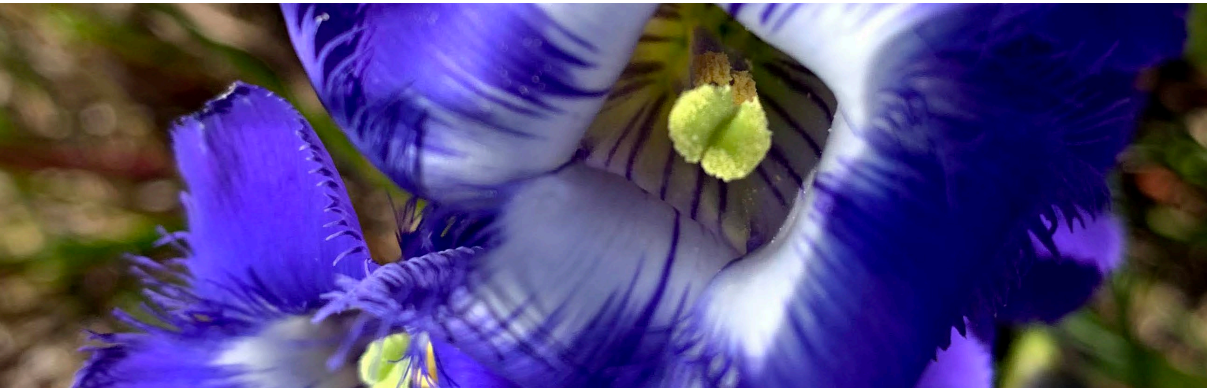




# Annual Report 2020

Healthy Water. Protected Places. Vibrant Communities.



# Looking Back and Moving Forward

Thank you to our board and staff for your passion, drive and commitment to conservation.

## Board of Directors

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*Communications Associate*
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*Community Program Director*
- Logan Hawley**  
*Coastal Restoration Team Lead*
- Heather Huffstutler**  
*Land Protection Director*
- Rachel Leggett**  
*Heartland Restoration Team Lead*
- Josh Leisen**  
*Senior Project Manager*
- Samantha Nellis**  
*Water Program Director*
- Amy Nowakowski**  
*Coastal Project Manager*
- Amanda Vanaman**  
*Huron Pines AmeriCorps Program Manager*
- Steve Woods**  
*Conservation Stewardship Director*
- Jennie Zoll**  
*Finance and Administration Director*

In 2020, we learned we have a staff that defines the word resilience, a board willing to take risks to achieve major conservation wins and a growing group of supporters whose generosity enables us to carry out our mission during challenging times. That mission, to conserve and enhance natural resources to ensure healthy water, protected places and vibrant communities, was proven more important than ever before as people came out in record numbers to enjoy the waters and forests of Northern Michigan.

We entered 2020 optimistic about the future. Our board welcomed members from diverse geographical and professional backgrounds, bringing new perspectives to our work. We added two full-time staff members to our team in January and hosted a grand opening for our new office in downtown Alpena in February. Working across nearly five million acres in Northern Michigan, a growing board and staff and a second location gave us increased capacity to meet the needs of our coastal and heartland communities.

When the world came to a near standstill in March and April, we took time to reset, reprioritize and find ways to keep momentum going wherever we could. It wasn't just about how many projects we could still make happen, it was about how we would continue building relationships with the partners, supporters and communities we rely on. So much of our work happens behind the scenes – bringing stakeholders together, gathering public input, planning large-scale restoration efforts. Some of those important steps had to be reimagined in 2020 but they didn't stop. We took full advantage of the natural distance provided by so many of the special places we work. We kept restoring rivers, enhancing wildlife habitat, developing leaders in conservation and helping cities prepare for future projects.

As we moved into fall, we were able to celebrate another grand opening with the dedication of the Emily Min Hunt Preserve. We then saw a unique opportunity to protect nearly a mile of shoreline along Lake Huron just south of Tawas City. We purchased the property right before the year ended, launching a \$2.5 million campaign. Knowing we can seize an opportunity like this – and have the support to make it happen – helped us end 2020 with even more optimism about what's to come. Thank you all for making our work such a success and for helping us build a brighter future.

**Brad Jensen**, *Executive Director*

**Joe Jarecki**, *Board Chair*



Executive Director Brad Jensen cuts the ribbon to mark the official grand opening of the Huron Pines Alpena office surrounded by Huron Pines board members, staff and friends.

## Our Mission

The mission of Huron Pines is to 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.



