*The mission of this Organization is to provide local leadership and the framework required to develop and carry out a plan of action for the conservation, development and wise use of the resources of the Area.*

### Shawnee RC&D Area



# Board of Directors

**Rudy Rice, Chairman**

**Dale Shumaker, Vice-Chair**

**Chris Evans, Secretary/Treasurer**

Tom Anderson

Tom Fisher

Caleb Grantham

Charles Nolan

Gary Pluta

David Warner

John Hemphill

Scott Wilmouth

Jean Sellar

Jonathan Voelz

Blayne Harris

Jan Phillips

## Executive Director

Raymond Bieri III

## Program Director

Cathy Poshard

## Grant Specialist

Tabitha Ayres

## Want to Get Involved?

The Shawnee RC&D is looking for dedicated professionals and enthusiastic community members to join our Council. Meetings are held four times per year. Council members are responsible for helping find new projects or conservation opportunities, networking with community and government leaders to accomplish conservation goals, representing Shawnee RC&D to the general public and informing others about the work we do. For more information about joining our council, or to submit a project or grant idea, please contact: Raymond Bieri, Executive Director, (618) 944-1736, or email [director@shawneercd.org](mailto:director@shawneercd.org).

# From the Director

Raymond Bieri III

As we enter the 58th year of operations for the Shawnee RC&D, I cannot help but marvel at the sustainability of the organization. The mission and the work of the organization has carried it through time and challenges. The work of the organization is the story that we like to tell. It is the story of acres impacted and dollars spent on conservation. This is the story we tell grantors and the public. The story of the protagonists that constantly imagine, build, and strengthen the foundation of the Shawnee RC&D, however, is often missing. What I have noticed is that those dedicated to conservation are quite humble. They work to make a positive difference for the land and for the community they serve, not for recognition. Through this annual report I hope to illuminate the dedication and integrity of our many protagonists.



To begin, the Shawnee RC&D would not be able to perform any work without the guidance and effort of our Council/Board of Directors. This year I would like to celebrate a handful of individuals that have served on the Council since at least 2012. Indeed, some of these individuals have been associated with the RC&D long before. Dale Shumaker, Rudy Rice, Tom Anderson, Tom Fisher, and Charles Nolan have truly served the RC&D extensively. The years of their service saw the federal defunding of RC&Ds nationwide, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. They are still with us after surmounting these great challenges. These individuals lead professional and personal lives that are already full with dedication and service. Yet, they conscientiously volunteer their time to help keep the RC&D running. This is true of every one of our council members. Their contribution extends beyond the furtherance of conservation in Southern Illinois. They have created economic opportunity for the many communities of the Southern 16 counties. Through these opportunities they have also made the development of human capital possible. Through their work with the RC&D, many former contractors gained necessary experience to move on to full-time positions with agencies and organizations, such as the U.S. Forest Service and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Working with the Shawnee RC&D is more than a job. The position of the organization creates a community and a subculture dedicated to collaborative conservation, education, skill development, understanding the needs of partners, and service to the community.

This year we have had three contractors move on from the organization. These include Jacob Hess, Cross-Boundary Outreach Coordinator; David Allen, Community Wildfire Protection Plan Implementation Coordinator; and Dr. Mike Baltz, Let the Sun Shine In Coordinator. Jacob contracted with the RC&D from 2017 through 2024. He began as a Forestry Technician, performing invasive species removal, forest stand improvement, construction of fire lines, and implementation of prescribed fire. Later, he became a Certified Prescribed Burn Manager. He diligently aided SIPBA and performed work for our Cross-Boundary Hazardous Fuel Reduction Project with Federal, State, and private partners. Jacob took a position with the IDNR Division of Forestry as a District Forester for Franklin, Jackson, Monroe, Randolph, and Union counties. David contracted with the RC&D from 2018 through 2024. His work has focused on the implementation of community wildfire protection plans, beginning with Pope County, and culminating with a Regional CWPP implementation project for Hardin county, Pope county, Union county, and Makanda Township. David's work significantly contributed to the RC&Ds shared ArcGIS mapping system, prescribed fire implementation, and conservation planning. Finally, Mike contracted with the RC&D from 2019 through 2024. He began by working under the original Cross-Boundary Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project and expanded his work beyond the state boundaries. He helped the Central Hardwoods Joint Venture start an LSSI initiative in Indiana. Mike also greatly increased the RC&Ds public outreach through his connections with local media. Shawnee RC&D extends our sincerest gratitude to these contractors.















