



# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

## LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Birds calling, the splash from a paddle, laughter, these are just some of the sounds we enjoyed while out on the water trail and at our events this past summer. 2021 was a big year for all of us at Paddle Antrim. We were honored to "open" the water trail with so many friends and supporters in May. While we do not know specifically how many paddlers enjoyed the 100+ mile water trail this season, based on stories from users, talking with local businesses and the data below, we know there was a significant increase of paddlers enjoying the water trail. From May to September this year:

- Over 1,000 water trail maps were distributed (digital and waterproof)
- 10,536 people visited the Chain of Lakes Water Trail website ([www.chainoflakeswatertrail.org](http://www.chainoflakeswatertrail.org))
- 76% increase in subscribers to Paddle Antrim's newsletter
- 28% increase in followers on Facebook & 75% increase on Instagram
- Reached over 2.8 million people through a variety of marketing tactics

We were so thankful to be back on the water engaging with paddlers, teaching paddling skills, and training paddlers to identify and report invasive species. We saw a significant increase in demand for all programming. We had record attendance at our sixth annual Paddle Antrim Festival and our community paddles participation increased by 50%. Class participation also increased, tripling our kayaking safety class participants and doubling our stewardship training participants.

Connecting with nature continues to be a priority and we are pleased to encourage more paddlers to get out on the water safely and work to protect our waterways for the future. We look forward to seeing you this year and hearing your stories from the trail.

Warmest Regards,

Deana Jerdee

Executive Director

*Paddle Antrim is a 501(c)3 organization whose mission is to protect our water resources by using paddle sports to connect people to our waterways.*



### Board of Directors and Staff



#### 2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Sue Palmisano - Director

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Deana Jerdee - Executive Director

Ellie Kirkpatrick - Marketing & Outreach

# THE CHAIN OF LAKES WATER TRAIL



Above: Paddle Antrim board members, staff, donors and partners cutting the ribbon on the water trail.

## WATER TRAIL RIBBON CUTTING

The first season with the fully opened Chain of Lakes Water Trail kicked off with a Ribbon Cutting event on May 26th in Ellsworth at Community Park. This event launched the first paddling season with signs in the ground at 84 access sites and a suite of paddler resources available for anyone planning a water trail adventure. We were thrilled to celebrate the grand opening of the water trail with donors, sponsors, partners, and volunteers.

With the launch of the water trail, we were able to connect prominent members of the media to the water trail who shared their experience with their audiences. Some of the most notable features are from Frommer's, Traverse Magazine, and a video by Pure Michigan. You can view these features and more on our website at [paddleantrim.com/features](http://paddleantrim.com/features).

While it's hard for us to know exactly how many people visited the water trail this year, it was encouraging to see data and hear stories showing an increase in the number of people out on the water and in our communities. Over 10,000 users visited the Chain of Lakes Water Trail website ([chainoflakeswatertrail.org](http://chainoflakeswatertrail.org)) during the paddling season and over 1,000 water trail maps were distributed. We saw an increase in all our on-water programming and loved hearing stories from paddler's adventures out on the water. Local businesses also saw a significant increase in activity related to the water trail. For example, Patrick Boyd, owner of Paddles and Pedals in Bellaire said that their kayak rental sales were up by over 50% from previous years and the paddler guides at his shop were flying off the shelf.

We look forward to continuing to build upon the success of the water trail launch as we move into the 2022 season!

### PLAN YOUR TRIP

Routes	Online Map Planning	Paddler's Guide
Digital Map	Outfitters	Lodging

[CHAINOFLAKESWATERTRAIL.ORG](http://CHAINOFLAKESWATERTRAIL.ORG)

“THANKS FOR YOUR EFFORTS TO PROTECT OUR WATERS AND BRING PEOPLE JOY AND GREATER UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE CHAIN OF LAKES

”  
- Meredith, Allison, and David



# STEWARDSHIP

## THE RIPPLE EFFECT MINI-GRANT PROGRAM IS BACK!

Our Ripple Effect Mini-Grant Program is funded through earned income from our events. We were delighted to hold events this year allowing us to bring back our Mini-Grant program to fund local projects that align with our mission. Over the past 7 years we have awarded \$25,800 to stewardship, accessibility, and education projects in our region. In 2021 we supported two projects and gave out a total of \$1800.

### **Coast Guard Auxiliary: Charlevoix Flotilla**

We are excited to support their AUXPAD (Auxiliary Paddlecraft) Program. These volunteers patrol rivers and smaller bodies of water where power boats are unable to safely oversee, working to keep paddlers safe out on the water.

