

# FirePony Creative Society

## Playa del Fuego

## Constellation Burn

### 2023 Annual Report

This document includes annual report information for FirePony Creative Society and the events Playa del Fuego 2023 and Constellation 2023. Formerly, these were provided to the community as 3 separate reports; however beginning in 2023, these reports were condensed into one document. In 2023, the Burning Man organization updated its reporting requirements to be standardized through a google form. The a .pdf of the form responses for our events can be found on the FirePony Creative Society website under Financials and Reporting <https://firepony.org/about/financials-and-reporting/>

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## Introduction

FirePony Creative Society is a 501c3 non-profit, participant-directed organization whose mission is to build an interactive, experiential, sustainable environment that encourages a culture of play, artistic creativity and freedom of expression. Our stated organizational vision is to *Attract, inspire, and nurture a diverse community to celebrate and encourage experiments in the creation of art, a culture of play, and the collective sharing of ideas and skills.*

## About FirePony Creative Society (FPCS)

FirePony Creative Society is the oversight body and fiscal and infrastructure sponsor for the Burning Man Regional Events Playa del Fuego (PDF) and Constellation. In February 2018, Playa del Fuego, Inc, a 501c3 registered in Maryland, filed for the trade name of FirePony Creative Society. FirePony Creative Society is colloquially known as FPCS or FirePony.

Historically, the signature activity of this organization has been to hold multi-day art centric camping events called Playa del Fuego (PDF). In 2017 a second multi-day art/camping event called Constellation was added. These interactive events promote artistic creativity and freedom of expression by the event participants. FPCS provides the framework and the infrastructure to allow artists such as sculptors, painters, musicians, DJs, fire performers, dancers, and any other creatively-minded individuals to come together to practice their unique forms of self-expression. FPCS also supports community-focused events through its Civic Engagement and Community

Arts (CACE) program, and has been the fiscal sponsor of events such as Burning Man Mid-Atlantic Leadership Conferences.

## A Brief History of Playa del Fuego, FirePony Creative Society, and Constellation

In 1998 an event called Playa del Fuego was created when about 20 East Coast residents, many of whom had been to Burning Man in the Nevada desert, wanted to get together closer to home to celebrate the spirit of the Burning Man event. These people joined together on the beach of Assateague Island on Maryland's coast for a weekend for the first "Playa del Fuego", or Beach of Fire. Over time, this event grew to over 150 participants, with a large team of volunteers, many of whom worked year-round to make the event come to life. In 2001, the event was moved from Assateague Island to a location in Townsend Delaware. For over a decade, PDF was a twice-yearly event in Townsend Delaware – a spring event over Memorial Day weekend, and a Fall event over Columbus Day weekend. Both of these events welcomed almost 1400 attendees.

In 2017, it became untenable to hold future PDF's in the Delaware site. Fall PDF was canceled and a new location search commenced. That fall, FPCS started a new event, Constellation, in Elkins, West Virginia. This has become a yearly event. In 2018, PDF was moved to a new location in Tamaqua, Pennsylvania for Spring 2018 PDF, and it became a once yearly event.

In 2023, the landowners of the Elkins, West Virginia property sold the property to new owners and Constellation was moved to a new location in Bedford, Pennsylvania.

As the Playa del Fuego event grew, a governing structure came into place in the form of a 501c3 nonprofit incorporated in Maryland in 2003, named Playa del Fuego, Inc. This nonprofit is now the recognized legal entity that sponsors the Playa del Fuego and Constellation events. These events are recognized as official Burning Man Regional events. The organization has grown to also support community art in the mid-Atlantic region. In February 2018, Playa del Fuego filed for the trade name of FirePony Creative Society, reflecting the growth of its scope beyond hosting the Playa del Fuego event.

Both Playa del Fuego as an event and Constellation, are experiments in collaborative community, featuring art and music. Volunteers work together to build community, utilizing the Ten Principles of Burning Man as a guide. This is a sincere experiment in creating a gift economy. One fundamental tenet of the events is the establishment of a zone that does not involve any currency-based commerce aside from the initial ticket purchase and ice purchases, thus creating a gift-based economy wherein all participants can exhibit, demonstrate, and educate others about their particular form of creativity. There are no spectators at Playa del Fuego or Constellation; everyone collaborates in some way to create the event. It's a place for radical self-expression, acceptance, inclusivity, and respect.

In 2019 FPCS formed a Community Art and Civic Engagement (CACE) program to bring the burner ethos to our local communities. The CACE umbrella encompasses community art and goodworks grants, workshops, community engagement events like a virtual monthly hangout,

and leadership conferences. In 2023, under the CACE umbrella, FPCS was the fiscal and infrastructure sponsor of the MidAtlantic Leadership conferences (MALC) for leaders in the east coast burner community.

## High Level Review of 2023

This year was an exciting and challenging one for FPCS! The BOD seated one new member, waved goodbye to two others, and successfully hosted our marquee events PDF and Constellation. Constellation moved from West Virginia to its new home in Bedford PA at the Fort Royal Farm, was able to grow in size, and sold out for the first time in its history.

In April, the Community Art and Civic Engagement (CACE) program hosted a Mid-Atlantic Leadership Conference (MALC) which was held April 21 - 22, 2023.

PDF held a camping coordinator retreat weekend which quickly become an annual tradition in team building. In 2023, the team focused on what worked and what didn't for 2023 and strategized for 2024. The camping coordinator retreat weekend has become a key recruitment tool for leadership and the PDF Planning Committee continues to grow its robust coordinator line up, improving in both experience and depth over 2022.

