



Annual Report

2019

Conservation driven by engaged, empowered communities.



Healthy Water. Protected Places. Vibrant Communities.

A Legacy of Innovation Lives on

Thanks to the many supporters and partners who helped Huron Pines conserve and enhance Northern Michigan's natural resources to improve healthy waters, protected places and vibrant communities in 2019. In addition to completing successful projects across each of our major program areas we hired three new staff members to advance water quality, land protection and stewardship efforts. Also, our Board of Directors welcomed four new members from across our service area each with different backgrounds and skills to help support our mission.

We said goodbye and thanks for her many contributions when Connie Schrieber stepped down from the board after almost 14 years of service, including six as the board chair. During her tenure, Huron Pines experienced significant program expansion, largely due to Connie's encouragement to tackle Northern Michigan's environmental challenges with new and innovative approaches.

Innovation is only possible when people have the time necessary to plan and develop new ideas and the courage to move forward. In honor of Connie's entrepreneurial spirit, the board established the Connie Schrieber Fund for Environmental Innovation to provide the financial resources necessary to allocate dedicated time for Huron Pines staff to develop new initiatives addressing Northern Michigan's environmental needs. Initial funding came from board contributions.



Thank you, Connie for the tremendous impact you've had on the direction and culture of Huron Pines.

The fund will foster continued innovation that will enhance and protect Northern Michigan's woods, waters and communities. As we move forward together, we ask you to work with us to advance ideas to improve healthy waters, protected places and vibrant communities.

Joe Jarecki, Board Chair

A New Vision for the Future



Over a decade ago, the Huron Pines staff and board set forth a vision to serve as the go-to organization for large environmental problems impacting water, woods and communities in our area. It was the right vision at the time. We had experience solving complex environmental issues that involved multiple parties and diverse interests – projects that needed coordination and special technical or financial resources to implement. We wanted to be the organization that everyone could turn to for getting the job done when it came to conservation.

As our work evolved, we realized that just getting the job done is not enough. It became clear that we needed to shift our vision to ensure a future with healthy water, protected places and vibrant communities. This summer our board and staff came together to adopt a new vision that reflects a change in our organization. Our region's environmental threats cannot be solved by the work of one organization, however the collective effort of many motivated individuals can make a lasting change.

Our theory goes like this: long-term impact begins with building trust over time, identifying shared goals, bringing the right resources to the table and building solutions that the entire community can support and sustain.

This new vision pushes conservation from a one-time fix to something that is part of the fabric of our local communities. Want a better planet? Involve more people in taking care of it and inspire stewardship. Engage new types of stakeholders in the outdoors. Build local leadership capacity. Invest in groups, communities and people who are really pushing the envelope and working on new ways to solve these recurring problems. That is why our new vision is: *Conservation driven by engaged, empowered communities.*

Achieving the new vision is going to take some time and persistence. But we're inspired by the signs of progress we already see. It's the students at Alcona, Gaylord and Vanderbilt setting goals and prioritizing land stewardship efforts in their hometowns; it's the 30 AmeriCorps members we bring on each January who give a year of their life to develop new conservation projects in communities across the state; it's working with local leaders in places like East Tawas, Au Gres and Rogers City to identify stormwater runoff problems and ways to use green infrastructure to solve those problems; and it's the specialized training requests we receive from key partners, like the Pine River-Van Etten Lake Watershed Coalition and county road commissions, so they can take the lead role in tackling the control of invasive species in their communities.

All of these people, and all of our supporters, are helping us move toward a vision where everyone is thinking about how to protect and enhance our natural resources.

Brad Jensen, Executive Director



Our Mission

Conserve and enhance Northern Michigan's natural resources to ensure healthy water, protected places and vibrant communities.

Our Vision

Conservation driven by engaged, empowered communities.

With the support of our board, staff and partners, Huron Pines has worked to improve economic, environmental, educational and recreational opportunities in the region since 1973.

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Conservation Stewardship Director
- Jennie Zoll**
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Cover photo: Ben Bator

Connecting Rivers In Creative Ways

Huron Pines set a goal to reconnect 500 miles of river. That's more miles than it takes to traverse Michigan from the southern border to the bridge, and it took over ten years to accomplish.

It started over a decade ago when Huron Pines began collecting and analyzing stream data from every river system in the region — Au Gres, Au Sable, Rifle, Tawas, Thunder Bay, Pigeon and Upper Black — to create a list of sites with the most critical restoration needs. Those needs included dam removal, culvert replacement, timber bridge construction and erosion control. Since then, Huron Pines has raised over \$10 million to make that work possible.

In 2019, we surpassed our goal of reconnecting 500 miles of river with 9 restoration projects that connect fish to 56 miles of upstream habitat. Here are two projects that helped us achieve that major milestone for healthy water in 2019.



Above: Upstream view of the free-flowing Middle Branch Cedar River. Below: Before photos of the dam during a site visit to finalize construction details.



Pushing Boundaries

In the spring of 2016, a dam failed on the Middle Branch Cedar River in Gladwin causing water and sediment to rush downstream. Though Gladwin falls outside of the typical Huron Pines service area, our experience and resources made us the right organization to lead the removal and restoration effort.

“The Middle Branch Cedar River is a really unique resource and is one of the few brook trout streams in the Saginaw River watershed. Plus, the entire Cedar River watershed eventually reaches Lake Huron

and protecting the quality of Lake Huron is a major driver of our work,” said Senior Project Manager Josh Leisen.

In order to restore the river to its natural state, the entire concrete structure of the dam was removed. With the structure gone, the pond that had formed upstream of the dam began to narrow as the stream found its natural channel again. This process sent excess sediment downstream, so a hole was dug in the river to capture and then remove the sediment to keep it from flowing downstream.

“The contractor, the engineer, Huron Pines

and all the contributors were outstanding and everything looks great,” landowner Robert Gingery said. “It’s finally found its original streambed and we’re still maintaining a sediment trap but it didn’t even fill with recent high water.”

“Huron Pines has the expertise to navigate the entire process,” Gingery added. “There’s no way I could have handled it by myself. It’s well worth it to the landowner to contact Huron Pines if they’re thinking of doing something like this.”

Fish can now access the final 9.2 miles of upstream habitat on the Middle Branch.

As Leisen explained, “This dam was the only significant barrier on the river from the headwaters to where the Middle Branch connects with the main branch of the Cedar River.”

Fish are now able to reach the cooler headwaters of the river for the first time in many years and the long-term negative impacts and risk of complete structural failure related to the dam have been eliminated.

“Consistent water level and temperature in those upstream areas are critical for brook trout spawning, nursing and refuge,” Leisen said.

The project was funded with support from the landowner, Robert Gingery, and grant funding from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network, Bay Area Community Foundation, Walters Family Foundation, Little Forks Conservancy and the Leon P. Martuch Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

Boulder Solutions

While the preferred approach to a problematic road/stream crossing is to remove it and replace it with something better, that option is not always the most feasible, cost effective or in the best interest of the surrounding habitat. As an organization charged with doing right by the resource in a financially responsible way, sometimes the best solution is to tread lightly



Boulders being placed in the South Branch River to increase water levels.