## Director's Report Continued

Through FY24 we contracted with two new conservation professionals, Joe Starkey and Jacob Bushno. Both were hired to help finish off the Cross Boundary Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project. Jacob contracted with us from November 2023 through April 2024. Jacob was pivotal in helping prep large cross-boundary prescribed burn units and implement prescribed burns for several landowners. We contracted with Joe at the end of April 2024. Since then Joe has taken on coordination of the River to River Cooperative Weed Management area. Currently, he is helping coordinate non-native invasive species (NNIS) treatments for several private landowners, as well as the Shawnee National Forest.

The rest of our team includes Mike Lewis, SIPBA District Coordinator; Zack Stawicki, SIPBA Regional Coordinator; Megan Gulik, Forest Restoration Support Team Coordinator; T.J. Freeman, Forestry Technician; Sally Harris, SIPBA Crew Coordinator; and Chris Walker, SIPBA Crew Coordinator. It is the professionalism and ingenuity of each one of these contractors that creates the conditions of success for the Shawnee RC&D. Of course, we also have our Program Manager, Cathy Poshard. Cathy meticulously serves the RC&D, making sure everyone is paid on time, keeping track of reporting timelines and our match obligations. It is no doubt that the RC&D would be much worse off without these virtuous individuals.

Before I move on to discussing our project work, I would be remiss if I did not discuss our dutiful partners. As a nonprofit in the conservation world, we work with every land management agency/organization that is hosted by the bountiful landscapes of Southern Illinois. We are profoundly appreciative to our close partners in the IDNR Division of Forestry, Division of Natural Heritage, and the Nature Preserves Commission, the Southern Illinois Prescribed Burn Association, University of Illinois Extension Forestry, the U.S. Forest Service of the Shawnee, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, The Nature Conservancy and the Southern Illinois Program, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the National Wild Turkey Federation, the many Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Southern Illinois, Illinois Forestry Development Council, Illinois Forestry Association, Greater Egypt Regional Planning and Development Commission, Quail Forever/Pheasants Forever, Great Rivers Prescribed Burn Association, Prairie State Conservation Coalition, and several industrious local contractors that undertake our conservation work directly.

### Current Projects:

-  Cross Boundary Oak Ecosystem Restoration
-  Coordination and Implementation of Community Wildfire Protection Plans Phase 2
-  Southern Illinois Oak Restoration RCPP
-  Large-scale Oak-hickory Ecosystem Restoration
-  Enabling Volunteer Fire Departments to Engage in Cross Boundary Prescribed Burn Efforts
-  Collaborative Expansion of Prescribed Fire to Reduce Wildfire Risk
-  Cross Boundary Fuels and Habitat Improvement
-  Integrating Southern Illinois Prescribed Fire and Wildfire Risk Reduction
-  Oak Reforestation
-  Implementing Prescribed Fire for Oak Restoration
-  Illinois Forestry for the Birds Pocket Guide
-  Franklin County SWCD Prescribed Fire Equipment Loan Program

**Total Conservation Dollars: \$2,597,212**

## Contractor Highlights



Mike Lewis, T.J. Freeman, and Joe Starkey after prepping a burn unit



Dr. Mike Baltz on the LSSI Field Day



Zack Stawicki at the DuQuoin Conservation Fair



Megan Gulik, Zack Stawicki, and volunteers after an FRST workday

# Let The Sun Shine In 2024

The Let the Sunshine In (LSSI) program began officially in 2016 with the award of a U.S. Forest Service (USFS) grant to hire a program coordinator. Since then, the primary responsibilities of the coordinator have been to foster communication between LSSI program participants, generate outreach and education relevant to the program, and to pursue grants consistent with the LSSI ecosystem restoration goals.