The FPCS Land Committee continued to meet however community engagement waned towards the end of the year.

FPCS continued the board's monthly informal online meet up known as the Burner Banter Hour, which remains well attended. The BBH started in 2020 as a way for burners to connect during lockdown and has become a key way for community members to have face to face time with board members and event leadership.

## Firepony Organizational Structure

The Board of Directors includes members who are elected by sitting members of the Board from a pool of nominees submitted by the FirePony community. Board members serve a 3-year term, and can serve at most 2 consecutive terms. The Board of Directors works to ensure that the organization fulfills not only its legal and financial responsibilities to maintain non-profit status within the United States, but that the organization meets all requirements to be a "Regional Burn" within the Burning Man network.

The Board responsibilities include engaging with landowners over event space rental. The Board oversees all organizational finances, decides on community art grants, defines short- and long-term strategic plans, maintains oversight of all official organizational communication, ensures the events comply with proper fire and safety regulations, and has the final say on participant ejections from events.

As of December 31, 2023, the Playa del Fuego Board of Directors included the following members:

- Diana “Smiles” Svendsen - President
  - Second term ends December 2025
- David Wilkes - Vice President
  - First term ends February 2024
- Miles Miner - Treasurer
  - Second term ends December 2025
- Alex “Whatever” Cramer - Asst. Treasurer
  - First term ends September 2025
- Christopher “M4” Venghaus - Vice President
  - Second term ends November 2024
- Kelly “Lotus” McMahon
  - First term ends September 2025
- Aye “Ã” Rogers
  - First term ends September 2025
- Branden “Wax” Hall
  - First term ends September 2025
- “Bucky” Tate
  - First term ends September 2025
- PJ “Hatter” Linke
  - First term ends September 2025
- Tovia Bat-Leah
  - First term ends September 2026

In 2023, new board member Tovia was seated in September and directors Ursula Sadiq and David “Karnak” Dugard retired in June, when their term limits expired. As an experienced Black Rock Ranger and long time burner, Tovia has actively embraced her role and her contributions to the organization have been invaluable.

The board met regularly through the year. Meeting minutes are posted on the Firepony.Org site under About>Board Meeting Minutes <https://firepony.org/about/board-meeting-minutes/>

The Board activities are arranged into committees. Every Board member sits on at least 2 committees. Committees are open to community members. Current 2023 committees are:

- Governance and Finance
- Community Art and Civic Engagement (CACE)
  - Subcommittee Grants
  - Subcommittee R.I.D.E.
  - Subcommittee Community Connections
  - Subcommittee MidAtlantic Leadership Conference
- Playa del Fuego Burn Event
- Constellation Burn Event
- Land
- Communications
- Technology
- Conduct

- Safety
- Ranger Council

## Governance and Finance

### Fiscal Overview

In 2023, FPCS hosted our marquee events, the Regional burns Playa del Fuego and Constellation Burn, and the Mid-Atlantic Leadership Conference. Tickets for our events were sold through our Black Rock Tickets system, leveraging PayPal to handle payments.

Playa del Fuego brought in \$109k in ticket funds from the community. These funds received were offset by event expenses of \$81k. This included grants to our communities' artists for over \$20k. Playa del Fuego ended with an excess funds of \$28k.

Constellation brought in ticket funds of \$120k from the community. These funds received were offset by event expenses of \$99k. This included grants to our communities' artists of just under \$19k. Constellation ended with excess funds of \$21k.

The Mid-Atlantic Leadership conference raised approximately \$1.8k from ticket sales, offset by \$1.5k in event expenses, primarily food and drink for attendees.

Excess funds from the events are used to cover administrative expenses of the FPCS organization. The 2023 expenses totaled \$11k, comprising \$9k for primarily IT services and \$2k for the annual BOD retreat. The remaining event excess will be reinvested back into our community for future projects including things like CACE, additional event art grants, and other initiatives.

FPCS has investment accounts with financial management firm Financial Services Advisory (FSA) which had investment gains and interest income of \$37k. At the end of 2023, we had \$640k invested with FSA. More information about FSA can be found at their website <https://fsainvest.com>. The rest of our funds totaling \$80k are in Wells Fargo and Paypal accounts.

Financial statements, including a Profit and Loss Statement for 2023 can be found on the FirePony website [firepony.org](https://firepony.org) on the page <https://firepony.org/about/financials-and-reporting/>. A copy of the 2023 report can be found here: [PDF 2023 Profit & Loss Statements.pdf](#)

# Community Art and Civic Engagement (CACE)

CACE is all about bringing the burner ethos out of the events and into our local communities and daily lives. To this end we have grants, underwrite leadership conferences, have year long outreach, and donate tickets.

## CACE Grants

Due to volunteer bandwidth, no separate CACE grant cycle was offered during 2023. Efforts were directed towards the Mid-Atlantic Leadership Conference (MALC)

## MALC 2023

The third Mid-Atlantic Leadership Conference (MALC) took place in Old Town Alexandria, VA, on April 21-22, 2023. It brought together 30 current and prospective Burning Man Regional Contacts, regional event leaders, theme camp leaders, artists, and other community leaders from the Mid-Atlantic region. The event aimed to foster discussion and information sharing, explore Burning Man's global impact within the regional context, address local challenges, and share skills and resources to support local communities. The 1.5-day program included workshops, networking opportunities, IGNITE presentations showcasing community projects, and a session dedicated to awarding a Community Art and Civic Engagement (CACE) grant.