— especially when there may be rattlesnakes underfoot.

Such was the case where the South Branch River meets Rollways Road in Iosco County. The existing culvert was close to the right size but had been set too high, preventing fish from moving through its shallow, fast current. Compounding the issue was a 30-foot mound of fill dirt between the culvert and road above, turning a routine “remove and replace” into a massive and costly undertaking.

“Huron Pines has the expertise to navigate the entire process.”

“To remove that structure would have meant moving an enormous amount of earth and that would have been very expensive — likely over \$1 million — which would have been almost impossible to fund,” Leisen said.

Instead, the culvert was left in place and boulders were strategically placed in the river to raise the water level and slow the current enough for fish to get through.

Fish are now able to reach upstream habitat for a fraction of the cost of replacing the culvert. The entire project was less than \$150,000 versus the estimated million-dollar operation.

Finding a new solution to fish passage was not the only unique consideration for this project. The site is also home to Eastern massasauga rattlesnakes, which are federally listed as a threatened species.

“We wanted to make sure we didn’t have an unintended impact on the massasauga,” said Leisen.

To avoid sensitive streamside habitat, heavy equipment had to enter the river 100 yards downstream and drive upriver to the crossing site. This was possible Leisen explained because, “By a stroke of luck the stream bottom was all shallow gravel around the work site.”

A single rattlesnake was found during the project resulting in a temporary hold on work for part of a day until the snake moved on.

Once finished, the project reconnected 26 miles of upstream habitat. The project was supported by the U.S. Forest Service, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Sustain Our Great Lakes Program and the Walters Family Foundation.

We’ve come a long way — over 500 miles down and 112 to go for 2020. We have nine new river restoration projects on deck for the coming year, including an extensive road/stream crossing overhaul in the Pigeon River Country State Forest that will allow fish better access to the headwaters of the Pigeon River.

Where Land and Water Meet

Coastal conservation gains a Great Lakes champion

Lake Huron gained an advocate adept in Great Lakes restoration when Samantha Nellis joined Huron Pines as Watershed Project Manager in 2019. From Au Gres to Cheboygan, Nellis has been helping communities up and down the coast safeguard their most precious natural resources through collaboration, education and on-the-ground restoration efforts. Whether it's planting native vegetation to support wetland habitat or helping a high school science class reduce stormwater runoff, Nellis is committed to supporting the resources and the people that make Lake Huron's northern shore unique.

"Samantha came to us with a wealth of resource background as a researcher and is very familiar with Great Lakes ecology," said Lisha Ramsdell, Associate Director of Huron Pines. "One of the great things about Samantha is she's very much connected into what the community needs or wants and is able to listen and learn from them. She excels in both areas – natural resources and community engagement."

After a year of working at Lake Huron's Hammond Bay Biological Station focusing on sea lamprey, Nellis moved to Wisconsin to pursue a master's degree in Environmental Science and Policy from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. Much of her work focused on Lake Michigan's Green Bay where she split time between research and partnership building. She supported habitat restoration efforts on the bay by bringing organizations and local stakeholders together to share information, improve water quality and protect wildlife habitat. Her work with Huron Pines has brought her focus back to Lake Huron where she engages partners along the coast in efforts ranging from land conservation and restoration to stormwater management.

On Cheboygan's Duncan Bay, Nellis works alongside partners at Little Traverse Conservancy (LTC) to restore wetland habitat within the LTC preserve system. In 2017 Huron Pines helped secure grant funding to expand the preserve system with the purchase of 317 acres across five parcels of critical coastal property. Since that acquisition, Huron Pines has supported LTC's stewardship efforts on the land. In 2019, Nellis stepped into that role by leading efforts to remove invasive species and install 2,000 native plants to support wetland development across the properties.

Nellis is also working with coastal cities to assess stormwater issues and create a plan of action that will reduce runoff. Stormwater runoff can pick up oil, grease, salt and other debris that can result in beach closures, waterborne illnesses and degraded habitat for fish and wildlife. Pollution and flooding caused by stormwater threaten the environmental and economic health of Lake Huron communities that depend on clean water for recreation and tourism.

In Rogers City, Nellis is working with city leaders to establish funding and support for solutions that include replacing paved surfaces with green infrastructure to absorb stormwater pollution before it reaches the lakeshore.

"Scott McLennan, the mayor of Rogers City, has been a strong advocate for environmentally focused initiatives in the city," Nellis said. "He has helped keep the momentum going for stormwater management."

Nellis is working with coastal and inland partners in Alpena, Au Gres, East Tawas and Lewiston to help assess stormwater issues and develop management plans to ensure healthier water throughout Northern Michigan.

"One of the great things about Samantha is she's very much connected into what the community needs or wants and is able to listen and learn from them."



Samantha Nellis with her daughter at the grand opening of the boardwalk at Little Traverse Conservancy's Duncan Bay Preserve.



Clockwise: The Huron Pines stewardship crew hauls native plants across the boardwalk at Little Traverse Conservancy's Duncan Bay Preserve. Au Gres-Sims Middle Schoolers assist the High School science class with spring planting for their rain garden project. Samantha Nellis visits Lake Huron after a planning meeting with Rogers City Zoning Administrator Toby Kuznick, Mayor Scott McLennan and DDA Events Director Kim Margherio.

On the north end of Saginaw Bay students from Au Gres-Sims High School have taken stormwater management into their own hands. Led by Luke Freeman, a former fisheries biologist turned science teacher, students have been working with Huron Pines and other Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative network partners since 2018.

"I love seeing my kids get excited about what we do," Freeman said. "Anytime I can apply lessons from my time as a researcher to the real world, I jump on that opportunity. This has changed the way I look at education and it has given my students a sense of ownership in their community."

During the 2018-19 school year, students designed and built a rain garden to capture stormwater on their school property. This area of native plants and wildflowers also serves as a proving ground for Freeman's lessons in data collection, soil surveys and water quality.

Freeman's class is forging ahead on a new project this school year to manage stormwater with green infrastructure improvements in Au Gres' Riverside Park. Nellis has been joining the class for weekly video calls to answer questions

and provide support in any way she can.

"The stormwater program in Au Gres is an educational model that we hope to expand to communities and schools throughout the region," Nellis said. "As we're working toward a vision where conservation is driven by engaged, empowered communities, I see Au Gres-Sims as a great example of that vision in action. The students are taking the initiative to solve real-world conservation problems with the support of the administration, staff, conservation partners and the community."

While the specific projects and planning process may vary, each place shares a desire to enhance and protect one of their greatest community assets—healthy water. To increase our support for those efforts, Huron Pines opened a second office in Alpena in early 2020. With more staff (including a Coastal Project Manager) and an increased coastal presence, we can build on existing projects and partnerships to help every community along the coast protect the places they call home.

