

FreeBSD Foundation 2023 Recap

BY DEB GOODKIN

I am sitting here amazed at how quickly 2023 flew by, but I'm also looking forward to kicking off the new year with rejuvenated energy to take on an exciting array of opportunities for FreeBSD. I hope you had a chance to slow down a bit over the holiday season, spend time with friends and family, and pursue activities that bring you joy. If you're like me, you probably thought about what you would like to do differently in the new year: Be more active, eat better, get out more, spend more time using and contributing to your favorite operating system. I hope all of those, but especially that last one. Our sole purpose is to support the FreeBSD Project and community, and if you are reading this, you are part of our amazing community!

As I reflect on what we did to support FreeBSD in 2023, I would like to share some of the highlights while pointing out areas we will focus on in 2024. We've set our sights high with some lofty goals, including:

- Improving the desktop experience, to make it easier for those wanting to use FreeBSD as their daily driver or even those who want to try out FreeBSD.
- Supporting specific features and technologies to ensure FreeBSD is the operating system of choice when organizations are looking at options
- Increasing the visibility of FreeBSD to individuals and organizations, not only to inform them that FreeBSD is an option, but why they should choose FreeBSD.

I'd like to start out by expressing my gratitude to everyone in this remarkable community for their support and contributions. Whether you write code, produce informative and engaging FreeBSD videos on YouTube, improve the documentation, support our infrastructure, submit bug reports or fix bugs, provide answers on Reddit, give FreeBSD presentations or represent FreeBSD at conferences, you are playing a crucial role in advancing FreeBSD. Thank you all.

At the end of last year, we published blog posts highlighting the main areas we support. In my recap, I'm summarizing those highlights for you while providing links so you can read in more depth the topics you are more interested in.

Grab some coffee, tea, Kombucha or a beer, sit back, and continue reading to see some of the highlights of how we supported FreeBSD this past year. I included links within each area to more detailed year-end reports.

Software Development Work to Improve FreeBSD

Did you know that over 60% of our budget is dedicated to funding software development work to improve the operating system? This includes keeping a small staff of software developers who can quickly step in to fix bugs, review changes, and implement features and

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functionality in FreeBSD. We also have a handful of contractors working on specific funded projects that align with our long-term goals and longer-term projects like supporting wifi and specific architectures.

Key Highlights in this area include:

- Sponsored 1082 of the 7060 commits to the src repository.
- We heard you! We added the necessary resources to accelerate the wifi efforts by continuing to fund Bjoern and bringing on two more contractors to focus solely on this area.
- Imported OpenSSL v3 into our base system in preparation for FreeBSD 14.0 RELEASE
- Hired six students for summer internships! They had opportunities to make impactful contributions to FreeBSD, including areas like wifi, DTrace, Capsicum, and more. Our internship program highlights the incredible opportunity for students interested in systems programming to gain real-world skills while making significant contributions to FreeBSD.

Go here to learn more about our software development work and accomplishments:

<https://freebsd.foundation.org/blog/2023-in-review-software-development/>

Advocating for FreeBSD and the Community

Part of our effort in supporting FreeBSD is ensuring the Project gets the visibility it needs and deserves. We are here to be a lighthouse for this 30+ year-old project that continues to grow and innovate while recruiting others to do the same. We do this by promoting FreeBSD at computing and open source conferences worldwide, writing blogs and articles highlighting the benefits and features of FreeBSD, and producing the professionally published FreeBSD Journal filled with informative and interesting technical articles.

Key highlights in this area include:

- Organizing, presenting, and sponsoring 16 events, including running Getting Started with FreeBSD workshops, resuming our Bay Area Vendor Summit at an amazing venue (provided by NetApp) with some [incredible talks](#) and organizing the BSDCan FreeBSD Developer Summit that included celebrating 30 years of FreeBSD (yes, there was cake!).
- Expanding the coverage of FreeBSD in the media by participating in interviews, writing articles, and working with a public relations firm.
- Getting your input on FreeBSD. You have ideas, and we're helping to get your voices heard. In partnership with the Core team, we produced an in-depth community survey to get your feedback and help inform how the Core Team and FreeBSD Foundation can better support you and FreeBSD going forward.
- Producing the FreeBSD Journal for 10 years! This is a major collaborative effort between the Foundation and FreeBSD community members who volunteer their time to help produce high-quality articles highlighting FreeBSD features and technologies.
- Creating How-to guides to help newer folks quickly get started with FreeBSD.
- Expanding our What is FreeBSD page so that it can better be used by individuals and

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companies as a resource to sell to their own leadership, vendors, and customers on the benefits of FreeBSD. We're still fine tuning the content, but you can check it out here: <https://freebsd.foundation.org/freebsd-project/what-is-freebsd/>

Go here to learn more about how we're advocating for FreeBSD and helping with community engagement: <https://freebsd.foundation.org/blog/2023-in-review-advocacy/>

Building and Strengthening Partnerships

This section could be called fundraising, but it's so much more than that! Yes, we rely 100% on donations, sponsorships, and grants to fund our work. However, we created a new role to work with our current and prospective partners. The role is not only about securing funding, but also educating them on the importance of contributing back and engaging with the community. It's about reminding them of why FreeBSD is or continues to be the right choice for their organization, and about the importance of shining a light (being a lighthouse) on their use of FreeBSD. We hired Greg Wallace in April to take on this role, bringing many years of open source, business, and marketing experience to concentrate on building and strengthening partnerships

Greg stepped into this role running, gently nudging us to accelerate our efforts in hiring more developers, producing more content, and connecting with more companies to understand their use cases and challenges.