The conference featured a keynote address on building a resilient burner community in Norfolk, VA, and sessions on topics such as developing leaders, the future of the Burning Man Regional Network, building a toolkit for radical inclusion, diversity, equity, and justice (R.I.D.E.), and writing successful art grants. An interactive "Build-a-Burn" icebreaker on the first evening successfully sparked creative energy and connection among attendees. The event was held in the private home of an FPCS board member, creating an intimate and cost-effective setting. Financially, the event had a gross income of \$1,826 and a net profit of \$347, achieved through ticket sales and donations.

Post-event feedback indicated high overall satisfaction among attendees, who particularly valued the networking opportunities, the quality and variety of sessions, and the inspiring IGNITE talks. Many attendees expressed interest in future MALC events and would recommend them to others. Despite its smaller size compared to the 2018 conference, MALC 2023 was deemed a "mighty" success, effectively rekindling connections and inspiring participants to take on new leadership roles and projects within the regional Burner community.

## R.I.D.E

In 2023, FPCS began a RIDE Ticket Program to gift event tickets to BIPOC burners and increase diversity to our events. PDF gifted 20 tickets and Constellation gifted 23 tickets to BIPOC burners.

For PDF, 19% of respondents to the Afterburn survey identified as a person of color or preferred not to say, which is up from 14.8% in 2022. For Constellation, 13.9% of respondents to the Afterburn survey identified as a person of color or preferred not to say, which is similar to 13.3% in 2022. FPCS plans to expand the program in 2024.

## Burner Banter Hour

The Burner Banter Hour was launched in Fall of 2020 to nurture community connections during COVID lockdown. This informal monthly zoom call happens the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7pm ET at [firepony.org/zoom](https://firepony.org/zoom) and is one of the ways that the Board makes itself available to the community for feedback and social time.

## Land

For many years, FirePony has been setting aside funds for land purchase. The last contribution to the land fund was in 2017 and in 2023, were commingled in the single FSA account.

In 2023, the Land visited several potential land purchase properties, which highlighted how difficult it is to find the right property. The committee learned from these visits, and was able to clarify the needs of the organization, however with lack of community participation in the committee, the committee went on hiatus at the end of 2023, pending board direction.

## Communications

The Communications committee for FirePony covers our newsletter, website content, and social media posts. We have 3 websites: [playadelfuego.org](https://playadelfuego.org), [constellationburn.org](https://constellationburn.org) and [firepony.org](https://firepony.org). In 2023 we moved the Playa Del Fuego website off of Drupal and onto Wordpress. The Constellation site and the FirePony site were already on Wordpress. All 3 sites are hosted on Dreamhost.

We have 3 newsletters: Burning Pony express for PDF, Shooting Star for Constellation, and the Firepony newsletter. We use MailChimp as our newsletter platform. Open rates for our newsletters range from 33% to 48% with the highest open rate for the newsletter with the Constellation map for our new location.

On social media, we have Instagram accounts @playadelfuego and @constellationburn and a FPCS youtube channel, which are mostly dormant.



We have a number of pages and groups on Facebook. This includes Playa del Fuego group with over 9.5k members, Constellation Burn group with over 3.9k members, and a FirePony Creative Society page with 1.6k total page followers.

These communication efforts are supported by a number of community members and board members.

## Technology

FPCS uses Google Suite for nonprofits. This allows for us to have better oversight and recoverability on documents associated with the organization.

We use a number of tools in our technology stack. These include

- Zoom for meetings and community outreach
- Slack and Discord for internal communications
- Trello for task management
- Google suite for group collaboration, calendars, and document storage
- Black Rock Tickets, a long time FPCS ticketing system originally developed by a community member. This ticketing system was retired in 2023 and a new ticketing system called Peacock, developed by Branden “Wax” Hall, began being used in 2024.

In 2023, the technology committee focused on building the new ticketing system PeaCock. While the new system was not quite ready for Constellation, the development was ongoing throughout the year. PeaCock was primarily developed by Branden “Wax” Hall, who led a team of board and community members to create this tool.

## Conduct

FPCS has a conduct committee to review reported conduct violations within our community. FPCS encourages an environment where participants can solve their conflicts themselves or with the help of the community, but we recognize that it may not always be possible. In those cases, community members may file a formal incident report with the FPCS Conduct Committee.

Community members can submit reports through any of our websites:

<https://firepony.org/conduct-committee/>

<https://playadelfuego.org/code-of-conduct/>

<https://constellationburn.org/event/event-policies-and-guidelines/code-of-conduct/>

The FPCS website has a comprehensive outline of the policy and procedures at <https://firepony.org/conduct-incident-policies-and-process/>.

## Safety

In late 2019, FPCS formed a Safety committee. In 2022, shifting committee membership impacted the effectiveness of the committee; however it continued to meet and explore safety solutions for the organization as the first post-covid events were held.

In 2023, experienced board and community members worked directly within our events to revamp and strengthen the event Safety Plans, policies, and procedures in an effort to streamline them across both PDF and Constellation. The Safety Plan includes topics like fire art & performance safety, law enforcement and ambulance procedure, missing persons, evacuation procedures, and more.

The activities of the Safety Committee and the Ranger Council, the governing body for Rangers at events produced by FPCS, overlap with each other and neither held specific committee meetings. Board members partnered with event leadership to focus on operational safety, particularly with the new site for Constellation, and Ranger recruitment for our events.