Protect and Restore

New staff bring a wealth of experience to our rich natural resources

East of I-75 there are over 4.5 million acres of land that stretch between Saginaw Bay and the Mackinac Bridge. Among those acres are the highest quality trout streams in the state, migration and stop-over spots for diverse and threatened bird species, and coastal wetlands that house rare plant and animal species, some of which exist nowhere else on earth. The protection and stewardship of this land is critical to Michigan's conservation future.

To meet the increasing need for land protection in the region and build on existing habitat restoration programs, Huron Pines took steps in 2017 to be eligible to hold land for conservation purposes. The primary goals of land protection are to preserve and enhance special ecosystems, foster meaningful connections to the land and inspire stewardship so our natural resources can be sustained for the future.

From 2017 to the end of 2019, our land protection efforts grew considerably. Huron Pines now owns two nature preserves — Hubbard Lake Nature Preserve in Alcona County and the Emily Min Hunt Nature Preserve in Presque Isle County. To support the demand of our growing efforts in land protection we welcomed Land Protection Director Heather Huffstutler and Conservation Stewardship Director Steve Woods in 2019. They bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to help develop our land protection and stewardship initiatives in the years to come.

Heather Huffstutler, Land Protection Director

Raised in a Coast Guard family, Heather Huffstutler found her passion for the outdoors at a young age, during her time exploring the beaches and rainforests of the Pacific Northwest.

"That's where I learned my love of the sea, the woods and all it can teach us and give us," Huffstutler said. "My history as a Coast Guard kid helped define who I am today — someone who loves the outdoors and has a great respect for it."

Before joining Huron Pines, Huffstutler worked in stewardship and land protection with Walloon Lake Trust and Conservancy and Six Rivers Land Conservancy. Influenced by her past conservancy experience and her biology background she sees the value in protecting landscapes for the benefit of both the people and the place.

"We want to be strategic in protecting lands that are ecologically valuable but are also important to the community," Huffstutler said.



Steve Woods, Lisha Ramsdell, Heather Huffstutler and Brad Jensen ready trails for the grand opening of the Hubbard Lake Nature Preserve.

The Emily Min Hunt Nature Preserve, gifted to Huron Pines in 2019 by the Thunder Bay Audubon Society, is an example of a property with unique ecosystems and direct public benefit. Home to 428 acres that include hardwood forests, a rare alvar glade and cedar wetlands, the unique mixed landscape serves as an important wildlife corridor. The property also serves as a public preserve that provides people with a new place to experience nature.

Each time Huron Pines promotes the preserve and hosts events, it's an opportunity for someone to connect with the land in a new way. The more people use and experience public lands, the more likely they are to care about them and to conserve them.

One of Huffstutler's long-term goals is to monitor changes in people's conservation knowledge and behavior as they experience more of the region's natural assets. She sees it as her responsibility to foster use and appreciation of public lands.

"We want people to be passionate about the wild places in their own backyards. And it's our job to make sure they know how to do that in the most environmentally responsible ways possible," said Huffstutler.



Attendees at the fall autumn olive workshop learn to identify, report and treat invasive autumn olive through hands-on practice.

Steve Woods, Conservation Stewardship Director

Steve Woods is a Michigan native who found his professional calling early in life. He spent summers as a kid at his family cabin on Black Lake near Cheboygan and later became a counselor at Camp Timbers in West Branch where he took an interest in environmental education.

"That experience was directly responsible for my career choice and it was a straight-line path," Woods explained. "I wanted to protect all the things that make Northern Michigan unique and special and I'm glad to be home."

"Huron Pines wants to be the organization that helps communities protect places they love."

With a background in environmental science and forest biology, Woods worked for The Nature Conservancy for 17 years before coming to Huron Pines. At The Nature Conservancy he managed and restored Michigan's unique natural landscapes like coastal fens, prairies and oak savannas by treating invasive species and conducting prescribed burns.

Together with Huffstutler, Woods is tasked with building a program that prioritizes land that meets as many community and conservation goals as possible.



Huron Pines hosts a yoga class following a trail run/walk at the Hubbard Lake Nature Preserve to introduce the community to this new recreation space.

"Huron Pines wants to be the organization that helps communities protect places they love," Woods said. "There's a lot to consider when we prioritize a project or a piece of land. With over 4 million acres, it's our obligation to identify and prioritize the most important ones."

Growing Protection and Stewardship

Huron Pines aims to protect and steward the highest quality ecosystems. However, maintaining and restoring land requires more than protection alone. Healthy habitat, clean water and recreational opportunities require thoughtful management and ongoing stewardship that meet changing environmental and community needs. To address development needs, fragmentation and threats like invasive species and climate change, we have to remain nimble and adaptable.

In an effort to make both land protection and landscape stewardship work strategic, we will explore how we can be efficient and effective in areas such as expanding important wildlife corridors or protecting rare natural areas at the highest risk for degradation. In addition, we're training local organizations and municipal staff to identify, inventory and treat invasive species in their own communities. And finally, we continue to grow our endowment and operational funding and seek support for these essential protection and stewardship efforts across our service area. Michigan's conservation future depends on it.

To support land protection and stewardship, and other important Huron Pines programs, visit huronpines.org/donate.

Land Protection

a. Forever Duncan Bay

In 2017, Huron Pines helped secure funding to protect over 3,500 feet of coastal and wetland property on Cheboygan's Duncan Bay. Protection and restoration were supported by grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Sustain Our Great Lakes Program and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Coastal Program, both supported through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Owned by Little Traverse Conservancy, the land is home to populations of rare plants including our state wildflower, the dwarf lake iris. In 2019 Huron Pines continued to support restoration by installing 2,000 native plants, managing invasive species and completing river restoration work on Elliot Creek, which flows into Duncan Bay.

b. Storey Lake

With support from Huron Pines, the Department of Natural Resources secured this 2,130-acre property after nearly 20 years of trying. Located in the heart of Michigan's elk range, the property includes the 8-acre Storey Lake and a mile of Stewart Creek. The property is surrounded by the Pigeon River Country State Forest and another large parcel of state land, creating an expanded wildlife corridor while providing abundant recreational opportunities.

c. Elk Forest Property

This 597-acre parcel is located in an elk range and surrounded on three sides by state-managed land. It includes public access to Walled Lake, over a mile of the Black River and diverse forest habitat. Huron Pines assisted the Department of Natural Resources in generating public support for the purchase and will be involved with developing management goals in 2020.

d. Upper Au Sable Property

Huron Pines helped secure support for the Department of Natural Resources to hold 1,010 acres of old growth and pine forest surrounding almost 1.5 miles of Au Sable River corridor. The acquisition of this land for habitat protection and public use was several years in the making and its purchase was made possible with support from the Natural Resources Trust Fund. This parcel creates greater connectivity on the landscape while helping to keep one of Michigan's most iconic rivers healthy and wild.