# Protecting Wild Places

The Lake Huron landscape, from the waterways that flow into it to the land that surrounds it, creates the perfect backdrop for biodiversity. Forests filter the Blue Ribbon Trout Streams stretching from the heartland to the coast. Thick cedar swamps provide cover for songbirds while marshes and swales shelter shorebirds and waterfowl. The limestone bedrock of the lake's northern shore makes a perfect home for rare species like our state wildflower, the dwarf lake iris. These wonders, all rooted in Lake Huron, are part of Michigan's heritage which Huron Pines is working to preserve for the future.

In partnership with community foundations and conservation organizations in Michigan and Ontario, Huron Pines is engaging communities to activate local solutions and sustain a healthy Lake Huron as part of the Lake Huron Forever initiative. This new effort aligns with our goals to support community-driven conservation to ensure healthy water, protect wild places and build vibrant communities.

One major way Huron Pines is working to support Lake Huron's unique ecosystems is through our land protection program. Started in 2017, this program has grown from an idea to a reality and Huron Pines now owns three preserves totaling more than 650 acres. In 2020, we celebrated the grand opening of our second property with a ribbon cutting at the Emily Min Hunt Preserve in Presque Isle County. We also took on our largest land protection project yet when we embarked upon the \$2.5M Lake Huron Coastal Preserve project in Alabaster Township, just a few miles south of Tawas City.

The undisturbed forested shoreline of this preserve offers food and shelter for migrating birds while its wooded wetlands keep Lake Huron pure and clean. With its connections to nearby residential areas, the Alabaster Township Bike Path and Arboretum, and bird migration routes, this property has something to offer everyone – from wildlife to weekend visitors.

Huron Pines purchased the property in December with a short-term loan from The Conservation Fund. Alabaster Township will apply for funding from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund in 2021 to purchase the property from Huron Pines and create their first township park. Even with full Trust Fund support and early investment from foundations and individual donors, Huron Pines is still seeking \$280,000 in additional funding to guarantee permanent protection and maintenance of the property. With full fundraising support, Huron Pines can transfer the property to Alabaster Township with a guarantee that it will be well taken care of, protected and enjoyed by the public forever.

Protection and stewardship of this critical coastline is the first step in securing a better future for Lake Huron.



The pebble beach and crystal clear waters of Lake Huron Coastal Preserve.



Judy Kalmanek and Karen Tetzlaff of Thunder Bay Audubon Society join Executive Director Brad Jensen and Associate Director Lisha Ramsdell for a ribbon cutting ceremony at Emily Min Hunt Preserve. Kalmanek is also a Huron Pines board member; Tetzlaff is President of Thunder Bay Audubon Society.

# Preserve Highlights

## Winter Wonderland

In 2020, we hosted our first winter preserve events with guided snowshoe hikes in January and February and an environmental education event in March. These were great ways to introduce new people to the preserves and connect with neighbors and other regular trail users.

One attendee, a lifelong Alpena resident, had never visited Emily Min Hunt Preserve and promised to return with her grandchildren to show them around this special place. It's our hope that experiences like these will foster connections to conservation that span generations.



## Hike, Rest, Reflect

Students in Alcona High School's Geometry in Construction class built 11 wooden benches which now reside at Hubbard Lake Nature Preserve and Emily Min Hunt Preserve. Known as Leopold benches, they are the design of renowned conservationist and author Aldo Leopold.

"The idea is that they are made of natural materials and blend into their landscape, rather than jump out or catch your eye," said Heather Huffstutler, Land Protection Director. "They offer a comfortable spot for respite and reflection and are gentle on the land."



## Upgrades Improve Access

Emily Min Hunt Preserve was ready for the public after some accessibility upgrades this fall. A grant from the Mr. and Mrs. O.B. Eustis Memorial Fund at the Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan paid for a sign to identify the preserve entrance and for the installation of a gravel driveway and small parking area to offer visitors safe parking away from the roadway.

The 428-acre nature preserve is located 15 miles north of Alpena on Shubert Highway and was donated to Huron Pines in March 2019 by the Thunder Bay Audubon Society. It features two miles of down-and-back hiking trail through mixed hardwoods and an old apple orchard.



# Community-Driven Conservation

## Our vision for the future of natural resource protection is conservation driven by engaged, empowered communities.

Decades of experience have taught us that the most sustainable environmental impact is born out of collaborative partnerships, whether they are with a city council, a watershed coalition or a classroom of high school students. When we bring together conservation knowledge and local perspective, we can build shared goals to address community and environmental needs.