### **Grass River Natural Area**

Our funding will help create paddling safety and accessibility kits that will be used during naturalist-led tours and by staff while out monitoring parcels for invasive species, sensitive species, and macroinvertebrates during stream sampling. In 2021, GRNA piloted a self-guided kayak rental which will also benefit from these kits.

We are incredibly grateful to these organizations for such great programs which align with our mission.

## MI PADDLE STEWARD PROGRAM

By moving slowly through the water, paddlers are in a unique position to see things near or under the water, including identifying aquatic invasive species. Paddle Antrim continues to implement the MI Paddle Stewards Program which began in 2019 by MI Sea Grant. Through this training, paddlers learn how to protect the lakes and rivers we love by using Clean, Drain, Dry methods as well as training them to identify and report invasive species. This year we partnered with CAKE CISMA to offer an online training course followed by three on-water trainings located around northwest Michigan. We were thrilled to have 39 participants join these classes to help us further our mission to keep our waterways pristine.

## MOBILE BOAT WASH AT THE PADDLE ANTRIM FESTIVAL

To emphasize the importance of cleaning boats/gear before entry into a new waterway, we invited Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council to bring their mobile boat wash unit to the Paddle Antrim Festival. All boats were verified clean or washed before entering the Upper Chain and again before entering the Lower Chain to reduce the spread of aquatic invasive species.

### MINI-GRANT PROGRAM IMPACT TO-DATE



17

Projects Funded



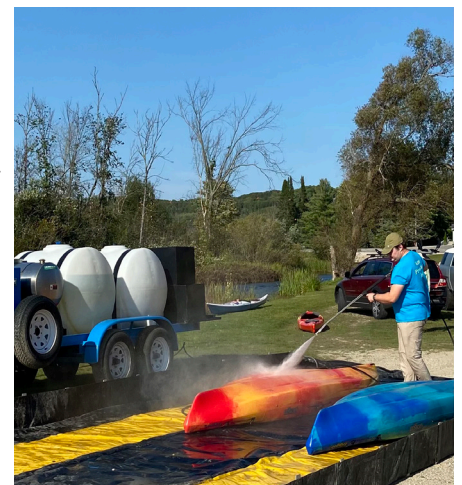
\$25,800

Dollars Awarded



10+

Communities Impacted



Above: Eli Baker from Tipp of the Mitt Watershed Council washing boats at the 2021 Paddle Antrim Festival.

# CLASSES AND EVENTS



## PADDLE ANTRIM FESTIVAL

This year marked the sixth annual Paddle Antrim Festival. Always the second weekend after Labor Day this Festival brings paddlers from all over Michigan and the Midwest to the Chain of Lakes Region to experience the water trail and explore the communities. This year we had a great turnout with over 170 paddlers registered and 42 paddlers who made it the entire 42-mile journey. We had beautiful sunny and warm weather all weekend, albeit a windy first day. Day 1 started with the mass launch of over 150 paddle crafts at Ellsworth River Park – a site to behold. Headwinds during the first day gave paddlers an extra challenge while Day 2 was a paddler’s dream with virtually no wind and beautiful blue skies. We were thrilled to have our first ever stand up paddle boarders join us on Day 2 and paddle the first nine miles from Ohio Street to the Dockside Restaurant. We love seeing a diversity of paddle crafts on the water! Be sure to mark your calendars for the 2022 Festival, September 15-17. You can learn more about the Festival by visiting [paddleantrim.com/festival](http://paddleantrim.com/festival)

“ I THOUGHT THAT THE WHOLE WEEKEND WAS SO SMOOTH. IT WAS LIKE A FINE TUNE MACHINE. ALL OF THE VOLUNTEERS WERE SO HELPFUL AND EVERYONE WAS SO NICE. THIS FOR SURE EXCEEDED MY WIFE AND I’S EXPECTATIONS. THE KAYAK ROUTE IS ABSOLUTELY BEAUTIFUL AND THE EVENING PARTIES WERE SO NICE TO RELAX AND A NICE WAY TO GET TO KNOW OTHER PADDLERS. HATS OFF TO DEANNA AND THE ENTIRE STAFF FOR SETTING THIS UP. WE WILL FOR SURE BE DOING IT AGAIN NEXT YEAR. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR AN AWESOME WEEKEND AWAY. ”

- Derek



Above: Paddle Antrim Festival Day 1.



Above: Paddle Antrim 2021 Hall of Fame Paddlers who paddled all 42 miles over two days.



