

2022 ANNUAL NONPROFIT REPORT

October 1, 2021 - September 30, 2022



inspire - discover - connect

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

As I write this report of an amazing year, 2022, I am watching young families stream into our brand-new Nature Center and Discovery Hall at a rate of 60-70 per day. And I know that they will still be coming to experience this wonderful place this winter, as a new day has dawned, a new page turned!

The end of 2022 marked the opening of our then not-yet-completed building, but the geothermal pipes were already working their simple nature-based magic, the work to move our offices into the renovated and insulated north wing was done, and desks occupied.

For the first time, we welcomed people into our warm lodge for programs in the midst of a cold Northwoods winter. The long-held dream of an all-season facility was finally realized after a successful six-year, \$4 million dollar capital campaign. For that, we thank you, our members and donor community, who built this amazing place with no governmental funding and no bank loans - just love and commitment for our mission. We never skipped a beat in continuing to offer a bounty of outstanding nature-based programming while the creative and diligent work of the staff, board, and volunteers worked to design and build our new nature center. These efforts brought to life educational, fun, artistic, and interactive displays that can now be enjoyed by all.

As COVID's grip finally abated from our lives, we replaced key staffing positions. Though we have staff residing for 16 years and counting, half were brought in new in 2022, bringing a wealth of new ideas, skills, and energy to help expand our programs and services. We worked to grow our AIS/Waters Program and made steps into terrestrial and lakeshore restoration. With our new integrated cabin bathrooms and showers, we have grown our residential environmental education program, serving schools from as far as Wausau, WI, Chicago, IL, and even Tacoma, WA.

We do have some challenges - COVID, the campaign, and construction did affect some revenues, and we are now in a ramping-up phase to meet our new level of investment in both people and facilities. With your help, we will get there, as our mission of connecting people to nature and to each other has never faltered, and we meet this new day with expanded resources, facilities, staffing, and tools to better serve you, our discovery community.

We are your nature center!

John Heusinkveld, Executive Director



STAFF MEMBERS

- John Heusinkveld, Executive Director
- Colette Anderson, Administrative Assistant
- Lisa Fossum, Finance Manager
- Licia Johnson, Education Director
- Hannah Gargrave, Naturalist and Residential Programs Liaison
- Megan Graffius, Facilities and Volunteer Coordinator
- Ryan Wahlgren, Maintenance Director
- Cliff Dischinger, Buildings and Grounds Coordinator
- Jamie Van, Woods and Water Program Director
- Sam Wolter, Membership, Marketing and Development Coordinator

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- JoAnn (Jody) Miller, Member
- Tom Olson, Member
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- Beth Wetzler, Member
- Brent Jelinski, NLS Liaison
- Craig Dalton, WDNR Liaison

SEASONAL STAFF

- Joe Kamstra, Naturalist
- Richie Dollhopf, Water Monitoring Intern
- Mary Langosch, Water Monitoring Intern
- Michael Small, Water Monitoring Intern
- Rebecca Fagley, Lake Technician
- Abby Vogt, Lake Technician







MASTER NATURALIST

Every year, the Discovery Center proudly hosts the Master Naturalist Training program, an initiative supported through the University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension. This program plays a crucial role in fostering awareness, understanding, and stewardship of our precious natural environment by nurturing a network of dedicated volunteers committed to conservation within their communities.

In the past year, we had the privilege of welcoming 11 passionate graduates from across the state for this invaluable training opportunity. Once equipped with their knowledge and skills, each Master Naturalist embarks on a meaningful project. This year, their diverse projects included creating wooden animal tracks, developing identification sheets for garden flowers, enhancing program materials, crafting whimsical critter cutouts for the Discovery Nature Trail, and even contributing to the design of an outdoor turtle enclosure set to be constructed in the upcoming year.

These projects reflect our ongoing commitment to environmental education and conservation, made possible by the dedication of our Master Naturalists.