In November of 2024 the former coordinator of LSSI, Dr. Mike Baltz, moved on from the RC&D. He is now the Executive Director of Keep Carbondale Beautiful and is the newly-hired Ornithology Assistant Professor of Practice at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. All of us at the Shawnee RC&D are immensely grateful for his work furthering the mission of Let the Sun Shine In. In late February 2024, Mike hosted an LSSI field day where partners including the USFS State Private & Tribal Forestry Forest Stewardship Program Coordinator, IDNR Forestry Division Chief and State Forester, and representatives of the Hoosier National Forest, LSSI Indiana, and the Central Hardwoods Joint Venture were guided on a tour of the Trail of Tears State Forest Demonstration Area. A productive in-person meeting followed the next day. Before Mike left the RC&D he was pivotal in the creation of the Illinois Forestry for the Birds Pocket Guide and securing funding for printing 2,000 copies of the guide. Mike was also critical in the maintenance of a remarkable conservation collaborative that consists of our Illinois partners, LSSI Indiana, American Bird Conservancy, Purdue University, Central Hardwoods Joint Venture, Sam Shine Foundation, and TNC Indiana. Finally, Mike also facilitated a connection between the Shawnee RC&D, Carbondale Township, and the Carbondale Park District. Our contractors, T.J. Freeman and Joe Starkey are writing a forest management plan for the Marberry Arboretum. We are also working with the Park District, SIPBA, and the Carbondale Fire Department to implement urban prescribed fire in some city parks.



Finding funding for LSSI coordination has proven to be challenging. Due to these challenges, the RC&D Executive Director, Ray Bieri, took over coordination. Much of what LSSI does is coordinate collaborative meetings, public outreach & education, and centralized coordination of different RC&D projects. The Director sits at the perfect position to continue these duties without additional funding. Since taking over coordination of LSSI, I have convened two meetings of the collaborative, disbursed around 150 pocket guides, established a photo-point and forest inventory monitoring protocol for lands impacted by RC&D forest management, and plan public events at forest management demonstration areas. Moving forward with LSSI, I plan to continue centralized oak ecosystem restoration efforts within, and beyond, the Forest Stewardship Clusters; expand our forest management monitoring protocol to include Lidar surveys of forest structure, fire intensity/fuel consumption surveys, bioacoustics monitoring, and bird and arthropod surveys; diversifying funding sources; and maintaining connections with regional and national conservation initiatives.

**LET THE SUN SHINE IN**



## Let The Sun Shine In Continued



Photo from a monitoring plot in a managed unit of the Trail of Tears Demonstration Area



Photo from a monitoring plot in a control (unmanaged) unit of the Trail of Tears Demonstration Area



Shawnee RC&D

941 State Hwy 146W

Golconda, IL 62938

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[www.shawneercd.org](http://www.shawneercd.org)

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## Put Your Money to Work for Local Resource Conservation

The Shawnee RC&D is primarily funded by grants and agreements with federal and state agencies. Private donations help to further the mission of the RC&D by providing necessary matching funds and can be targeted toward your personal area of interest.

The RC&D can receive tax deductible donations under Internal Revenue Service Code Section 501c3. The RC&D may accept all forms of contributions including, but not limited to gifts, property, cash, stocks and securities. Feel free to contact us with any questions at 618.944.1736 or [director@shawneercd.org](mailto:director@shawneercd.org).

The RC&D offers outreach and education, on-site technical help, landowner training and education, and cost share in each of the program areas. For a detailed description of each program, please visit our website at [www.shawneercd.org](http://www.shawneercd.org).