In 2020, we brought together community residents in Alpena, Cheboygan and Rogers City to lay the groundwork for projects seeking to protect and improve water quality along the Lake Huron coast.

At these community visioning sessions, data sets were combined with personal knowledge to drive green infrastructure planning for each city. Participants learned about the negative impact that excess stormwater runoff can have on water quality in the area's streams, lakes and wetlands.

This was demonstrated at a workshop in Rogers City where participants pored over a stormwater map of the city, pointed out areas of concern based on their personal experiences and brainstormed potential solutions together.

"As the group rallied around their common passion for Lake Huron you could feel the energy rising in the room," Water Program Director Samantha Nellis said of the March meeting in Rogers City. "By the end, not only had we identified specific projects to collaborate on but some of the participants were congratulating each other. The connections we have to nature are complex but we can accomplish so much by working together."

These meetings are also critical for securing future funding. Management plans are one step in the ongoing process of identifying problems, developing solutions and attracting the help needed to improve the quality of life in an area. Through the years, Huron Pines staff have been able to use those plans to leverage funding so that every local dollar brings in \$10 of investment from outside the region.

"The success we see now with our river restoration program was born out of watershed management plans and inventories we conducted over 20 years ago," said Executive Director Brad Jensen. "That work has paid off with the completion of millions of dollars in restoration projects. Taking the same approach with land protection, stormwater runoff and invasive species is part of how we'll continue making Northern Michigan a better place in the years to come."



Participants study a stormwater map of Rogers City during a March 5 green infrastructure workshop led by Community Program Director Abby Ertel (right).

Funds from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Sustain our Great Lakes Program will support the engineering, design, construction and materials for green infrastructure projects along the coast in 2021 and beyond. Additional funds from the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network will support projects in Au Gres specifically and help launch a pilot program to showcase and formalize community commitment to Lake Huron protection.

"We have a lot of momentum building along the coast with the initial funding in place to connect physical project work back to the community," added Abby Ertel, Community Program Director. "We love putting projects in motion and seeing those successes. What we love even more is seeing local leaders and residents pick up the banner for natural resource protection and inspire community action."

**"The connections we have to nature are complex but we can accomplish so much by working together."**

# Forever Starts Today



Water Program Director Samantha Nellis situates native plants in a bioswale designed to capture and filter stormwater at Au Gres Riverside Park.

The Lake Huron Forever initiative focuses on the intersection between people and place. A healthy Lake Huron depends on a healthy landscape defined by thriving native plants and wildlife. With a changing climate, aging municipal infrastructure and increased public use, the land across Northern Michigan requires stewardship and protection. It needs people to take action. We all play a part in keeping Lake Huron protected, whether it's by brushing our boots to prevent the spread of invasive species or planting native gardens to filter stormwater. Here are two places where community and environment are coming together to make a positive impact.

With 294 unique species, Cheboygan's Duncan Bay is one of the most ecologically diverse communities in Northern Michigan. Its wetlands serve as a giant filtration system to improve the quality of water that enters the bay and Lake Huron.

Huron Pines secured funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for the purchase and maintenance of over 3,500 feet of Lake Huron frontage on Duncan Bay in 2017. That property is now protected forever as part of the Little Traverse Conservancy (LTC) preserve system. Huron Pines continues to partner with LTC to steward the property.

In 2020, Huron Pines removed invasive honeysuckle, Scotch pine, common and glossy buckthorn and Japanese barberry to support wetland restoration. Removing invasive plants is essential to support the habitat of native species including the over 2,000 plants that were installed at the property by Huron Pines in 2019.

Reducing polluted stormwater runoff before it can reach Duncan Bay is one way the Cheboygan community is getting involved in maintaining the health of their water and natural resources. In 2020, Huron Pines presented to the The Duncan and Grass Bays Watershed Plan Advisory Committee and partnered with Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council on a workshop for their series addressing stormwater management in Cheboygan.

At the southern end of our service area, Huron Pines supported the efforts of Au Gres-Sims students to design and install a bioswale at Riverside Park. The 600-square-foot garden captures and filters stormwater runoff with the help of native plants.

"They started with a rain garden on school grounds in 2019 which was a huge accomplishment," said Samantha Nellis who supported the students in their efforts. "This new project was an even bigger undertaking requiring more complex design, community input and partnership with the city. Months of planning, learning and collaborating, led to this real-life example of green infrastructure in action. It's really powerful that the students and community members can see their conservation efforts at work every time they visit the park."