## PADDLING SAFETY CLASSES

Understanding risk and knowing some basic skills, go a long way to ensuring safe and fun trips out on the water. For the fourth year, Paddle Antrim has offered introductory paddling classes for adults and youth, all taught by American Canoe Association certified instructors with low teacher:student ratios of 1:5 or less. In 2021, seven classes were held with a total of 51 participants. Ranging from students who had never been in a kayak to those who have paddled leisurely for over ten years, everyone walked away with new skills, more confidence, and many “aha” moments!

“ THE ESSENTIALS OF KAYAKING CLASS WAS SO GREAT! ...THE CLASS REALLY HELPED ME UNDERSTAND HOW TO EFFICIENTLY STROKE, STOP, AND TURN. I ALSO LEARNED A LOT ABOUT KAYAKING SAFETY - THINGS THAT JUST WEREN'T ON MY RADAR ”

-Shana



Above: Kids Kayaking Class (ages 7 - 12 yrs).



Above: Adult Kayaking Class.

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS



2022

COMMUNITY PADDLES

ADULT AND YOUTH KAYAKING CLASSES

MI PADDLE STEWARD TRAININGS

PADDLE ANTRIM FESTIVAL

[WWW.PADDLEANTRIM.COM/EVENTS](http://WWW.PADDLEANTRIM.COM/EVENTS)

## COMMUNITY PADDLES

One of our favorite parts of summer is our regularly scheduled Community Paddles where we explore a new area of the water trail each time. These “meet-up” type events are a great way to see new places, meet new paddlers, and enjoy a peaceful time on the water. All-ages are welcome for these slow out and back paddles, which last for about an hour. All you need to participate is your paddle craft of choice and a properly fitting life jacket. This year, we hosted seven community paddles starting from various trailheads to explore different routes throughout the water trail. We enjoyed connecting with over 100 paddlers this season, we love seeing new faces and reconnecting with familiar ones.



Above: Bellaire Community Paddle, Elk Rapids Harbor Days Community Paddle, Grass River Natrual Area Community Paddle (from left to right.)

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# IMPROVEMENTS TO ROTARY PARK

In November 2021, we partnered with the Village of Elk Rapids to officially move forward with improvements at Elk Rapids Rotary Park. Rotary Park is a key access site for the Chain of Lakes Water Trail. Included in the improvement plan is a universal kayak/canoe launch, to offer water trail accessibility to paddlers with varying levels of mobility. This launch will connect to the existing universal launch at Milton Township Waterfront Park, creating the first accessible route on the Chain of Lakes Water Trail. Additional improvements to the park will include plumbed restrooms, storage racks, a boat wash station to prevent aquatic invasive species, accessible picnic tables, and a paved parking area with trailer parking.

## VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

We could not do what we do without the help of our amazing volunteers. In 2021 we engaged volunteers for a combined total of 886 hours. Ellie Kirkpatrick, our marketing and outreach coordinator, expanded and enhanced our volunteer program this year to help us maintain the Chain of Lakes Water Trail.

### Water Trail Volunteers

We recruited volunteers to help us monitor and maintain our newly installed water trail signs. 30 Water Trail Monitors are our eyes on the ground visiting our 84 access sites and signs (kiosks and wayfinding) throughout the paddling season. Volunteers visit their designated access site(s) every 2-3 weeks and report issues. Our Water Trail Stewards help us resolve reported issues by completing tasks such as relocating signs, trimming and clearing brush, tightening or replacing bolts and more. This program runs May - September each year.

### Paddle Antrim Festival Volunteers

Over 80 volunteers helped with duties such as registration, assisting paddlers with moving their boats, motorized safety boat crews, paddler tracking/counting, boat washing and more. We consistently receive compliments from participants on our friendly and helpful volunteer staff.

### Administrative Volunteers

We welcomed volunteers back in the office this year. From filing, to organizing, to stuffing envelopes, these volunteers are behind the scenes helping things run smoothly.

### Safety/Instructor Paddlers

We are grateful to our expert paddlers who help whenever we have paddlers on the water. Ensuring safety at community paddles and helping teach new skills, these individuals are critical to all our on-water events.

### Outreach/Event Ambassadors

These volunteers help staff Paddle Antrim booths at a variety of different local events, helping us share the work we do.

We could not do the work we do without these amazing individuals. Learn more about volunteering with Paddle Antrim at <https://www.paddleantrim.com/volunteer-opportunities/> or email us at [volunteer@paddleantrim.com](mailto:volunteer@paddleantrim.com).



**Above: Volunteers relocating a kiosk sign**

# WAYS TO SUPPORT PADDLE ANTRIM

## DONATE TODAY

Your gift will help Paddle Antrim continue efforts to improve access, education, and stewardship.