**Your contribution can be mailed to:**

**Shawnee RC&D 941 State Hwy 146W Golconda, IL 62938**



# The Forest Restoration Support Team (FRST)

## 2024

Megan Gulik

The Forest Restoration Support Team had a meaningful year full of new members, work days, and trainings. We have logged over 400 hours of invasive species removal from FRST members and volunteers on southern Illinois private lands. We hosted 5 workdays in 2024, engaging over 35 volunteers on non-native invasive species (NNIS) treatment projects. In addition to this, we led a workshop for the Beginning Forest landowner Program on NNIS identification, ecology, safe herbicide practices, and treatment methods. We have helped empower landowners to continue working independently on their own land by providing equipment loans and were awarded the VSN Stewardship Fund to help support this endeavor. Looking forward, we are excited to continue our NNIS eradication efforts, as well as expand to other restoration projects.



# River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area 2024 Annual Report

## The River to River CWMA is a partnership between:

Illinois Department of Natural Resources—Illinois Department of Agriculture

Illinois Department of Transportation—Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge

Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge — Middle Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge

The Nature Conservancy — Shawnee Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc.

Southern Illinois University Carbondale — USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

USDA Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service — USDA Forest Service

Shawnee National Forest — University of Illinois Cooperative Extension

In April of 2024, Shawnee RC&D contracted with Joe Starkey to work under our Cross Boundary Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project. Later in August, we were awarded a state Habitat grant that allowed us to continue to contract with Joe. However, at this point Joe elected to step in and coordinate the River to River CWMA. Joe received his Bachelor of Science in Forestry from SIUC in 2013. He worked as an outdoor educator for SIUC Touch of Nature Outdoor Education Center, then as an urban tree care technician for Brian’s Tree Service, and then as a consulting forester for Long Forestry Consultation. He worked his way through the ranks at Long becoming a crew leader and later an operations manager. Joe has chosen to contract with the RC&D because of the conservation community that we foster and to have the ability to work with the regions land management agencies/organizations.

Since Joe has contacted with us, he has been helping to coordinate the following projects: Oak Reforestation and Implementing Prescribed Fire for Oak Restoration. The work of these projects centers around NNIS management training with the Forest Restoration Support Team, NNIS treatments on private lands within the Little Grand Canyon and Trail of Tears Forest Stewardship Clusters, and working with SIPBA to implement prescribed fire. Joe is also working under the Cross Boundary Fuels and Habitat Improvement project. For this project he aids in the creation of cross-boundary prescribed burn units, fire control line installation, and a treatment of invasive Japanese chaff flower at Barke Bluff Research Natural Area. In FY25 we will reconvene the RTRCWMA Steering Committee, continue work on the above projects, and setup new photo/forest monitoring plots.



**RIVER TO RIVER**  
Cooperative Weed Management Area

# Coordination and Implementation of CWPPs in Southern Illinois 2024

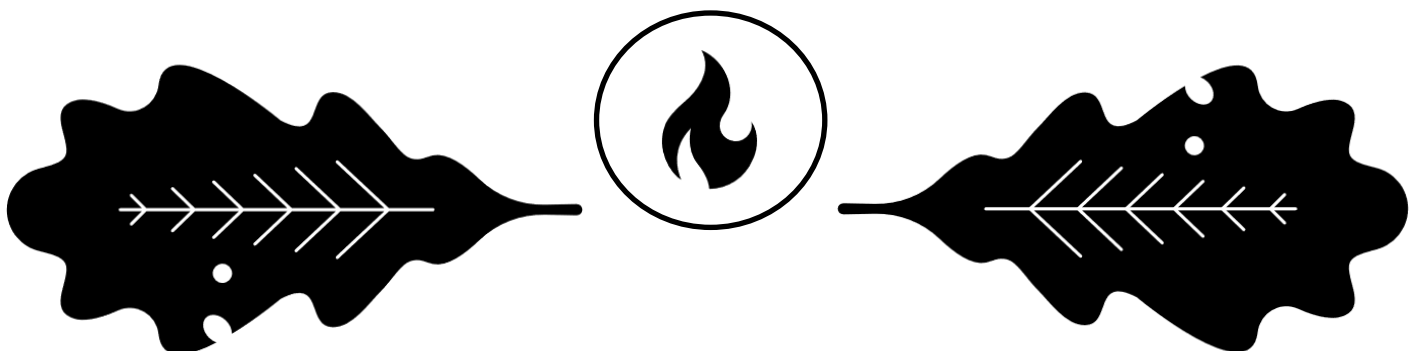
The Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) project provides regional coordination for implementing recommendations from the Pope County, Hardin County, Union County and Makanda Township Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP's). Initially developed and coordinated separately, since 2020 the vision has been to coordinate these CWPPs as a regional effort to streamline (avoid duplication of) coordinator salary needs and take advantage of a developing economy of scale in implementing Plan recommendations.