PIZZA GARDEN

In 2021, we were fortunate to receive a generous grant from the Cellcom Green Gifts Program, allowing us to bring a unique educational experience to life - our very own pizza garden. Fast forward to June 2022, and the garden became a reality thanks to the hard work of an overnight residential group from the Center for Conservation Leadership (CCL), long-time friends of the Discovery Center. Throughout the summer, our dedicated staff and volunteers lovingly tended to the garden, ensuring its success.

Come fall 2022, we celebrated with our community by hosting a free event, inviting everyone to harvest the bountiful vegetables and craft delicious grilled pizzas. This initiative perfectly embodies our commitment to leveraging grant funding for maximum educational impact, establishing a foundation for ongoing learning, and ensuring that the wonders of nature education are accessible to all.

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

51 residential participants aged 13-17 experienced 261 nights of unique nature based adventures.

"The most impactful part of a residential program are the bonds created not only with others along on the trip, but also with each person's own experience in discovering what natural beauty the Northwoods has to offer. Everyone has their own interests and hobbies, but the best part for me is seeing someone's true colors shine as they discover that looking closely at an interesting plant, insect, or anything else in nature or doing something they've never done before can really open their eyes to a new world of possibilities. For example, with the school group from Tacoma, many of those kids had never been too far outside of Washington state, so being able to see them see Lake Superior for the first time was heartwarming because many of them compared it to the Pacific Ocean close to home. It was very obvious that their connection to each other and nature grew exponentially throughout their stay at NLDC."

Hannah Gargrave, Naturalist and Residential Programs Liaison



In September, 32 students from Tacoma, WA spent 7 days & 6 nights learning about Northwoods Ecology.



*Our students got so much out of our stories they continue to tell about the experience are indicative of its impact." Joe Romano, Director of Innovation



"The staff at NLDC are absolutely phenomenal humans who are willing and able to successfully share their passions with us.... Megan who helped facilitate our visit, Hannah and Licia who spent countless hours teaching us your craft, Martha for continuously providing delicious food and drink for us, and for John for overseeing the development of NLDC to become the Northwoods Educational jewel it is becoming!

- Anonymous

NATURALIST PROGRAMS

210 Public programs served 1301 participants.

51 Traveling naturalist programs served 1383 participants.

Our farthest program was 171 miles away at the Ethel Everhard Library in Westfield WI.

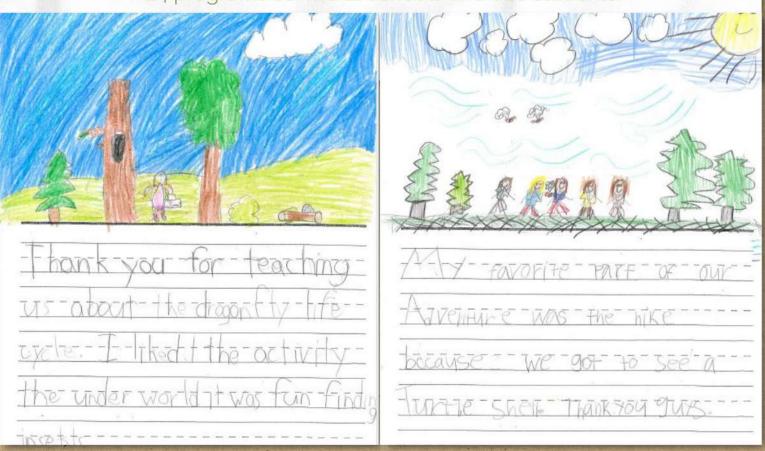
"My favorite topic to talk about would be anything to do with bats." - Licia Johnson, Education Director





SCHOOL NATURALISTS

24 programs served 11 schools and 826 students.



WOODS AND WATER PROGRAM

Invasive Species Battle: Triumph in the Bog

The Water Program team has been actively working on the Manitowish Chain to remove and monitor various invasive species, with a focus on the Purple Loosestrife. This plant, known for its beautiful blooms, can release an astonishing 2.7 million seeds per year, leading to rapid invasion of wetlands and shorelines. To combat this, the team conducts visual surveys of the shoreline during blooming season.