Key highlights in this area include:

- Identifying many dark users – companies using FreeBSD that we weren't aware of
- Engagement by the numbers:
 - 50 - Number of companies reached out to
 - 33 - Number of companies talked to
 - 05 - Number of companies with outstanding partnership proposals
 - 11 - Total corporate partners
 - 03 - Total first-time corporate partners
- Identifying and applying for new grant opportunities to fund security efforts
- Participating and identifying government security guidelines and mandates to ensure our voice is included in these discussions, plus doing the due diligence that FreeBSD will incorporate these requirements to keep FreeBSD secure for the Project and partners.
- Developing consistent messaging and pitches that are helping to inform companies why they should invest in and use FreeBSD - Just look at the # of companies with outstanding partnership proposals above!
- Organizing and running the new Enterprise Working Group that has helped bring the community and enterprise customers together, identifying gaps and opportunities in FreeBSD, while providing opportunities for participants to get more involved in some of these areas.

And, Research too!

This new role also consists of a research component, which includes researching and identifying key markets for FreeBSD, emerging markets like AI and how FreeBSD fits in, and where we should invest to make the biggest impacts in FreeBSD.

Go here to learn more about what we did in partnerships and research and what some of our plans for 2024 are: <https://freebsd.foundation.org/blog/2023-in-review-partnerships-and-research/>

FreeBSD Infrastructure

We approved over \$100,000 for a cluster refresh that began in 2023 and will carry over into this year by purchasing and shipping 15 new servers to a new NYI Chicago facility. We're excited to collaborate with the clusteradm team to provide the funding, resources, and coordination efforts to stand up the new hardware, taking advantage of NYI's generous donation of 4 racks in their newer colocation facility.

We have one staff member on the clusteradm team and another who helps facilitate the efforts between the team and the Foundation. Go here to learn more about how we've been supporting the Project's infrastructure: <https://freebsd.foundation.org/blog/2023-in-review-infrastructure/>

Continuous Integration

One full-time staff member is dedicated to improving the Project's continuous integration system and test infrastructure.

Some of the highlights include:

- Adding more testing jobs for ARM64 architectures like testing with Kernel Address Sanitizer and building tests for non-standard compilers like GCC 12 and 13.
- Making great progress running the workflow working group, designing and implementing systems to support the pull-request based workflow.
- Implementing Pre-commit CI changes that will be available soon!
- Publishing git hooks used for the Project's git repository and now producing semi-official release snapshots from the CI system.
- Updating the "Tinderbox View" (<https://tinderbox.freebsd.org>) of the CI result dashboard, which now provides more details of the test results and the possible breakage point.

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Cloud Support

The Foundation also supports our full-time staff member's efforts to work with the engineers from Microsoft to help them implement support for new features in Azure and provide more FreeBSD features in Azure. This includes ARM64 VM support, Gen2 VM support and ZFS images provided. All these changes are included in 14.0-RELEASE and published to the Azure Marketplace.

Go here to learn more about how we've been supporting the Project's testing and CI efforts: <https://freebsd.foundation.org/blog/continuous-integration-and-workflow-improvement/>

Legal

The Foundation owns the FreeBSD trademarks, and it is our responsibility to protect them. We review a handful of trademark permission requests per month and make sure our registrations haven't expired. Go here <https://freebsd.foundation.org/legal/trademark-usage-terms-and-conditions/> to find out more information about the FreeBSD trademarks.

We also provide legal support for the core team to investigate questions that arise. We engaged in multiple NDAs this year, which allows us to understand the commercial user's FreeBSD needs.

Going Forward

We are excited about the future of FreeBSD and the increased interest in individuals and companies using our favorite open source operating system! We've identified areas within the Project, where we can make impactful investments to ensure FreeBSD is the operating system of choice going forward.

We are finalizing our 2024 plans, and will share them soon. But, here's a little preview of what we are planning:

- Improving the desktop and developer experience
- Strengthening and increasing our partnerships
- Increasing the visibility of FreeBSD by providing more content and articles on the benefits and features of FreeBSD, working with more companies to share their stories and use cases, and increasing media exposure. In a nutshell, getting the word out there about FreeBSD and why everyone should use it!
- Implementing key features to keep FreeBSD innovative and the platform of choice for commercial entities.

In a nutshell, we will be implementing soon-to-be-announced features and technologies in the operating system, and increasing the visibility of the Project, while continuing to investigate key markets and opportunities for FreeBSD. We're also going to increase our advocacy efforts, especially in the area of technical content, so watch for an announcement about that soon!

We're looking forward to the opportunities ahead for FreeBSD and will continue and increase our support. If you are a software developer looking for full-time or contract work, keep an eye on our jobs page <https://freebsd.foundation.org/open-positions/>.

With the number of start-ups using FreeBSD, and companies switching to FreeBSD, the future truly looks bright for us! We will be here supporting the Project, community, and users to ensure FreeBSD stands out as a compelling choice for individuals and businesses.

DEB GOODKIN is the Executive Director of the FreeBSD Foundation. She's thrilled to be in her 19th year at the Foundation and is proud of her hardworking and dedicated team. She spent over 20 years in the data storage industry in engineering development, applications engineering, and technical marketing. When not working, you'll find her road or trail running, playing with her dogs, cycling the backroads of Colorado, or reading a good book.