e. Emily Min Hunt Nature Preserve

The Thunder Bay Audubon Society donated the 428-acre Emily Min Hunt Nature Preserve to Huron Pines in March of 2019. Located between Rogers City and Alpena, the preserve offers the perfect spot for quiet nature exploration. Just off of Shubert Highway across from Long Lake, the preserve offers visitors the opportunity to traverse a mixed hardwood forest, limestone glade and grasslands. The preserve is home to many small mammals, birds and butterflies. Huron Pines is planning a dedication this summer to officially welcome the public to our newest preserve. We will also launch a fundraising campaign to support the stewardship and maintenance of the preserve's unique habitat. Contact Huron Pines to learn more or get involved.

f. North Point Preserve

The 1,500-acre North Point Preserve includes four miles of Lake Huron shoreline and provides a diverse ecosystem for many plant and animal species, access to historic shipwrecks and endless educational opportunities. After nearly a decade of effort, The Nature Conservancy purchased the property in 2018. The preserve will be our first opportunity to hold a permanent conservation easement, meaning we will ensure all agreed upon conservation principles are upheld and guarantee the protection of the land in perpetuity. That transition will happen later this year when ownership and management of the property are transferred to the Friends of Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

g. Hubbard Lake Nature Preserve

Hubbard Lake is the first nature preserve owned and operated by Huron Pines. Donated in 2018 by John and Wendy Frye, this property officially opened to the public in the summer of 2019 and features 80 acres of hilly, wooded terrain. We celebrated an event series that included a grand opening, nature hike, autumn olive workshop, trail run and yoga. We closed out the year with a watercolor class taught by our inaugural Artist-in-Residence, Sarah Tule. The preserve is open daily to the public from sunrise to sunset with close to two miles of trails for hiking, snowshoeing and wildlife viewing. Stay informed about future events at huronpines.org/events.

Community Connections

Inspiring conservation through local engagement

They say it takes a village, and that's especially true when it comes to nature. That's why we've committed to building collaborative partnerships with local organizations, residents, leaders and schools to educate, empower and inspire communities to prioritize conservation practices in everything they do.

We call this Vibrant Communities, and it's a category of programming devoted specifically to working hand-in-hand with local citizens and leaders to restore and maintain healthy communities and natural resources across Northern Michigan.

This work starts with an open mind and an open dialogue – meeting people where they are and understanding their interests and connections to nature. By first listening, assessing and collaborating, we're able to create programs that help show people what's at stake and enlist them to be part of a solution.

The health of our region depends on establishing strong advocates for natural resource protection.

The first step is getting people outside.

The second step is connecting them to conservation.

The third step is inspiring stewardship.

The Intersection of Purpose and Place

Connecting communities to nature means bringing everyone outdoors. In 2019 alone, Huron Pines was responsible for connecting over 1,000 youth and adults to nature, engaging students, seniors, parents and preschoolers in activities ranging from pulling invasive garlic mustard along the Au Sable to practicing nature

journaling after a trail hike. We invited communities to access and explore public land by hosting events at the Huron Pines Hubbard Lake Nature Preserve, Hanson Hills Recreation Area, the Little Traverse Conservancy Duncan Bay Nature Preserve and the Pigeon River Country State Forest Discovery Center. We expanded our scope by working with non-traditional partners and targeting events to new audiences.

Healthy People Make Healthy Places

Huron Pines launched a partnership with Munson Healthcare in Grayling and Gaylord and joined the Crawford County Health Improvement Committee (CHIC) to explore connections between personal and environmental health. Community Program Lead Abigail Ertel and Environmental Education Coordinator Emily Vogelgesang spent 2019 collaborating, planning and executing new programs focused on integrating health, wellness and conservation. As a result, we hosted four events and helped launch a backpack program to fuel outdoor exploration. Residents and visitors in Crawford County can now check out free backpacks with nature gear for all ages – field guides, nature bingo, binoculars, a bug viewer and more.

"Huron Pines has been responsible for bringing the vital conservation and environmental wellness piece to CHIC, which focuses on community health and wellness initiatives," said Zoey Thayer, chair of CHIC and Public Health Educator with the District #10 Health Department. "Crawford County has so many outdoor and recreational opportunities and the Adventure Pack program that Huron Pines helped develop has helped highlight those well."

Huron Pines plans to add more community partners and events in



Left to right: Abigail Ertel helps with a garden scavenger hunt. Grayling Middle School students do a round of nature bingo at their school forest property with the help of CHIC Adventure Packs. Event attendees monitor water quality by looking for macroinvertebrates (e.g. river bugs and other organisms without spines).

the coming year and integrate the backpack program into more community and school programs.

Community Cornerstones

Speaking of school programs, Vogelgesang has been leading the charge with our K-12 programming, working with students and staff in Au Gres, Alcona, Gaylord, Grayling and Vanderbilt. Each school has a unique way of integrating hands-on learning, community engagement and student leadership, and Vogelgesang helps support and expand their initiatives.

When it comes to our education program, we are supported by a network of conservation professionals, volunteers and educators. With the help of these partners, Vogelgesang and the Huron Pines staff present students with a diverse set of conservation role models. Students can run a soil investigation alongside a career forester or calculate slope for a rain garden with a watershed planner standing by. These experiences help them see how their work in the field directly relates to career opportunities.

"Huron Pines is a pillar in the conservation community and brings a wealth of resources and knowledge to the Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative place-based education network," said Meag Schwartz, the Network Coordinator. "From school forests to invasive species to land-water connections, Huron Pines is a partner we can rely on to educate youth about protecting the unique natural resources that make Northeast Michigan such a wonderful place to live."

Statewide Impact

Thanks to the Huron Pines AmeriCorps program, our impact stretches well beyond Northeast Michigan. By placing 30 Huron Pines AmeriCorps members with conservation organizations across the state each year, we can scale community outreach and education efforts exponentially.

In 2019, Huron Pines AmeriCorps members hosted 322 nature-focused events in over 100 cities statewide. Through their

collective efforts to engage local volunteers, community groups and schools in service projects, hands-on learning opportunities and educational workshops, they reached almost 13,000 people. That's more than the entire population of many of the Northern Michigan communities we reach.

Huron Pines AmeriCorps member Samantha Peterson served with the Department of Natural Resources at the Pigeon River Country State Forest in 2019 and has returned for a second year in 2020. She remembers leading an event with a local Girl Scout troop, where the girls were hesitant to walk in the tall grass by the river because they were worried about ticks. She wanted them to get comfortable being outdoors.

"...as Huron Pines AmeriCorps members we can really have an impact on how people see the natural world..."

"As we were in the grass a couple of ticks climbed onto me and I calmly flicked them off of my pant leg. Seeing me act calm about it and explaining how they are a natural part of the landscape really helped to calm the girls down," said Peterson. "By the end of the class they were running around looking for different things on a scavenger hunt. It showed me that as Huron Pines AmeriCorps members we can really have an impact on how people see the natural world and how we can help them relax and enjoy what Northern Michigan has to offer."