## The FPCS Events

The primary function of FPCS is to produce the sanctioned Burning Man regional events Playa del Fuego and Constellation Burn. Each event has a committee that acts as a liaison between the event production teams and the Board. In 2023, the board liaison for PDF was Hatter Smiles and for Constellation Burn the liaisons were Aye, Whatever, and Smiles

## Playa del Fuego - 2023 Afterburn Report

### PDF 2023 Overview and Highlights

PDF 2023 was a sellout. In total 1201 tickets were sold, 1096 were redeemed. This compares to 836 through the gate in 2022, with 18% of the tickets sold going to volunteer or artist directed sales. In a return to the tradition of being an all-ages event, we once again allowed children under the age of 5 to attend COVID vaccination requirement in place for 2022 was lifted in 2023

.

The consensus from the organizers is that this was the best event in recent memory, and a hugely successful burn. The weather was dry and cool, and there was more art, more theme camps, and more volunteers than ever before, including leadership roles.

We took an Post Burn community survey which reinforced the notion that PDF 2023 was well received and that PDF 2024 will also be well attended. To the question, “Please let us know how you feel about your PDF 2023 experience”, respondents reported a 96% satisfaction rate (14.8% satisfied, 81.5% very satisfied).<sup>1</sup> To the question, “Are you interested in attending PDF 2024”, respondents reported 94% extremely or very interested in 2024. (22.2% Very, 71.9% Extremely). These numbers are on par with last year, indicating the burn continues to be successful in the eyes of our community as well as our leads.

This was our fourth event at this location, and we expanded onto more of the site than we ever have before, with over 250 more attendees than last year. We are intentionally governing growth to be sure we don’t overextend our volunteer workforce and moreover to be sure that the event continues to be safe and viable. To this end we held off on releasing the final 100 tickets until critical safety departments (First-Aid, Rangers, Sanctuary) confirmed they had sufficient volunteer commitment to cover the additional people.

## Organizational Structure

PDF is entirely volunteer run and includes the Board of Directors, the PDF Event Planning Committee, Coordinators, and other volunteers.

## Event Planning Structure

The Planning Committee includes Department Coordinators, the PDF event Board Liaison, and any community participants who choose to participate in the monthly Planning Committee phone calls.

The Planning Committee organizes event operations, develops an event budget, and partners with each other and the Board of Directors to oversee the details of event planning and execution for PDF.

The following list reflects the list of departments as of May, 2023

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<sup>1</sup>The Post Burn community survey has 8% margin of error, calculated by 137 respondents for 1201 tickets sold.

- Art Grants
- Burning Arts & Response Team
- City Planning
- Communications
- DPW (Department of Public Works)
- DMV (Department of Mutant Vehicles)
- Fire Conclave
- Fire Perimeter
- First Aid
- Gate
- Greeters
- Lamplighters
- Parking
- Participation
- Planning Committee
- Rangers
- Sanctuary
- Signage (new!)
- Sound Patrol
- WWW (What Where When Guide)
- Website

## Event Art

Art is the core of Playa del Fuego. PDF and FPCS strive to support art and artists at the event.

To this end, PDF offers art grants, early entry for artists, reserve tickets for artists, and hosts onsite artist appreciation events. Art Grant Coordinators work with a team of volunteers in selecting pieces to fund for each event. Grants are available to artists and organizations that share a passion for the burner ethos and demonstrate a commitment to bringing participatory, interactive art, or forward-thinking collaborative projects to the communities. The 2023 art grant budget was 25% of ticket sales. Actualized percentage of the budget utilized for art grants was 23.4%, with the discrepancy primarily driven by artists who did not claim their award.

2023 PDF Art Grant Winners		
Project name	Artist	Granted amount
Biomorphic Lantern Sanctuary	Veronica Barker-Barzel	\$599
Bottle Art Illumination Station	Josh Tulkin	\$520
Chill Pills	Hiplomat	\$400
Color by Number Pony	Balance	\$200
Everything Changes	Sunscreen	\$380
Heart of the Jungle	Hallsi Rose / beep boop	\$1,424
Introducing The Burning Triangle	Lucifer	\$599
Jellyfish don't pay rent	Wren	\$1,343


LIT BOX	CatNip	\$1,530
Make Your Own Sock Muppets	MoJo	\$200
On Balance	Lizzy	\$250
Organ Donation Camp	Saint	\$524
Pixie Pixel Selfie Wings	Hatter	\$599
Playa Del Fuego FoxHunt	karnak	\$550
Professor Willie's Retro '60s Liquid Light Show	Professor Willie	\$407
Rainbow Unicorn	Maker	\$696
Schnard II: Balls to the Walls	Quentin	\$670
Secret Temple	Genie	\$1,503
She The Explorer	Lika	\$480
Stella the Squirrel	Charlie Ringer	\$300
Synergic Non-Euclidian Fire Portals	Laura Katz Rizzo	\$200
TABULA RASA	SKIPPER	\$350
The Bubble Tree	John O'Don once former Leprechaun	\$30
The Poop-Shoot	Timothy Ahern	\$1,104
Thirsty Unicorn of Hydration	Alice at Night	\$599
Thresholds	Adam Wise	\$317
TOTALLY TUBULAR	SKIPPER	\$320
Whither Vane	flightless	\$599
Zone of thought	Martyn with a Y	\$60
Lose your Labels	Maybe	\$508
The GOAT of all Ponies	Damien Motter	\$1,700
Rugged Putt-N-Play	Point	\$500
Temple of Ruminaton	Drakien	\$3,203

Tentacles	Alice	\$120
The Dinky Diner	Heidi K	\$105
The Escape	Cybelle Smith	\$1,080
The Stampy Unicorn	Chaos	\$175
Dara	Space Burrito	\$350

## Financial Summary

Playa del Fuego brought in \$109k in ticket sales, ice sales, re-entry passes, and community donations. These funds received were offset by event expenses of \$81k. This included grants to our communities' artists for over \$25k. Playa del Fuego ended with an excess funds of \$28k.