Conservation Stewardship Director Steve Woods gives staff instruction on chainsaw operation to remove invasive Scotch pine as part of Duncan Bay wetland restoration.

# Brighter Days for Brook Trout

Two projects in Montmorency County headlined our river restoration work in 2020. The first eliminated the last major obstacle for brook trout on the East Branch Black River, the second reconnected 11.5 miles of Gilchrist Creek, a coldwater tributary of the Thunder Bay River.

Down a dusty back road northwest of Atlanta, deep in the heart of wild elk country, Northern Michigan's finest brook trout stream is finally flowing free now that its last troublesome road/stream crossing has been restored.

Our first major restoration project of the year tackled an undersized culvert that, for decades, choked the East Branch Black River at County Road 622 about seven miles west of Atlanta. Known as the Shingle Mill Crossing among anglers who fish these renowned reaches, a narrow pipe culvert there kept brook trout from accessing 20 miles of vital nursery and refuge habitat upstream. On top of that, spring floodwaters that were unable to pass through the crossing often washed over the roadway, causing damage and sending silt into the stream which buried gravel beds where aquatic insects – a main food source for those famed fish – live and lay their eggs.

In May, that 9-foot-wide rusted steel culvert was pulled from

the river to make way for a 27-foot arch. To accomplish this, contractors routed the East Branch around the site with a temporary stream channel in order to pour concrete footers and build the new aluminum structure in its place.

Weeks later, for the first time in decades, the East Branch was flowing unhindered under County Road 622. The bottomless arch design allows the natural river bottom to continue all the way through the crossing, giving the East Branch and its trout little indication there's a road above.

Senior Project Manager Josh Leisen said this project promotes a healthier and more resilient population of wild brook trout in what is now one of the most intact watersheds in Northern Michigan. With better access to cold, spring-fed spawning and refuge habitat upstream, brookies are better able to survive environmental stressors like hotter summertime temperatures in a changing climate.

"As a fisherman, I have a special place in my heart for wild and native fish," he said. "It's rewarding to know I'm doing something to make sure brook trout are here long into the future."

Carol Rose, current chair of the Michigan Natural Resources Commission, used to lead the Upper Black River Council, a partnership of people and organizations including Huron Pines who work to restore and protect the watershed. The council was formed in 1993 by Bud Slingerland, the retired state

representative who lived and fished daily at his cabin a stone's throw from the Shingle Mill site, making this place "Bud's Bridge" to those like Rose who knew him.

"This crossing is so close to his former homestead which is now owned by the people of Michigan," Rose said in July. "Anyone can visit the 'Slingerland Reach' and fish the same stretches as Bud. This restoration has been long awaited and Bud is smiling up there now."

Leisen called the Shingle Mill project "a true team effort" supported by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Fish Passage and Partners for Fish and Wildlife Programs, Walters Family Foundation, Montmorency County Road Commission, Huron Engineering and Surveying, Inc., MacArthur Construction and the Upper Black River Council.

**"It's rewarding to know I'm doing something to make sure brook trout are here long into the future."**



The former culvert at the Shingle Mill Crossing.



The new 27-foot arch structure during the installation phase.



The finished product which restores a more natural flow to the East Branch Black River and connects trout to 20 miles of upstream habitat.

# Standout Stream Reconnected in Thunder Bay Watershed

By July, in the opposite corner of Montmorency County, three undersized pipe culverts in Gilchrist Creek were being traded for a timber bridge.

Among the coldest tributaries of the Thunder Bay River, Gilchrist Creek is one of the few places in an otherwise warm watershed where brook trout occur. But like the Shingle Mill site, the three, 6-foot culverts at Harwood Road were a barrier for fish and caused similar issues with flooding and erosion during heavy rain and spring thaws. Additionally, road commission crews often had to remove logs and other debris that further hindered the river flow when they accumulated on the upstream side of the crossing.

For this crossing, Huron Pines chose a 32-foot timber bridge to span the full width of Gilchrist Creek. Associate Director Lisha Ramsdell said a timber bridge was the right fit for the site.



Gilchrist Creek at Harwood Road consisted of three undersized culverts, restricting river flow and fish movement.

Ramsdell said the Harwood Road site was first on the list because it was also a priority for the Montmorency County Road Commission who wanted to address ongoing issues with maintaining that crossing.

**“It conveys a natural feel and that’s what we want to do at these road/stream crossings, where manmade and nature intersect.”**

“This was one of the most cost-effective sites to do and was also the site that the road commission was most interested in to reduce maintenance,” she said. “After having long-term



The new timber bridge spanning Gilchrist Creek.