From family events to student field work, Huron Pines is committed to the long-term health of the environment, and that means committing to the education and engagement of the communities we serve. Wherever communities meet and engage with the outdoors, it's our goal to join them for a walk in the woods.

"From school forests to invasive species to land-water connections, Huron Pines is a partner we can rely on to educate youth about protecting the unique natural resources that make Northeast Michigan such a wonderful place to live."



Gaylord students identify soil types on their school forest property with Environmental Education Coordinator Emily Vogelgesang and NRCS District Conservationist Sharcy Ray.

A Home on the Coast

Huron Pines opens a second office in Alpena

The Huron Pines Alpena office went from an idea to a full-fledged reality as we closed out 2019. In early fall we started searching for an office, posting new staff positions and making plans. By December we were assembling furniture and scheduling start dates. The decision was years in the making, and marks a new chapter in our longstanding commitment to the region and the community.

In the last decade, Huron Pines has worked up and down the Lake Huron coast to improve habitat and the health of the Great Lakes by managing invasive species on public and private land. In the Alpena community we helped manage the spread of invasive plants around Island Park with the help of volunteers and members of the Alpena Wildlife Sanctuary. We also partnered with the city of Harrisville to manage Japanese barberry across the city, and we regularly treat phragmites at almost 100 properties along the coast each year.

We've had Huron Pines AmeriCorps members serve with local organizations including Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative. We've inventoried the rivers and streams throughout the Thunder Bay Watershed to prioritize river restoration and erosion control.

"We've always been drawn to Alpena and the surrounding area because of its abundant natural resources and exceptional partners," said Brad Jensen, Executive Director. "We've really seen an expansion of our work along the coast over the last few years and that's been driven by the people and partners in those places."

Our team is working with communities including Alpena, Au Gres, Rogers City and East Tawas to address stormwater issues in an effort to protect the long-term health of Lake Huron. With the new office up and running we are looking ahead to increasing our capacity with new employees, and a permanent presence on the coast that will help us deepen existing partnerships and develop new ones.

The Alpena office houses three full-time employees. Emily Vogelgesang, Environmental Education Coordinator, transferred to Alpena from Gaylord and has been with Huron Pines since 2017 to develop and execute hands-on educational programs in partnership with school districts across Northern Michigan.

Two new positions were filled by Alpena natives Amy

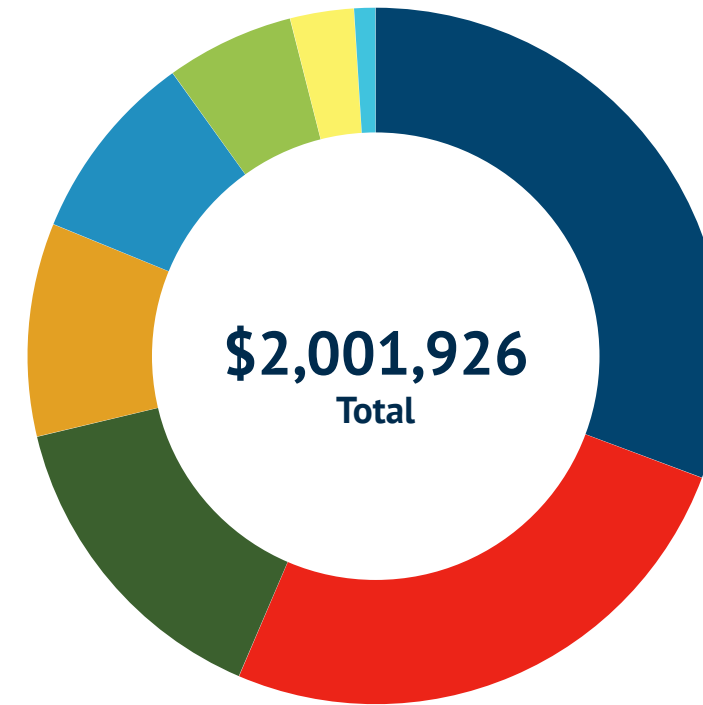


Amy Nowakowski, Chris Engle and Emily Vogelgesang inside the Huron Pines Alpena office at 122 W Chisholm St. Photo: Crystal Nelson for The Alpena News

Nowakowski and Chris Engle. As Coastal Project Manager, Nowakowski is focused on road/stream crossings, river restoration and invasive species management. She holds an associate in science from Alpena Community College, a bachelor's double-major in geology and environmental science from Western Michigan University and a master's in hydrology with a focus on fisheries biology from Colorado State University. She worked for the U.S. Forest Service as a hydrologist and fisheries biologist for over a decade and has lived in Wyoming, Colorado, Hawaii and Alaska. She enjoys camping, biking, skiing, kayaking, playing hockey and being outside with her family.

As Communications Associate, Engle will share project information, updates and events to engage people across the region in conservation. He was a staff writer for the *Gaylord Herald Times* from 2005 until 2014 covering city government, environmental issues and conservation efforts. He later worked under a forestry consultant managing private forest lands for timber and wildlife in Otsego and surrounding counties. He holds an associate's degree in journalism from Alpena Community College and his favorite activities include fly fishing for bluegill, mushroom hunting and camping with his wife and young daughter.

With the office up and running in 2020, we hope you'll visit the new location and meet our new staff members in Alpena.



2019 Huron Pines Program Expenses

31%	Healthy Water	\$624,209
26%	Huron Pines AmeriCorps	\$516,830
15%	Wildlife Habitat Improvement	\$300,939
10%	Community Development	\$208,159
9%	Invasive Species Management	\$171,347
6%	Land Protection	\$113,869
3%	Environmental Education	\$53,765
1%	Public Policy	\$12,808
100%	Total	\$2,001,926

Financial Overview

Revenue	2018	2019
Annual Giving	\$104,042	\$141,097
Contributions	*\$602,631	*\$584,712
Contractual Services	\$263,241	\$308,952
Federal Grants	\$1,028,345	\$1,280,882
State Grants	\$644,741	\$492,657
Total Revenue	\$2,643,000	\$2,808,300

Expenses	2018	2019
Fundraising	\$23,858	\$40,539
Management	\$361,435	\$361,711
Program	\$1,865,819	\$2,001,926
Total Expenses	\$2,251,112	\$2,404,176
Net Income	*\$391,888	*\$404,124

After achieving our annual financial goals and building cash reserves for future program expansion, we were able to invest in our long-term sustainability by adding to the Huron Pines Endowment Fund at the Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan. If you are interested in supporting our endowment fund, you can do so by contacting the Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan directly or visiting cfnem.org.

* In 2018, the value of the Hubbard Lake Nature Preserve was included in contributions and in 2019 the value of the Emily Min Hunt Nature Preserve has been included. That same property value is also reflected as part of our annual net income which results in a larger net income than in years past.

Contributions

Grants

These amounts represent the total amount awarded by each grant or entity, not the specific portion of the grant spent in 2019.