Expenditures for 2023 were \$81k. The three largest categories for expenses were art and art support, land and storage rental, porta potty rental, and event insurance. Event insurance was expanded in 2023 to include golf cart coverage, which increased the cost of the event insurance to 6.6k over the \$537.00 in 2022.

Profit and Loss Statement for 2023 can be found on the FirePony website [firepony.org](https://firepony.org/about/financials-and-reporting/) under the Resources menu, Financials and Reporting: <https://firepony.org/about/financials-and-reporting/>  
And a direct link here:  2023 Profit & Loss Statements.pdf

## Profit and Loss

This is a summary of the PDF financials. For complete details, see the 2023 Profit and Loss statement for FirePony Creative Society <https://firepony.org/about/financials-and-reporting/>

PDF 2023 Profit & Loss Summary	
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$109,693</b>
<b>Expenditures Include:</b>	
Art & Artist Support	\$25,684
Bank, PayPal & Transaction Fees	\$2,480
Dept of Public Works, includes portos	\$11,547
Equipment Rental	\$4,248
Event Insurance	\$6,625
Fire Team, includes firewood	\$3,329
First Aid	\$960
Parking Supplies	\$187
Gate Supplies, includes wristband	\$2,629
Meeting & Conference Supplies	\$505
Printing & Publications	\$2,666
Land Rental	\$15,090
Storage Unit	\$1,000
Security	\$1,280
All Other Dept Expenditures	\$2,620
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$80,850</b>
<b>Net Revenue</b>	<b>\$28,843</b>

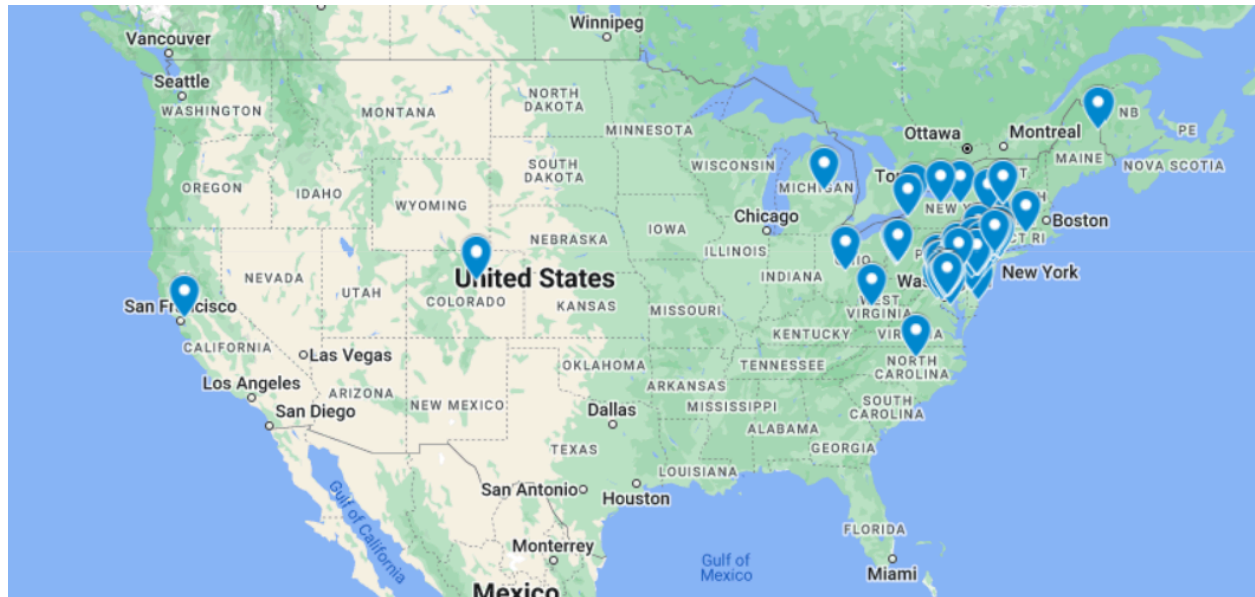
## Attendee Profile

An after event survey was taken. There were 137 responses. From the survey results, 57% were in the age range 31-45, up from 52% in 2022, and 37% of the participants were first time attendees, up from 31% in 2022. Even with this many first time attendees, 82% said they were

very or extremely familiar with the 10 principles of burning man before arrival. This number crept up to 89% at departure.

Burners of course can be playful, and it is important to remember that the survey might underestimate or overestimate values. The 137 results for ~1200 participants gives a large margin of error of 8%+/-

We also mapped the zip codes of ticket buyers. Attendees are primarily clustered on the DC-NYC corridor and across New York State, though we do have some participants spread out across the country.



## Burning Man After Burn Report

The Burning Man organization requires each burn to submit information about their event as part of the requirement to be officially sanctioned as a Regional. In 2023, BM changed the format for the submission to a google form. A summary of the key items in the report are below and the entire report can be found on the FirePony website [firepony.org](https://firepony.org/about/financials-and-reporting/) on the page <https://firepony.org/about/financials-and-reporting/>. A copy of the 2023 report can be found here: <https://firepony.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/2023-Playa-del-Fuego-Afterburn-Report.pdf>

Playa del Fuego, a sanctioned Burning Man Regional event, took place on May 25, 2023 in Tamaqua PA. The event sold 1201 tickets with 1096 redeemed. PDF offered full price, directed (reserved), discounted tickets through our Ticket Aid program and gift tickets through our RIDE program. Of the 1201 tickets, 18% were reserved for volunteers and artists.