“It blends in really well with that rural setting and landscape and crosses a beautiful stretch of river surrounded by woods,” she said. “It conveys a natural feel and that’s what we want to do at these road/stream crossings, where manmade and nature intersect. A timber bridge, in a way, punctuates the natural setting.”

This timber bridge is the first of four bridges Huron Pines has planned within the watershed of the Thunder Bay River to address fish passage and flooding issues. The Thunder Bay restoration initiative will continue in 2021 and 2022 with three more timber structures planned on streams southeast of Atlanta.

relationships with our road commissions, they understand the positive impact these projects have on our natural resources. In turn, we have a better understanding of what they need in terms of road maintenance and safety.”

The Harwood Road timber bridge project was funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, Walters Family Foundation, Great Lakes Fishery Trust and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Fish Passage Program, with in-kind support from the Montmorency County Road Commission.



Andrea Foster of The Little Forks Conservancy (left) and Jennie Zoll of Huron Pines carry a timber beam for a new footbridge at a Midland nature preserve.

## Helping Hands

On the morning of Sept 25, a dozen Huron Pines AmeriCorps members gathered for a day of service to assist The Little Forks Conservancy after devastating flooding, caused by dam failures in May, destroyed trails and scattered debris throughout the conservancy’s Forestview Natural Area.

“Little Forks needed the help and we were there,” said Jennie Zoll, Director of Finance and Administration. “One of our members is from Midland and was serving with Little Forks so it was nice to be able to show up and help even if it was only for one day.”

Over the course of the day, Huron Pines AmeriCorps members built a new footbridge where the old one had been torn away by the Tittabawassee River. They amassed enough tires, splintered lumber and mangled metal gathered from the forest to fill a 30-yard waste container.

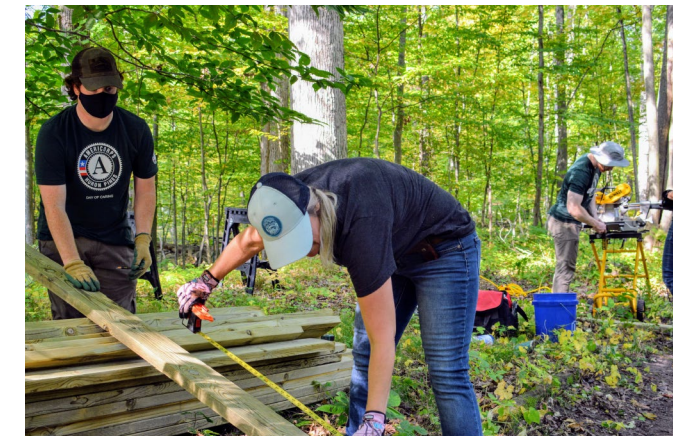
In an upended year, this was one of few opportunities for Huron Pines AmeriCorps members to be together in person and work toward a common goal. This was also the first event organized by Amanda Vanaman, who was hired as Huron Pines AmeriCorps Program Manager in August.

“What our members were doing that day was not just helpful and important for Little Forks but an opportunity for us to have a shared experience,” Vanaman said. “My highlight was getting to see how much they were able to accomplish by working together.”

“I believe every generation is judged by the negative few,” said Chuck Martin, board president of The Little Forks Conservancy, as he recounted that day. “We should judge generations on how positive and powerful they are. This one is going to change the world in many positive ways, and the fact they came together to help us out is a powerful sign of that.”



Huron Pines AmeriCorps Program Manager Amanda Vanaman and member Nick Theisen work together to roll a tire out of Forestview Natural Area.



Huron Pines AmeriCorps member Joe Dewan and Associate Director Lisha Ramsdell measure planks for a bridge deck.

# There's No Place Like Home

Through thoughtful prioritization, planning and execution, Huron Pines protects and restores some of Northern Michigan's most iconic places including the jack pine plains of the Au Sable River, the dunes of Negwegon State Park, the shores of Lake Huron and the depths of the Pigeon River Country State Forest. These wild places provide the ideal habitat for threatened and endangered species like Hine's emerald dragonfly, piping plover, Pitcher's thistle, eastern massasauga rattlesnake and Kirtland's warbler.

The process includes monitoring habitats from the heartland to the coast to inventory and report existing and emerging invasive plant species, understand the impact a changing climate is having on local vegetation and wildlife and prioritize action based on this carefully collected data.