\$1,000,000+

Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Aquatic Habitat Grant Program
Coastal Zone Management
Dam Management Grant Program
Habitat Improvement Fund
Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program
Wildlife Habitat Grant Program
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Sustain Our Great Lakes

\$300,000-999,999

Bay Area Community Foundation
Corporation for National and Community Service
Great Lakes Restoration Initiative
Michigan Community Service Commission
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Fish Passage Program
Coastal Program

\$100,000-299,999

Eagle Creek Renewable Energy
EPA Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving (CPS) Cooperative Agreement Program
Great Lakes Fishery Trust
U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities supported by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Forest Service
Walters Family Foundation

\$10,000-99,999

Besser Foundation
Consumers Energy Foundation
Elizabeth, Allan & Warren Shelden Fund
Ruffed Grouse Society
The Carls Foundation
The Conservation Fund (Saginaw Bay WIN)
The Herbert H. & Grace A. Dow Foundation

\$1,000-9,999

Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan
Council of Michigan Foundations
District Health Department #10
Leon P. Martuch Chapter of Trout Unlimited
Michigan Forest Foundation
Northeast Michigan Women's Giving Circle Fund at the Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan
Northeast Michigan Regional Prosperity Initiative
Otsego Community Foundation
Presque Isle Electric & Gas
Rotary Club of Gaylord
Skerratt Family Fund of the Otsego Community Foundation
Weyerhaeuser Giving Fund
William B. Mershon Chapter of Trout Unlimited

\$100-999

FOP Cop Fund of the Otsego Community Foundation
Kiwanis Club of Gaylord
Lampert Family Fund of the Otsego Community Foundation
Munson Healthcare Otsego Memorial Hospital
Otsego Wildlife Legacy Society
Youth Fund of the Otsego Community Foundation

Business and Organization Gifts

\$25,000-49,999

Enhance, Inc.

\$5,000-9,999

Hubbard Lake Sportsman & Improvement Association
ITC Holdings Corp.

\$1,000-4,999

Black Lake Preservation Society
Fischer Insurance Agency
Gaylord Area Convention and Tourism Bureau
M&M Excavating Inc.
Pine River-Van Etten Lake Watershed Coalition
Thunder Bay Audubon Society

\$500-999

Alcona Community Schools
Ann Arbor Trout Unlimited
Au Sable Dunes Homeowners Association
City of Gaylord
Consumers Energy
DTE Energy
Flygirls of Michigan, Inc.
Huron Engineering and Surveying, Inc.
Mayfair Plastics

\$100-499

Alpena Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
Ann Arbor Soccer Association
Bennethum's Northern Inn Restaurant
Bradford Lakes Association
Capital Region Community Foundation
Cedars for the Au Sable
County of Otsego
Higgins Lake Property Owners Association
Jansen Warehousing
Julie and Mark Pulte Charitable Foundation
Krenn Timber Bridge, Inc.
Line 45
Maple Ridge Hardwoods, Inc.
Michigan Overboard
Montmorency County Conservation Club
Northern Family Dentistry PLLC
Opal Lake Association
Oscoda Canoe Rental
Presque Isle County Garden Club
Recreation Fishing Club
Roscommon Auto Recyclers, Inc.
Sunrise Gardening Club
Yoga 45

\$1-99

First Congregational Church UCC
Lake Horicon Corp.
Saturn Booksellers
West Perch Lake Homeowners

Individual Gifts

\$2,500-4,999

Eric Bankhead and Connie Schrieber
Kathy Erwin and Dirk VanKoughnett from the Erwin/VanKoughnett Family Fund at The Chicago Community Foundation
John and Wendy Frye
Peggy Kusnerz
Tom and Bonnie Page from The Bonnie (Olsen) Page Charitable Trust Fund

\$1,000-2,499

Gregory and Cecilia Bator
The Chip and Betsy Erwin Family
Richard E. and Dixie L. Erwin Family Fund from The Chicago Community Foundation
Beach and Marianne Hall
Joe and Judi Jarecki
Kohnert Family Fund from the Otsego Community Foundation
James Kure
Bill and Katie Robertson
Jerry and Fran Rucker
Donette and Gary Spiekerman

\$500-999

Tom and Marcia Cardelli
Ned Caveney
The Honorable Alton T. Davis and Sandra Kay Shellfish
William A. and Linda Demmer
Beverly and James Haas
Hack Family Foundation, Jan and Talbot Hack, from the Raymond James Charitable Endowment Fund
David Irani and Laurel Moore
Brad Jensen and Rebecca Benson
Judy Kalmanek
Jennifer and Michael Koralewski
Thomas B. Mudd
Robert and Mary Lou Petrach
Paul and Carol Rose
Eric R. and Laura Showalter
Peter and Suzanne Thomson

\$100-499

Glen Adams
Bill and Debi Anderson
Kirk Anderson
Anonymous
The Cathy and Bob Anthony Fund at the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan
The Richard L. and Marilyn K. Augustine Foundation from the TIAA Charitable Giving Fund
Richard and Marilyn Bachelor
Peter and Chiara Barbier
Rudolf Becker
Robert and Betsy Bell
Karl Benghauser
Waterfowl Bob's Wetlands Consulting-Bob Bissonnette
Ethalinda Blackman
Tim Blanchet
Pam Blondin and Harry Lenhart
George and Janet Bozynski
Paul and Mary Bray
Norm and Valerie Brecheisen
Douglas and Kathryn Brehm
Larry Brickler
Christopher Brierley
Larry and Joanne Brock
Richard Bryan
Gerald and Rose Burke
Don and Kathy Burkley
Harriet and David Butz
Chad Byron
Al Cambridge
Glen and Gwen Catt
Anne and John Cauley
Colby and Tim Chilcote
Pam and Tom Conquest
Bob and Gay Courtois
Ann and Richard Craig
Norma Crouch
Anne and Daniel Danosky
Dan and Kandy Dennis from the Erwin/VanKoughnett Family Fund
Michael and Darcy Dombrowski
Aric Donajkowski
Patricia Donath
Brian Doughty
Esther Dullaert
John D. and Eleanor H. Durno
George Ebling
John Edwards
Roger and Dagmar Eriksson
Roger and Mary Fechner
Jane A. Fitzpatrick
Valerie Flood
Linda and Oz Forrester
Scott Foster
Jim and Sue Francis
Dale and Sandy Franz
Steve and Corrine Freeman
Belinda Friis
Samuel and Linda Gabby
Paul Gambka