## BECOME A WELLSPRING SUPPORTER

Donate as little as \$5 a month and make a big impact. Recurring gifts allow us to plan and sustain our work more effectively.

## JOIN OUR SUSTAINERS CIRCLE

These vital contributors give a minimum annual gift of \$1,000 or more to support the general operations of Paddle Antrim.

## BECOME A WAVEMAKER

Join other businesses and organizations who have found meaningful ways to support our mission.

## BECOME A WATER TRAIL CHAMPION

Support Paddle Antrim by sponsoring one of the many access sites on the Chain of Lakes Water Trail.

## LEARN MORE AND DONATE:

[www.paddleantrim.com/how-to-give](http://www.paddleantrim.com/how-to-give)

## STAY UP-TO-DATE ON PADDLE ANTRIM & THE WATER TRAIL

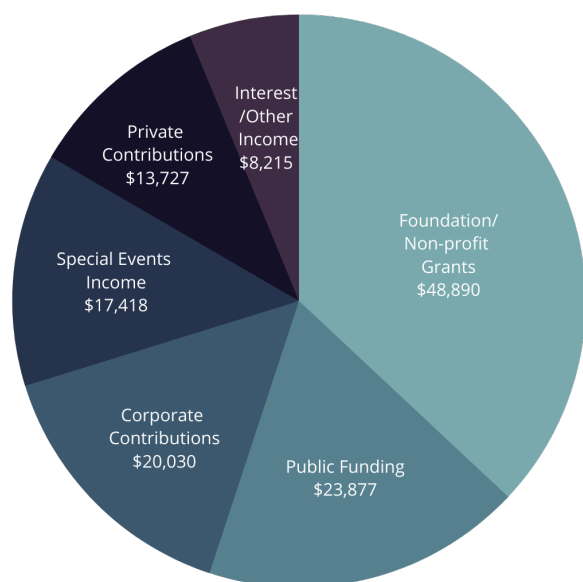


@PADDLEANTRIM

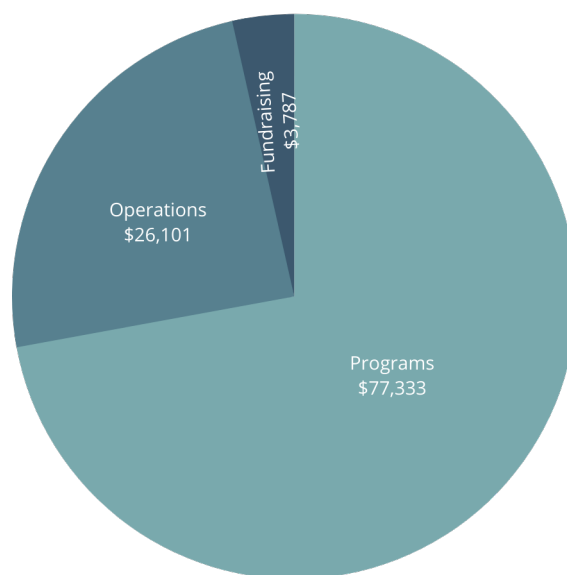
Sign-up for our  
monthly newsletter:  
[paddleantrim.com/new-sletter-signup/](http://paddleantrim.com/new-sletter-signup/)

# FINANCIALS

## 2021 REVENUES



## 2021 EXPENSES



## CHANGE IN NET ASSETS

Beginning Net Assets: \$103,605

Ending Net Assets: \$128,541

Change in Net Assets: +\$24,936

Temporary Restricted Assets: \$50,151



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## THANK YOU FOR HELPING US ACCOMPLISH WHAT WE CANNOT DO ALONE

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Family Foundation

### GIFTS OF \$10,000 - \$24,999

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Gardner-Aben  
Alden State Bank  
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Sue Carey  
Community Foundation  
Rotary Endowment  
Johanna Cressy  
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Northern Alliance Security  
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Pine Hill Nursery  
The Flour Pot Bakery  
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**Debra Diane Downing** (Tara Sharpe)

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**Devin Hotchkiss** (Mindy Theis)

**Deana Jerdee** (David and Donna Heeres)

**David Stromberg** (Jannifer Stromberg)

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Elk Rapids, MI 49629

231-498-2080

[www.paddleantrim.com](http://www.paddleantrim.com)

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**



**100**

Volunteers

**886**

Volunteer Hours



**372**

Paddlers Engaged  
on the Water



**1000+**

Water Trail Maps  
Distributed



**251**

Donors

**103**

New Donors