In the same way our river restoration work across Northern Michigan is the culmination of years of information gathering and planning, the decisions we make about our land stewardship efforts are also based on extensive data collection by our staff, partner organizations and citizen scientists. The more information we have, the easier it is to prioritize where we should focus our efforts and accurately estimate the time and resources necessary to make the biggest impact on the region.

In 2020, to better meet the demands of our region, we re-organized our 12-county invasive species network into two separate networks, each with their own coordinators and field technicians, to provide greater capacity and better services tailored to the unique needs of each landscape.

Working collaboratively, partners in the Huron Coastal Invasive Species Network and the Huron Heartland Invasive Species Network engage communities and lead them in a strategic, coordinated approach to invasive species management, including awareness, prevention, control and restoration. We envision a Northern Michigan where native plants and wildlife thrive, unencumbered by invasive species, and healthy ecosystems enrich the quality of life in the region.

## Prioritizing Critical Habitat

From June to September, our invasive plant inventory and treatment work took us to parts of Northern Michigan that are home to some of the rarest plants and animals of the Midwest. Among these places were the 147,000-acre Camp Grayling National Guard training facility that spans Crawford and Kalkaska counties and the 4,118-acre Negwegon State Park on the border of Alcona and Alpena counties.

During our visits to distant corners of the Camp Grayling property, we came across two species of concern – Voss's goldenrod and an eastern massasauga rattlesnake.

The federally threatened rattlesnake was spotted swimming across a small stream while the field crew was collecting invasive species inventory data. Keeping this close encounter fresh in their minds, they conducted careful treatments throughout the season to ensure minimal impact on the surrounding environment for the sake of this species.

The stewardship team also spotted Voss's goldenrod near Howes

## Covering More Ground with Citizen Science

With 12 counties to inventory and monitor for invasive species, the staff of Huron Pines can use all the help we can get. That's why we've been training volunteers and organizations across the region to equip them with the tools they need to identify and report invasive plants in their communities.

Online and in person, we trained more than 40 individuals in 2020 on how to identify the most common invasive plants, monitor and record data and report their findings to the Midwest Invasive Species Information Network (MISIN). Serving as a database for the entire Midwest, MISIN aggregates this information and alerts Huron Pines when invasive species are reported within our service area so that we can prioritize where next to take action.



Purple loosestrife, an invasive species which grows along riverbanks and competes for resources with native plants.



Heartland Restoration Team Lead Rachel Leggett kneels beside a Pitcher's thistle growing on a shoreline dune of Negwegon State Park in June.

Lake during their inventory and treatment of reed canary grass, an invasive species that is in direct competition with the native goldenrod found only in two counties in Michigan. To avoid any potential for collateral damage to this species, they switched from spray treatment of reed canary grass to hand-swiping the invasive plants in that area.

Our ongoing work at Negwegon State Park focused this year on the restoration of lakeshore habitat for the federally threatened Pitcher's thistle.

For most of its life, the Pitcher's thistle is a wispy tangle of stems branching like antlers into slender leaves. Below ground, the plant sends a taproot 6 feet down, stabilizing beach sands as it searches out nutrients. In its final summer, it puts on a show of pale pink blossoms, pollinates, makes seed and dies. This life cycle, evolved over millennia and specialized to a handful of places around lakes Huron and Michigan, is not compatible with the relatively recent arrival of invasive species, shoreline development and climate change.

"The coastlines of our service area are at the very top of the list for us in terms of Michigan's at-risk natural resources," said Steve Woods, Conservation Stewardship Director. "There's a disproportionate number of rare and threatened species along



Conservation Stewardship Director Steve Woods (left) and Sue Keller of Friends of Negwegon State Park survey the dunes for federally threatened Pitcher's thistle.



Huron Pines staff was able to snap this photo of a passing eastern massasauga rattlesnake during restoration work at Camp Grayling.

the Lake Huron coast and the Pitcher's thistle is representative of that. To start their recovery, we want to focus our work in the places where they still exist."

Our stewardship team surveyed 3.5 miles of Lake Huron shoreline at Negwegon and recorded precise GPS locations where these plants were found growing among the park's sugar-sand dunes. These coordinates informed our efforts throughout the summer to remove invasive spotted knapweed growing within a 50-foot radius of each Pitcher's thistle, giving the silver-green plants and their seedlings room to grow in the absence of knapweed's toxic roots. We also treated invasive phragmites along the same stretch, ensuring that natural wind and wave action will continue building the dunes that Pitcher's thistle calls home. In all the world, this species is found only on a few shores of the Great Lakes.