Edward Garcia-McDonnell
Gits' n Shiggles audience
Chris and Elaine Graham
Jim and Shirley Graves
Harry and Audrey Greenleaf
Jim and Linda Gregart
Pamela Griffin
Peter and Virginia Gustafson
Rob Haar
Rick and Robin Hagopian
Virginia R. Hanley
Blair and Sandra Marie Headrick
Michael Heath
Jerry Heinrich
Dick and Judy Henry
Scott and Cynthia Hill
Frank Hinzmann
Raymond and Frances Hoobler
Katherine and Larry Howell
Carl and Vicki Hueter
Chris Humes
Mike and Sue Inman
Kurt Jagoda
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George Jury
Brian Kelley
George and Linda Killat
Andrew Knapp
Mary Lou Korsh
William Kusey
John and Jessica Kusku
Jerry and Susan La Vanture
Bernie and Nancy Lamp
Kathleen Lawrence
Arnie Leriche
Leif and Lois Lindblom
Lance and Pamela Lindell
John R. Lindsay
Jenny and Anton Llakmani
Bill and Teresa Lossing
Robin-Marie and Terence Loucks
The Love Family Cottage
Ronnie Macko
Donna and Michael Maddin
Dr. James and Deborah Mangutz
Jack and Julie Marlette
John C. Marsh
John and Nancy Marshall
James Maslanka and Catherine Giebel
Diane and Glen Matthews
Greg and Diana McComas
Mike McGraw
William McLaughlin
Rick and Anne Meeks
Kimberley and James Menzie
William D. Middleton
Hank and Terri Milius
Drs. Bruce Hull and Margaret Mitchell
Robert and Cynthia Morgner
Jenny Morton
Guy T. Moulthrop
Tom Mundt
Sandra Murphy
Phil and Lora Myers
Sharon Myers
David and Nancy Neal
Jennifer Nelson
Gordon and Vernie Nethercut
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Christie and Mike Perdue
Susan Perdue
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Lisha and Mark Ramsdell

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Mark Rice
Theresa Richter
James and Andrea Risk
Keith Ross
Dr. and Mrs. Nathaniel H. Rowe
Mary Sanders
James and Dorothy Schramm
Glenn and Moon Seagren
George Shaw and Bonnie Marsh
Jeff Silagy and Beth Chan
Robb and Christine Smith
Dr. Donald M. Solomon
Harold Sorenson
Michael and Suzanne Sorrentino
Robert and Jane Sparks
Bob and Jane Spence
Barbara Spuhler
Walter Stansbury
Bill and Charity Steere
Joe Stevens
Morrison and Julie Stevens
Daniel and Jeanne Stock
David L. Stolle
Ben and Debbie Stosick
Philip Straley
Joseph and Jane Swallow
Fred and Carole Swinehart
Andrew C. Tarkington DDS
Robert and Mary Louise Tarkowski
Allison and David Graw
Tom Trevillian
Jay and Bev Trucks
Sarah Tule Artworks
Eric VanPoucker and Ronald J. Smith
Stewart Vining
Patricia and Mark Watkins
Judd and Mary Ann Wellard
Scott and Ann Wellard
Stephen Werner MD and Karen Werner
Chuck Wheeler
Joseph Wildberg
Peter and Lynn Wilson
Ron and Gail Young
Thomas and Carol Young

\$1-99

Ruth Aagesen
Elizabeth Abood-Carroll and David Carroll
Christopher Adamo
Lindsey Adams
Fred and Diane Alati
Anonymous (2)
Caryl and Russ Anton
Jessica Beltz
Nadia Benab
Ed and Lee Bender
Betty Bennett
Mary and Timothy Blackwood
Gail and Don Block
Dennis and Linda Boyer
Bonnie and James Braden
Carolyn Jean Braden
Jim and Kathy Bricker
Don and Patricia Brown
Laurie Bruneel Arora and Shail Arora
Carl Buchner
James and Christina Budzynowski
Leonard and Maureen Butski
Carol Buxton and Dave Kelley
Richard and Marsha Carlson
Michael Carroll
Kristen Carter
Lori and Mark Carter
Pamela Cole
Daniel Conto

Bruce E. and Lisa Cooke
Peg Cowdin
Mary M. Cox
Richard and Penelope Crawford
Jim Culberson
Robert Davis
Sandra Davy
William R. and Mary Elizabeth Derwin
David Dobbie
Pamela Doll
Katherine Duffy
Susan Duncan and Larry Van Wagoner
Bob and Linda Eder
Abigail and Patrick Ertel
Larry and Pat Farris
Ruth Favro
Mrs. Pat Feighan
Larry and Vickie Fields
Charles and Katherine Finneran
Joan Fitzgibbon
Sharon Fortner
Barbara Fosmire
Robert and Nila Frei
Ethan Fulton
T. Eduardo and Maria Garcia
Jim and Judy Gaskell
Meaghan Gass
Jim and Alyce Gendregske
Robert Gillenwater
Robert and Jennifer Grace
Tom and Joann Green
Ken and Elizabeth Gribble
Diane Haber
Victoria Hankins
David Hawkins
James and Rebecca Heindl
Jennifer Heinrich
Patrick Heraghty
Sarah Hercula
Jack Hipchen
Thoralf and Victoria Hoelzer-Maddox
Terry and Ruth Ann Hoiles
Michael and Susan Horner
Meghan Hoste
William Houston
Heather Huffstutler
Elizabeth Jacob
Jim Jarecki
Marty Jones
Chet Kapusinski
Joseph Keefe
Mr. and Mrs. Herb and Linda Klingel
Nancy Koepke
Mark Koski
Gary Kovellev
Carol Kugler
Randy Kursinsky
Claude and Sharon LaFray
Jeanne Leccese
Joshua Leisen
Yvonne and Helga Lentner
Kathy and Mike Lewis
Don and Wanda Lord
Tom Lorenz
Guy and Barbara Lovelace
Judith Lynch
Liz Lynch
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Cathy Maxwell
Cheryl McCormick
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Gary and Carolyn Medland
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David Melcher
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Herman Miller

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Mark Notman
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Al Ochsner
Charles and Irene Ohmer
Katie Olson
Janet Opdyke
Georgie and Robert Pachella
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Ruth Peek
Ryan Pemberton
John Peppler
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Don and Sis Pierce
John and Armella Pierce
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David Potter
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Keith Radwanski and Erin Fanning
Diane and Robert Reeve
Virginia Reichenbach
Gregg Resnick
Nanci Richards Tayler
Steve and Karen Rodock
George and Jeanette Roe
Katherine Roth
Denise Rousseau
Tony and Jill Scarzo
Roland Schaedig
Peter and Pat Schmid
Troy Schoenmeyer
Meag Schwartz
Sharyn Scovie
Robert Seaman
Bill and Denise Semion
Pete and Kimberly Sermo
Jim and Pat Shaffer
V. Carl Shaner
Louise and Ronald Shoknsnyder
John Shreves
Linda Sidzina
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Jerry Smith and Linda Arlt-Smith
Stewart and Carol Smith
George and Elizabeth Smojver
Danielle Smoot
Joey Spano
Pat and Vicki Springstead
Sindy Steffner
Joe Stratton
Bob and Debi Stuber
Leona M. Sullivan
Linda Taylor
Dave and Donna Tinsley
Melissa Tomassi
Helen Tull
Douglas and Deborah Vandenberg
Emily Vogelgesang
Robert and Elena Wakeman
Matthew Watkins
Michael Wells
Dave and Adrian Wilson
Jane Winters
Roger and Carol Witherbee
Richard Wolff
Steven and Brenda Woods
Mary Workinger
Stanley and Linda Yolkiewicz