In 2024 we bid farewell to former coordinator, David Allen. David moved on from the RC&D to finally enjoy retirement. David's contribution to conservation in Southern Illinois can not be understated. After working as an IDNR District Forester for 29 years, David contracted with the RC&D to carry out implementation of Community Wildfire Protection Plans. During his time with the RC&D he has extensively improved our ArcGIS mapping system, created fire hydrant maps for Pope and Hardin County fire departments, implemented/oversaw forest stand improvement and non-native invasive species (NNIS) treatments on 3,000+ acres, aided in the planning and implementation of at least 4,000 acres of prescribed fire, held several CWPP community outreach events, helped secure several thousands of dollars in fire equipment through the Federal Excess Property Program for local fire departments, oversaw the development of forest stewardship plans for several thousands of acres, and helped secure hundreds of thousands of dollars in grant funding for various RC&D projects.

In FY24 David oversaw the development of forest stewardship plans covering 1,681 acres on 7 properties. He also contracted out 130 acres of forest stand improvement and NNIS treatments across 6 properties. David aided in the planning and implementation of 887 acres of prescribed fire. Finally, he helped initiate the Enabling Volunteer Fire Departments to Engage in Cross Boundary Prescribed Burn Efforts and Collaborative Expansion of Prescribed Fire to Reduce Wildfire Risk projects. Since David has moved on from the RC&D, Executive Director, Ray Bieri, has taken over coordination of the project with the help of SIPBA Coordinators, Zack Stawicki and Mike Lewis.

Our FY24 proposal to the USFS Eastern Region State, Private, and Tribal Forestry Cohesive Fire Strategy grant series was awarded. This project will allow us to contract with Mike Lewis, as a SIPBA District Coordinator, for five years. The project will enable SIPBA to implement 4,000 acres of prescribed fire, facilitate the installation of fire control lines encompassing 6,000 acres, and provide 4 prescribed fire trainings.

We have also been coordinating with Environmental Planning Coordinator, Kelsey Bowe, with the Greater Egypt Regional Planning and Development Commission on the development of new CWPPs. Kelsey and Greater Egypt have nearly completed a CWPP for Williamson County. They have also been awarded a Community Wildfire Defense Grant for the development of a Jackson County CWPP and have applied for a grant to fund the development of CWPPs for Alexander, Johnson, Massac, and Pulaski counties. Once the CWPPs have been completed we will work with each county to implement the actions prescribed in their plans.



# The Southern Illinois Prescribed Burn Association 2024 Annual Report

Zack Stawicki, *Regional Coordinator*

SIPBA has accomplished a great amount in the last year. We ended our 2024 burn season with 4700 acres burned, a new record. We were able to help almost 40 southern Illinois landowners with much needed burns. This was due to the great help we received from our partners and fantastic weather we received. We had a successful summer. In June we held our summer training at Dixon Springs Ag center where we were able to help train the next cohort of SIPBA members. SIPBA also held the first annual Fire Practitioners meeting where we brought all of the professionals who work in fire together under one roof. The focus of this meeting was on liability and the Illinois Prescribed Fire Act. Our fall was void of burning due to drought conditions we had. We picked things up in the winter when we started our monthly Zoom trainings. My goal with this is to help educate our members on not only fire, but other aspects of conservation. We chose the Zoom format to offer more accessible training opportunities so that we could engage with more of our members. We currently are in the middle of our spring burn season. This season had a slow start due to the intense winter weather we had. There are still a few more weeks of burning and we hope to have a strong finish.