Chris Engle, Communications Associate



Shelby Bauer, Stewardship Program Coordinator



Amy Nowakowski, Coastal Project Manager



Colby Chilcote, Marketing and Development Director

From the Pigeon River Country State Forest to the shores of Lake Huron, the entire Huron Pines staff played a part in our field season.

*“There’s a disproportionate number of rare and threatened species along the Lake Huron coast.”*

**We Get Around**

By land and by sea, we racked up the miles in 2020.

Stewardship Program Coordinator Shelby Bauer and Coastal Restoration Lead Logan Hawley fired up their four-wheeler for the first half of a 2-year effort to survey 700 miles of motorized trails and 65 forest campgrounds for invasive plants. Data gathered during this inventory will help drive our future work to restore these recreation areas so that native plants and wild-life can flourish. This project, funded by the U.S. Forest Service’s Cooperative Weed Management Area program, covers Crawford, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Oscoda, Otsego and Roscommon counties.

They also looked at sites where trails intersect streams to help determine whether future projects could restore those waterways with improved crossing structures.

“I’ve been surprised at the variation in terrain and habitats I encounter in one trail loop,” Bauer said. “It has really been a unique and different way to experience Northern Michigan.”

For our surveys within the Thunder Bay River Watershed, we relied on a mix of kayaks, canoes and motorized boats to search out and document invasive species and areas where streambank erosion is occurring.

“There’s no better day than being in a kayak for work, no matter how many logjams, portages or mosquitoes there are,” said Coastal Project Manager Amy Nowakowski, who conducted surveys by kayak on the upper Thunder Bay River near Hillman. “It’s interesting to see how much the watershed changes from the upstream to downstream sections. I find this kind of work really rewarding.”

In 2020, we surveyed 22 miles of the Thunder Bay River and 60 miles of shoreline at Hubbard Lake, Lake Winyah and Fletcher Pond.

“It was humbling to experience how much work goes into surveying these shorelines for invasive species,” said Communications Associate Chris Engle. “I saw firsthand the negative impacts they can have on the landscape and how important it is that they be kept under control. These were long days but I felt good about the work we accomplished.”

Our inventory of the Au Sable River covered more than 160 miles of the North Branch and Main Branch by canoe, kayak and waders. Sometimes lasting 10 hours, these long days took us through some of the most scenic stretches of water Northern Michigan has to offer and also gave us a hard look at areas where our future treatment work will need to be focused.

# Field Trip Report

We ditched the school bus but kept the brown bag lunches. This year’s annual board and staff retreat sent the group on three field trips to visit past, present and future Huron Pines project sites across Northern Michigan.

The **South Coast Adventure** featured stops at Oscoda’s Tuttle Marsh, the East Tawas dock and the Lake Huron Coastal Preserve property in Alabaster Township. **Foray Into Pine Barrens** explored two very different habitat management strategies within the Huron-Manistee National Forest. **Northbound Adventure** took the group through Cheboygan’s coastal wetlands, to the site of the 2018 restoration of Milligan Creek and on to the Trout River Dam and Herman Vogler Conservation Area in Rogers City.

The trip also marked the first day of work for Huron Pines AmeriCorps Program Manager Amanda Vanaman and Office and Data Manager Tonya Clayton.

“My first day on the job started with a hike in the jack pine forests near Mio,” Clayton said. “For someone who spent most of my working life waiting until after work to be able to go for a walk or a hike, this was a special treat.”

Board member and Alcona Community Schools superintendent Dan O’Connor took part in the South Coast Adventure. New to the board, he said the chance to have face-to-face conversations with his colleagues outdoors was “a welcome and valuable experience.”

“Visiting the Alabaster Township property was particularly inspirational,” he said. “What an amazing opportunity for the community to preserve that piece of Lake Huron shoreline. I’m grateful to be a part of these projects that Huron Pines is doing.”