Participation: There were approximately 70 department leads with an estimate of 600 volunteer shifts filled. There were 54 theme camps and 42 placed art projects. The burning art was 1 Effigy, 1 Temple, and 7 smaller burnable art pieces. There were almost 200 event submissions.

Financials: Playa del Fuego brought in \$109k in ticket sales, ice sales, re-entry passes, and community donations. These funds received were offset by event expenses of \$81k. This included grants to our communities' artists for over \$25k. Playa del Fuego ended with an excess funds of \$28k. A detailed P&L document can be found here <https://firepony.org/about/financials-and-reporting/>

Diversity: PDF gifted 20 tickets to BIPOC burners. Priority was assigned to the applications as: RIDE committee members (excluding white members), first time burners, first time to our event burners, and then veteran burners. We also emailed with local Indigenous Native communities to have guidance and approval on our land acknowledgement. We are presently exploring ways to engage that community more.

Sustainability: Our team piloted a recycling and composting camp as well as a MOOP tracking app. 2,449 cans, 26 plastic bottles, and eight glass bottles were deposited. 475 pieces of MOOP were collected and tracked.

#### Top Event Challenges:

- We onboarded many new leaders this year and we need to improve those processes.
- Technical issues with the ticketing system stressed the ticketing department.
- While we have an excellent signage department, the team needs to evaluate what communication needs to be added for 2024 to improve communication with the community.

#### Top Ideas and Innovations:

- We used Facebook very effectively as a pre-event communication tool in our Consent Culture campaign as well as our pre-event volunteer sign-ups. The leaders were invested in co-creating a fun online presence that generated engagement.
- We created a department for Drum Circle and the coordinator took the initiative to have several pre-burn night drumming workshops to increase participation in the burn night drum circle.
- The website was refreshed to be more interactive and content was updated regularly. The tone of the communications was light and irreverent while still conveying the important information for the event. This attitude towards communication increased the traffic to the website and the click through rate of the emailed newsletters.

# Constellation Burn - 2023 Afterburn Report

## Constellation 2023 Overview and Highlights

2023 was a big year for Constellation! The event moved to a new location at Fort Royale Farm in Bedford PA. The move to PA was popular with the community as Constellation sold out for the first time since its inception! In total, Constellation sold 1079 tickets, up from 773 sold in 2022. Approximately 9% of the tickets sold went to volunteer or artist directed sales. Constellation was challenged by the site move and limited number of volunteers in key leadership roles, both during pre-event planning and during the event on site. The new site is large and sprawling though mostly wooded areas and uneven terrain, with only one viable location for a burn field which required a long walk. A new mobility cart department was created with golf carts to pick up participants at regular stops, which was popular. Constellation also started using Pink Light Camps, which are theme camps designated as having a radio to reach Rangers and First Aid.

We took an afterburn survey which had significant changes from Constellation 2022. To the question, "Please let us know how you feel about your Constellation 2023 experience", respondents reported a 91% satisfaction rate. (53% satisfied, 38% very satisfied)<sup>2</sup> This was down from 98% in 2022. To the question, "Are you interested in attending Constellation 2023", respondents reported 82% extremely or very interested in 2024 (27% very interested, 55% extremely interested). This was down from 91% in 2022.

Some community feedback that may have contributed to the decline in satisfaction rate included general size and how spread out the burn was on the new property, not enough toilet paper in the portos, confusion on burn night with the location and dissatisfaction with the long walk to get there, better signage and lighting, and poison ivy. Positive feedback included that the event was well run and many folks loved the new location.

## Organizational Structure

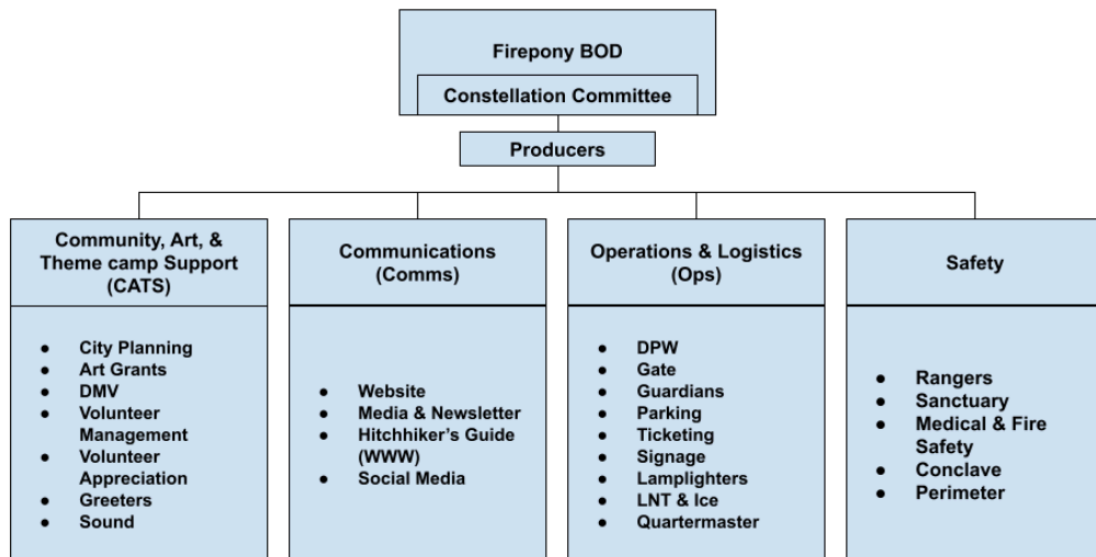
Constellation is entirely volunteer run and includes the Board of Directors, the Event Producer(s), Sphere Leads, Department Leads, and other volunteers.

