-CONNECTING PEOPLE, WATER, AND COMMUNITIES IN THE CHAIN OF LAKES

For a decade, Paddle Antrim has been a driving force in protecting our region's waterways and connecting people to the lakes, rivers, and communities of Northern Michigan. Through the Chain of Lakes Water Trail, we have built a nationally recognized resource that enhances recreation, strengthens our local economy, and fosters environmental stewardship.

Now, we have an opportunity to take our impact even further.

Our Vision: Happy, active people connected to healthy communities and waterways. In Northern Michigan, the Chain of Lakes is more than a beautiful backdrop for a photo opportunity. It's the very soul of our community. Here, the water is our conduit for connection, an avenue for adventure, and a source of joy for residents. Here, paddling isn't just a pastime. It's a gateway to our community's prosperity.

Imagine

Imagine a place where the gentle splash of paddles on water brings people together. Where everyone, from the youngest child eager to dip their paddle for the first time to the seasoned adventurer seeking new waters to explore, can experience the pure joy of paddling. Where people forge new friendships, acquire fresh skills, and deepen their ties to nature and to one another.

Imagine people enjoying a healthy, active lifestyle, boosting physical and mental wellness through a tranquil water sport while connecting with nature.

Imagine small towns and prosperous year-round local businesses, rooted in a place where the economy is deeply intertwined with outdoor recreation, proud of its waterways. Imagine business owners and employees appreciating the place that connects and sustains them and championing mutual responsibility and collective enthusiasm to protect the land and water.

Imagine a community turning toward the water, educated and aware about how to steward and care for it. Imagine people nurturing a culture of sustainability and creating a haven for wildlife, and a healthy environment for future generations.

Through the enhancement and maintenance of the Chain of Lakes Water Trail, alongside paddling safety classes, community events, and environmental stewardship, we can cultivate this thriving community.

JOIN US

We invite you to join us. Together, we can create a legacy of inclusive access to paddling in the Chain of Lakes, support small businesses and our rural economy, celebrate civic pride, promote safety on the water, and uphold a commitment to environmental stewardship.

We seek to increase our impacts and leverage opportunities for growth by accomplishing several key goals over the next three years. To accomplish these goals we are launching this campaign to stabilize our staff capacity and make strategic improvements along the water trail and to our programming.



CONNECT | PROTECT | EDUCATE











Paddle Antrim has worked tirelessly for the past 10 years to connect individuals to our waterways to protect the areas we all love and educate people on stewardship and safety which helps improve the vitality of our communities.

CONNECT

Working with 20 different organizations, we developed & host the premier Chain of Lakes Water Trail - the only designated **Pure Michigan** ™ Water Trail in Michigan, providing 100 miles through 12 lakes and interconnected rivers.

With over 40 volunteers, we maintain and monitor all 84 water trail access sites through a volunteer water trail program.

We've raised over \$1.2 million for water trail improvements focusing on universally accessible and environmentally focused improvements.



PROTECT

Support regional initiatives that align with our mission through our Ripple Effect Mini Grant Program. Provided \$35,000 for for 35 separate projects since 2015.

Since 2019, we educated paddlers through 11 stewardship classes on ways to identify and report invasive species to protect our lakes from further spread.

We maintain water trail materials including signage, waterproof maps, and website, which inform paddlers on ways to help us protect our waters for future generations.



EDUCATE

Engage paddlers through community paddles and educational programs on paddling safety and skills connecting over 2,700 individuals to our waterways.

Teach paddling classes/trainings to adults and youth, with over 155 on-water events and classes to date. Data shows this work is critical as while boating fatalities overall are declining, fatalities due to paddle sports are rising (now 1/3 of all boating fatalities).

Through social media, we engage regularly with our over 6,600 followers and use traditional media outreach to educate the public on safety, stewardship issues, and connecting with our waterways.

STRENGTHENING ACCESS, ENGAGEMENT AND STEWARDSHIP



Paddle Antrim is launching a transformative capital campaign to invest in the future of our waterways, ensuring they remain accessible, vibrant, and well-cared for. This initiative will support expanding our capacity to engage volunteers, enhance programs, and strengthen partnerships. It will also include essential improvements to Central Lake's waterfront, a key trailhead on the Chain of Lakes Water Trail. By investing in both people and water trail infrastructure, we will create lasting benefits for our communities, paddlers, and the natural environment.

Building Capacity: Volunteers, Programs, and Partnerships

Beyond physical improvements, this campaign will strengthen Paddle Antrim's ability to support and sustain the Chain of Lakes Water Trail through:

- Volunteer engagement Expanded training and coordination for trail maintenance, events, and safety initiatives.
- On-water programming Enhancing paddling safety courses, educational experiences, and stewardship initiatives. Expanding to connect more local youth to our waterways.
- Collaborative partnerships Strengthening and create new relationships with local businesses, municipalities, donors, and conservation organizations.



Enhancing the Water Trail & Access for All

We want to improve experiences on the water and are partnering with the Village of Central Lake for waterfront improvements, a vital trailhead in the center of the Chain of Lakes Water Trail. Planned improvements include:

- Universal access upgrades Improved restrooms, an accessible kayak/canoe launch, and pavilion access.
- Expanded water trail amenities Enhanced signage, parking, and paddle craft storage for safety and navigation.
- Stronger connections to downtown A new sidewalk linking the park amenities to local businesses, creating a more engaging and safer space.
- Boosting the local economy Attracting paddlers, supporting small businesses, and strengthening the region's reputation as a premier paddling destination.
- Environmental stewardship initiatives Educational signage and an invasive species removal tool to protect waterways.



By supporting this campaign, you will help create a legacy of safe, accessible, and well-stewarded waterways—benefiting paddlers, all park users, communities, and our cherished natural resources for generations to come.

FLOWING FORWARD: CAMPAIGN

Help Us Reach Our Goal

Paddle Antrim seeks to raise \$713,000 by December 2025 in private contributions and gifts from individuals, foundations, and businesses. We are currently 74% of the way. Our goal is to begin construction and programming improvements in 2026.

All donations will directly support Central Lake enhancements, staff expansion, and Paddle Antrim's programs and operations. Any funds raised beyond project needs will further our mission and strategic goals.

Gifts of all sizes are valued. We offer recognition opportunities for major contributions and accept stock gifts, as well as multi-year and pledge gifts of \$10,000 or more. Please consult your financial advisor regarding potential tax benefits.



MISSION

Founded in 2014, Paddle Antrim is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization working to protect our water resources by using paddle sports to connect people to our waterways. We are dedicated to protecting Northern Michigan's Chain of Lakes. Through stewardship, education, improved access, and waterway promotion, we enhance environmental protection and regional economic vitality. Through partnerships and relationships with volunteers, local businesses, champions, and donors, we achieve our mission by connecting, protecting, and educating.

We believe that when people engage with the water, they develop a deep commitment to its care—working to protect water quality and address challenges like erosion, sedimentation, and invasive species.

The Chain of Lakes Water Trail spans over 100 miles and is the only Pure Michigan Water Trail in the state. Completed in 2021, the trail has benefited from over \$1.3 million in improvements, coordinated with 20 different site owners. These investments align with Paddle Antrim's long-term strategic plan.



YOU CAN SUPPORT PADDLE ANTRIM

Learn more, meet face-to-face, share your advice, ideas or experiences along the waterway or to discuss giving opportunities. Contact Deana Jerdee, Paddle Antrim's Executive Director at 231-492-0171 or deana@paddleantrim.com





Central Lake, Michigan