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## Shawnee Resource Conservation &amp; Development Area, Inc.

03/24/25

## Balance Sheet

Accrual Basis

As of September 30, 2024

	<u>Sep 30, 24</u>
<b>ASSETS</b>	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
1000 · NOW Checking	59,702.12
1002 · Money Market	71,381.48
Total Checking/Savings	<u>131,083.60</u>
Accounts Receivable	
11000 · Accounts Receivable	13,356.07
Total Accounts Receivable	<u>13,356.07</u>
Total Current Assets	<u>144,439.67</u>
Fixed Assets	
15000 · Furniture and Equipment	
15001 · Accumulated Depreciation	-13,596.00
15000 · Furniture and Equipment - Other	13,596.00
Total 15000 · Furniture and Equipment	<u>0.00</u>
Total Fixed Assets	<u>0.00</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b><u>144,439.67</u></b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	
20000 · Accounts Payable	7,935.39
Total Accounts Payable	<u>7,935.39</u>
Other Current Liabilities	
1235 · SBA Loan	28,256.49
1237 · Educational Fund	910.00
1238 · Stewardship Week	960.28
1239 · CWMA	1,670.25
1240 · FRST	1,008.52
24000 · Payroll Liabilities	717.35
Total Other Current Liabilities	<u>33,522.89</u>
Total Current Liabilities	<u>41,458.28</u>
Total Liabilities	<u>41,458.28</u>
Equity	
32000 · Unrestricted Net Assets	141,923.41
Net Income	-38,942.02
Total Equity	<u>102,981.39</u>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b><u>144,439.67</u></b>

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## Shawnee Resource Conservation &amp; Development Area, Inc.

## Profit &amp; Loss

October 2023 through September 2024

03/24/25

Accrual Basis

	Oct '23 - Sep 24
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
42100 · Indirects - Grants	54,338.21
4300 · Grant Income	
430500 · Contractor Reimbursement	0.00
430600 · Contracted Services Reimburseme	180,668.01
4300 · Grant Income - Other	420.00
Total 4300 · Grant Income	181,088.01
45000 · Investments	
45030 · Interest-Savings, Short-term CD	301.94
Total 45000 · Investments	301.94
46400 · Other Types of Income	
46430 · Miscellaneous Revenue	4,983.33
Total 46400 · Other Types of Income	4,983.33
Total Income	240,711.49
Expense	
60900 · Business Expenses	
60905 · Loan Interest Expense	2,345.49
60920 · Business Registration Fees	11.00
60900 · Business Expenses - Other	37.00
Total 60900 · Business Expenses	2,393.49
62100 · Contract Services	
62105 · Contractors	15,000.00
62150 · Outside Contract Services	188,631.80
Total 62100 · Contract Services	203,631.80
62800 · Facilities and Equipment	
62870 · Property Insurance	1,317.00
Total 62800 · Facilities and Equipment	1,317.00
65000 · Operations	
65005 · Payroll Expense	579.12
65020 · Postage, Mailing Service	68.00
65030 · Printing and Copying	433.92
65040 · Supplies	2,973.49
65045 · Supplies Contractor	427.52
65050 · Telephone, Websites, WiFi	2,893.89
Total 65000 · Operations	7,373.94
65100 · Other Types of Expenses	
65120 · Insurance - Liability, D and O	5,655.40
65140 · Landowner Reimbursement	0.00
Total 65100 · Other Types of Expenses	5,655.40
66000 · Employee Payroll	52,328.88
68300 · Travel and Meetings	
68305 · Employee Travel	2,843.16
68310 · Conference, Convention, Meeting	100.00
68320 · Travel Contractor	0.00
Total 68300 · Travel and Meetings	2,943.16
70000 · Conservation Education	2,900.00
9999 · Annual Meeting	1,109.84
Total Expense	279,653.51
Net Ordinary Income	-38,942.02
Net Income	-38,942.02