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<sup>2</sup> With our numbers, the survey has a 7 % margin of error.

# Event Planning Structure

Constellation management is organized in a hierarchical structure starting with a Board of Directors liaison, who were Aye and Whatever, with support from Smiles. These board members partner with Event Producer(s). Event Producers in turn coordinate with the Sphere leads, and through them manage the Department Leads and volunteers. Constellation divides its related departments into Spheres. There are four spheres: Operations and Logistics (Ops), Fire and Safety (Safety), Communications (Comms), and Community, Arts & Theme camp Support (CATS). Each Sphere has a lead who manages departments in the sphere and coordinates with the other Spheres through their leads and the Event Producers



## Event Art

Art is the core of Constellation. Constellation and FPCS strive to support art and artists at the event.

To this end, Constellation offers art grants, early entry for artists, reserve tickets for artists, and hosts onsite artist appreciation events. Art Grant Coordinators work with a team of volunteers in selecting pieces to fund for each event. Grants are available to artists and organizations that share a passion for the burner ethos and demonstrate a commitment to bringing participatory, interactive art, or forward-thinking collaborative projects to the communities.

The 2023 art grant budget was 20% of revenue. Actualized percentage of the budget utilized for art grants was 16.6%, with the discrepancy primarily driven by artists who did not claim their award. The total art and art support actual outlay for Constellation 2023 was \$19,893.

For 2023 it was decided to fund a total of 24 projects including an effigy and temple, listed below.

Project Name	Artist	Granted Amount
Campfire	Shawn Walton	\$2,700
From Fiber to Finished Product: An Interactive Demo	Ceres Eilde	\$95
Libra Burners	Balance	\$1,800
ˌsɪˈdræ.i.əl (Sidereal)	Wax and Kai	\$1,000
Star Spore	Hatter	\$1,593
Illuminated moon & constellations	Seasan	\$800
Propane Street Lamp	Wren	\$100
SparkTree	Beep Boop	\$200
Jelly Balls	Xanadu	\$331
Mobility A-Go-Go	Saint	\$673
Scraps	Know Signal	\$442
Glow Rover	Dr. Vitamin and Just	\$1,000
Cryptid Luminaries	Cicada Magica	\$1,000
Firenado	mun	\$2,000
Chill Pills	Hiplomat	\$500
Decades Roving Silent Dance Party	Lacey and Scotty	\$400

Garden of New Life	Miles Cutler and Cole Fiory	\$600
Work From Everywhere Desk	Amitabh Shrivastava	\$700
Spoop Cave	Action Adventure Nigel	\$648
Mad Tea Party	Brenda Sherer	\$1,674
Find The Fox	karnak	\$200
Spoopyisle Wristbands	Courtney Miller	\$127
12 Principle Flags and Free Candy	Chimera )'('	\$890
Everything Changes	Sunscreen	\$420

## Financial Summary

Total revenue for Constellation 2023 was \$120k in ticket sales, ice sales, and car and RV passes. The total expenditure was \$99k, leaving a net of \$21k.

Expenditures for 2023 99k. The three largest categories for expenses were art and art support, land and storage rental, porta potty rental, and event insurance.

Profit and Loss Statement for 2023 can be found on the FirePony website [firepony.org](https://firepony.org/about/financials-and-reporting/) under the Resources menu, Financials and Reporting: <https://firepony.org/about/financials-and-reporting/>

And a direct link here: [PDF 2023 Profit & Loss Statements.pdf](#)

## Profit and Loss

This is a summary of the Constellation financials. For complete details, see the 2023 Profit and Loss statement for FirePony Creative Society <https://firepony.org/about/financials-and-reporting/>