Northbound Adventure to Duncan Bay



Foray into Pine Barrens near Mio



South Coast Adventure at Tawas State Dock



# Financial Overview

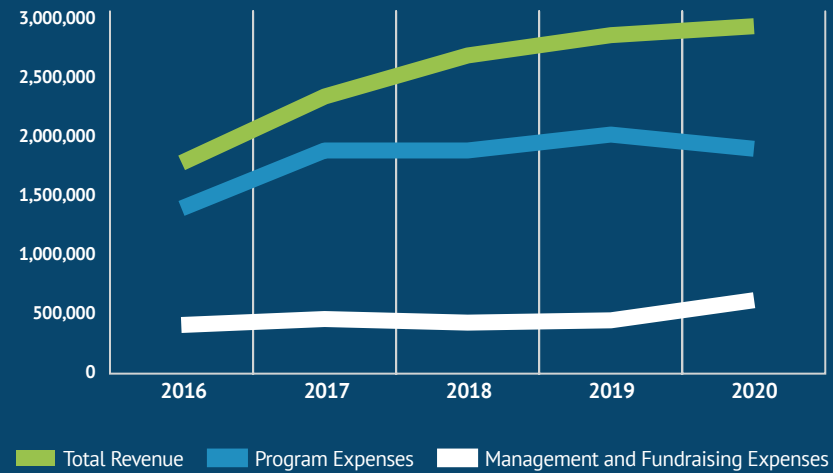
## 2020 Financial Report

Working closely with communities and building partnerships has expanded the scope of our work over the last five years with new program areas like community engagement and land protection. It has also led to larger environmental impact and more holistic and long-lasting change.

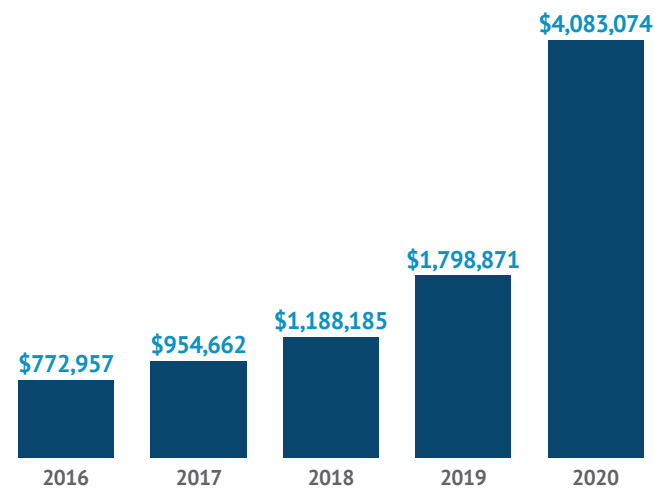
"As our focus on community-driven conservation has grown, so has our support from businesses, foundations and individuals" said Colby Chilcote, Huron Pines Marketing and Development Director. "Our work can't happen without community support. It's inspiring to see so many people take action to protect our region."

## Five-Year Trend

Total Revenues, Programming Expenses, Management & Fundraising Expenses



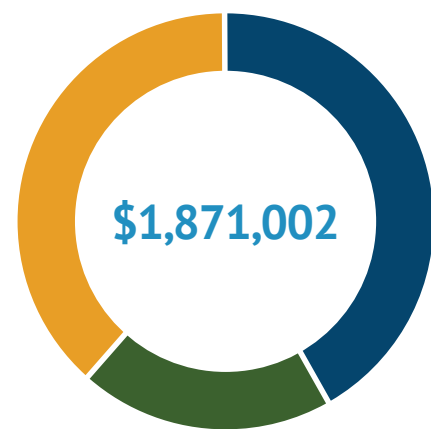
## 5 Year Net Assets



Since our land protection program was established in 2017, Huron Pines has acquired three preserve properties, significantly increasing our organizational assets. It has also led to increased stewardship and engagement opportunities.

A full 990 financial report is available upon request.

## 2020 Program Expenses



Healthy Water  
**41.7%**

River Restoration  
Lake Huron Efforts

Protected Places  
**19.8%**

Habitat Restoration  
Land Protection

Vibrant Communities  
**38.5%**

Huron Pines AmeriCorps  
Education and Engagement

# Thank You to Our 2020 Supporters

With deepest thanks to the government agencies, foundations, businesses, organizations and individuals who made our work possible in 2020. Your grants, sponsorships and donations protect the most special places across Northern Michigan.

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**Malcolm Coon**  
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**Happy 50th anniversary. We love you.**  
 From Eric, Allen, Jesse and Liz  
**My family**  
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**Jerry Rucker**  
**Happy birthday!!**  
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**Connie Schreiber**  
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**Thank you for all you have done for the local environment and all  
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If you haven't already, we encourage you to sign up for our email newsletter at our website and follow us on social media to stay informed about upcoming projects and opportunities.

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It is our mission to conserve and enhance Northern Michigan's natural resources to ensure **healthy water, protected places** and **vibrant communities**. We have worked for over 45 years to restore rivers, steward the land and build meaningful connections to conservation.

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