Nicholas and Jill Zielinski
Jennie and Mike Zoll
Melissa Zoll

In Honor Of
Gifts made in honor of the names in bold

Gregory and Cecilia Bator
from Kimberley and James Menzie

Greg Bator
from James and Andrea Risk

Black Lake Preservation Society
from Beverly and James Haas

Rudi Edel
from Dale and Sandy Franz

Betsy, Chip, Claire and Will Erwin
from Dr. Donald M. Solomon

Charles Gillece
from Roger and Mary Fechner

Mike Grace
from Robert and Jennifer Grace

Mike Grant
from Barbara Fosmire

Joan and James Graw
from Dave and Donna Tinsley

The incredible work done by Huron Pines
from Mary M. Cox

Huron Pines' work at Tawas Beach Club. Thank you.
from The Love Family Cottage

Laura Justin
from Jim and Linda Gregart

George Kusku: Happy Birthday to George Kusku!
This is for you, from Gabriel Smoot and Family

from Danielle Smoot

Mr. Craig Perry
from Rudolf Becker

Lisha Ramsdell
from Bob and Gay Courtois

Connie Schrieber
from Brad Jensen and Rebecca Benson

from Jennifer Heinrich

from Terry and Ruth Ann Hoiles

from George Shaw and Bonnie Marsh

Straley Lamp & Kraenzlein P.C. CPAs
from Philip Straley

Student Stewardship
from Mike McGraw

In Memory Of
Gifts made in memory of the names in bold

Anne & Zophia
from Stewart Vining

Chester Casimir Bator
from Katherine and Larry Howell

Bing and Bonnie Benghauser
from Karl Benghauser

Erin Block
from Gail and Don Block

Emilie Ann Bolan
from Katherine and Larry Howell

Ed and Dolores Bozynski
from George and Janet Bozynski

William and Violet Clements
from Fred and Diane Alati

Chris T. Cowdin
from Peg Cowdin

Stephanie Ebling
from George Ebling

Jed Erwin
from Dr. Donald M. Solomon

Jed Erwin
from Jenny Morton

Dr. David A. Feighan
from Mrs. Pat Feighan

Catherine L. Garcia-McDonnell, PhD
from Edward Garcia-McDonnell

Veronica Greason
from Ethalinda Blackman (2)

Mr. and Mrs. William Hartz
from Esther Dullaert

Celeste Jensen
from Jerry Jensen

Elton and Joyce Jensen
from Jerry Jensen

Nels Johnson
from Diane and Glen Matthews

Elaine Ciotola Kaplan
from Helen Tull

Mary Lynn Kraft
from Mary and Timothy Blackwood

Julianne and Altan Kusku
from John and Jessica Kusku

Patricia Mielke
from Susan Duncan and Larry Van Wagoner

Dorothy Miller
from Herman Miller

Jerry Myers
from Glen and Gwen Catt

William Myers
from Sharon Myers

Timothy Daniel Pulte
from Julie and Mark Pulte Charitable Foundation

Robert V. Petrach, Sr.
from Robert and Mary Lou Petrach

Pete Petoskey
from Kimberley and James Menzie

Bill and Lenora Richards
from Nanci Richards Tayler

Jerold Scovie
from Sharyn Scovie

Andrew James Smojver
from George and Elizabeth Smojver

Eric Timinsky
from Tom Lorenz

Paul Winters
from Jane Winters

Everett S. "Bud" Woods
from Ruth Aagesen

from Glen Adams

from Ann Arbor Soccer Association

from Anonymous

from Nadia Benab

from Pam Blondin and Harry Lenhart

from Dennis and Linda Boyer

from Richard Bryan

from Chad Byron

from Michael Carroll

from Pamela Cole

from Bruce E. and Lisa Cooke

from Robert Davis

from Sandra Davy

from Joan Fitzgibbon

from Jane A. Fitzpatrick

from Robert and Nila Frei

from Meaghan Gass

from Jim and Alyce Gendregks

from Diane Haber

from Virginia R. Hanley

from Chris Humes

from Huron Pines Staff

from Brad Jensen and Rebecca Benson

from William C. and Lori Jurgens

from Mary Lou Korsh

from Claude and Sharon LaFray

Huron Pines Donor Spotlight

Generosity Comes in All Sizes

Six-year-old donor George Kusku leads by example and puts his money where his lake is

Some donors give to Huron Pines because they've seen our work in action – we've managed the spread of invasive species on their property or made it easier for fish to flourish on their favorite trout stream. Some give because they believe we're developing the next generation of conservation leaders through environmental education and Huron Pines AmeriCorps. Some give because they want to protect the places they love. Some, like six-year-old George Kusku, give because they like to swim in Lake Huron.

George's donation came to us with a letter that read: "I saved my money from my jobs to donate to Huron Pines. Thank you for helping us and protecting the environment. I like to swim in Lake Huron and I like nature."

His reasons for giving were simple, but at six years old, he already understands what some people take years to see, that the things we love about nature like swimming and exploring can only exist if we appreciate and protect them.

George's appreciation for the outdoors comes to him naturally. His parents John and Jessica Kusku have been enjoying the woods and water of Northern Michigan since they were kids. They both grew up with family properties up north that they would visit whenever they could. As teachers, John and Jessica take advantage of summers off to continue their up north traditions.

Even with a home downstate surrounded by the woods of the Proud Lake Recreation Area, there's something about Lake Huron the Kuskus can't get enough of. "When I get up there, to that house, everything is relaxed. I'm looking at this amazing beautiful lake that every day is different," said Jessica.



George and his dad John, sledding during a winter visit up north. Photo: Jessica Kusku



George swimming in Lake Huron. Photo: Jessica Kusku

George's favorite part of the lake is "all the creatures and stuff that we can look at." He collects rocks and follows toads on the path to the lake. He canoes with his dad to Sulphur Island and watches minnows swimming in the shallow water.

"I saved my money from my jobs to donate to Huron Pines. Thank you for helping us and protecting the environment."

At the end of a busy year of restoration projects, partner meetings, community events and so many miles on the road, George's generosity was the perfect gift to end the year for the Huron Pines staff. His letter and donation were a reminder to everyone why this work matters so much. We're grateful to George for helping us think back to all the people we reached in 2019 and to the experiences we had in our youth that shaped our values and passions and brought us here to Huron Pines.

We imagined we weren't the only ones who would be inspired by George so we shared his story. George's original gift of \$9.50 was matched again and again throughout the end of 2019. In total, George helped to raise more than \$750 to protect the places he loves in Northern Michigan. George is proof that it doesn't matter how big the donor or the donation, every gift makes a difference at Huron Pines.



4241 Old US 27 South, Suite 2
Gaylord, MI 49735
(989) 448-2293
huronpines.org



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