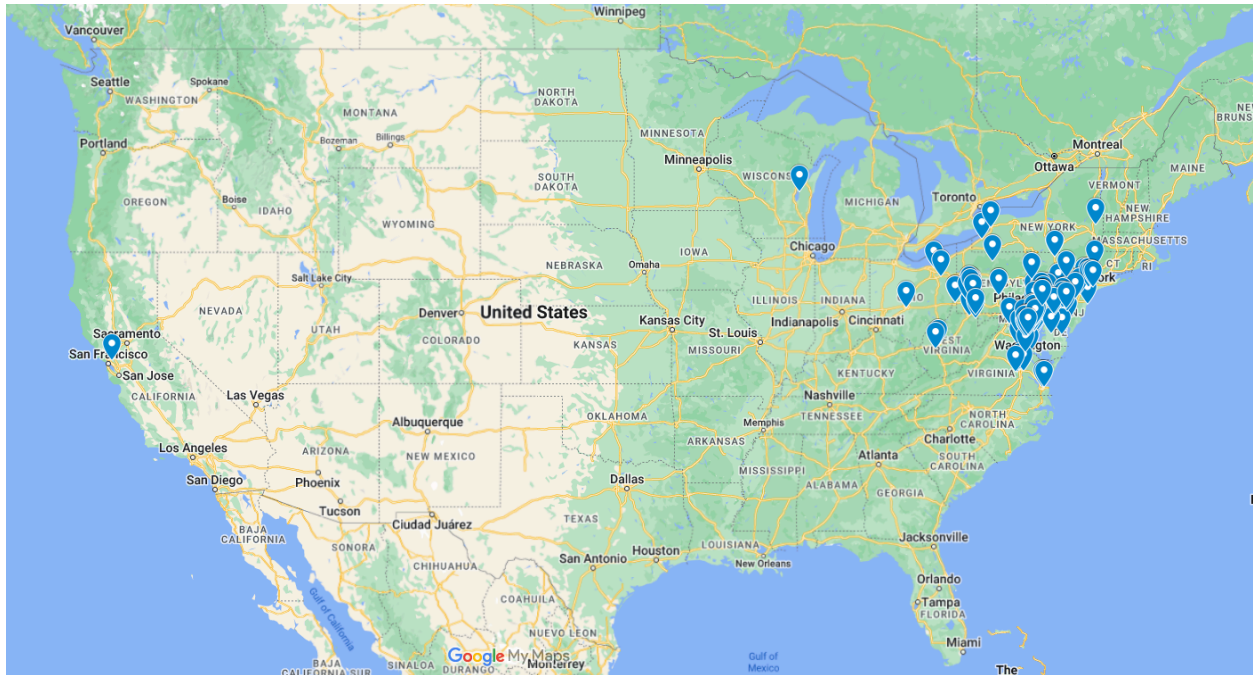
Constellation 2023 Profit & Loss Summary	
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$120,360</b>
<b>Expenditures Include:</b>	
Art & Artist Support	\$20,077
Bank, PayPal & Transaction Fees	\$2,840
Dept of Public Works, includes portos	\$19,757
Equipment Rental	\$5,884
Event Insurance	\$9,790
Fire Team, includes firewood	\$5,000
First Aid	\$746
Parking Supplies	\$0
Gate Supplies, includes wristband	\$1,210
Meeting & Conference Supplies	\$0
Printing & Publications	\$0
Land Rental	\$18,198
Storage Unit	\$2,499
Security	\$280
All Other Dept Expenditures	\$10,122
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$96,403</b>
<b>Net Revenue</b>	<b>\$23,957</b>

## Attendee Profile

An after event survey was taken. There were 167 responses. From the survey results, 61% were in the age range 31-45, up from 53% in 2022. Over 37% of the participants were first-time attendees of Constellation, down from 46% in 2022. Even with this many first time attendees, 90% said they were very or extremely familiar with the 10 principles of burning man before arrival, which increased to 93% at departure.

Burners of course can be playful, and it is important to remember that the survey might underestimate or overestimate values. The 167 results for ~12079 participants gives a large margin of error of 7%+/-

We also mapped the zip codes of ticket buyers. Attendees are primarily clustered on the DC-NYC corridor and a high concentration of participants from the Pittsburgh PA area.



## Burning Man After Burn Report

The Burning Man organization requires each burn to submit information about their event as part of the requirement to be officially sanctioned as a Regional. In 2023, BM changed the format for the submission to a google form. A summary of the key items in the report are below and the entire report can be found on the FirePony website [firepony.org](https://firepony.org/about/financials-and-reporting/) on the page <https://firepony.org/about/financials-and-reporting/>. A copy of the 2023 report can be found here: <https://firepony.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/2023-Constellation-Afterburn-Report.pdf>

Constellation, a sanctioned Burning Man Regional event, took place on Oct 5, 2023 in Bedford PA. The event sold 1079 tickets. Constellation offered full price, directed (reserved), multiple discounted ticket price points through our Ticket Aid program and for key volunteers, and gift tickets through our RIDE program. Of the 1079 tickets, 9% were reserved for volunteers and artists.

Participation: There were approximately 37 department leads with an estimate of 250 volunteer shifts filled. There were 73 theme camps and 24 placed art projects. The burning art were 2 Effigies, 1 Temple, and 2 smaller burnable art pieces. There were 208 event submissions.

Financials: Constellation brought in \$119k in ticket sales, ice sales, parking, car and RV passes, and community donations. These funds received were offset by event expenses of \$99k. This included grants to our communities' artists of \$20k. Constellation ended with an excess funds of \$21.5k. A detailed P&L document can be found here <https://firepony.org/about/financials-and-reporting/>

Diversity: Constellation gifted 23 tickets to BIPOC burners. Priority was assigned to the applications as: RIDE committee members (excluding white members), first time burners, first time to our event burners, and then veteran burners. A Mobility Cart service was put in place to help those with disabilities to navigate the tough terrain of the new site.

Sustainability: In an effort to lower our carbon footprint, the Constellation team experimented with replacing kerosene burning street lights with rechargeable and solar powered lights and Constellation is a paperless organization, with paperless ticketing and an electronic only event guide.

#### Top Event Challenges:

- Leadership Changes: Constellation started the planning cycle with a team of 3 new producers, but by the time of the event only one was still on board. Not having stability at the producer level made recruiting efforts for department leads difficult, and we went into the event with missing leads in some departments and less redundancy than we'd have liked in others.
- Land: Our event moved to a new site this year and associated logistical challenges and communications. The new land itself also offers challenges compared to our old site in that it has fewer facilities, is harder to secure, and is significantly larger than our previous home
- Insurance: Securing event insurance continues to be top of the list of things putting our event at risk.


#### Top Ideas and Innovations:

- Neighborhood Theming: As part of the push on social media to keep participants engaged pre-event, our City Planning team sent out 'Neighborhood Previews' describing what kind of theme camps were grouped into each neighborhood at our event.



# Appendixes

## FPCS 2023 Profit & Loss

Profit and Loss Statement for 2023 can be found on the FirePony website [firepony.org](https://firepony.org) under the Resources menu, Financials and Reporting: <https://firepony.org/about/financials-and-reporting/>  
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