During one of their expeditions, they discovered a unique island rich in sphagnum moss, forming a bog. On this island, they found dozens of blooming Purple Loosestrife plants that they diligently removed. Additionally, they spotted many native

insectivorous plants, including Round-leaved Sundew and Pitcher Plants. Delicately working through the bog, they managed to protect these unique plants while removing hundreds of young Purple Loosestrife invaders.

By their efforts, the team saved the bog and its diverse ecosystem. This summer's work has been essential in preserving the natural balance of the Manitowish Chain and surrounding lakes. The team's dedication to combating invasive species and protecting native flora has been a crucial aspect of the nonprofit's mission.



Intern Success Story

In September 2022, we celebrated the successful internship of Abby Vogt, our Lake Technician at the Discovery Center. She has been hired as the Coordinator for the Timberland Invasives Partnership, a nonprofit organization under the Lumberjack Resource Conservation and Development Council.

We are delighted that Abby will be continuing her vital work in Wisconsin, and her dedication is a testament to the success of our hands-on internship program at the Discovery Center.

Congratulations, Abby!





An Aquatic Herbarium

During the summer, the Water Program team started their own herbarium, focusing on aquatic plants encountered in Northwoods lakes and rivers. Led by Lake Technician, Rebecca Fagley, the collection preserves plant specimens for education, research, and species identification.

Preserving aquatic plants is a creative process, as they have delicate, thin leaves that can become entangled when removed from water. To ensure accurate representation, the team floats the plants in water, presses them onto paper, and dries them like terrestrial specimens. This project adds valuable resources for scientific study and enhances our understanding of aquatic plant life in the region.

Forestry, Fire, and Soil Data Collection Kits: Made Possible by Excel Energy Grant

This year we received a \$2000 excel energy foundation grant to use for education, citizen science, and conservation. We're going to use these funds for purchasing items such as Munsell Soil Color Charts, Jim-Gem Fire Weather Instruments, a Drip-Torch, DBH tapes and more! If you don't know what those tools are, no sweat, we're here to teach you! Stay tuned for a chance to use these Forestry, Fire, and Soil Data Collection Kits that we're putting together in our future programming.

These kits will also be available to be checked out by members. We think it's so important to expose our younger generation to careers in conservation, natural resources and similar applied sciences that have often been left out of the STEM curriculums. Wildland Firefighter traversing the Rockies, Wetland Ecologist paddling the backcountry wilderness of the boundary waters... dream big! We can't wait to use these kits to show kids what awesome jobs are waiting for them!





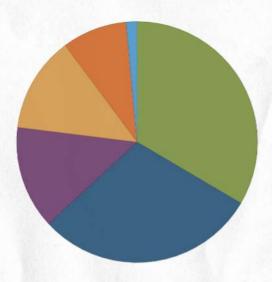
FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

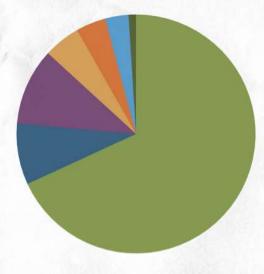
2021-2022 fiscal year, unaudited results

OPERATING REVENUE \$679,885

- Membership & Donations \$227,575
- Programs, Events, & Grants \$201,616
- Facilities & Trails \$94,069
- Employee Retention Credit \$87,389
- Fundraisers \$59,267
- Other \$9,969

*excludes capital campaign contributions





OPERATING EXPENSES \$649,147

- Payroll, Benefits, & PR Taxes \$442,216
- Administration \$53,845
- Programs, Events, & Grants \$67,454
- Facilities & Trails \$32,240
- Insurance \$26,382
- Fundraisers & Sales \$20,472
- Program & Membership \$6,538

DISCOVERY VOLUNTEERS

Over 3000 hours dedicated by volunteers this year!



Continued learning and sharing of information about our Northwoods ecology.

- Noelle Mucino

Knowing that I am helping support the mission of an organization that promotes appreciation and conservation of nature. I really enjoy helping young people learn the importance of preserving the natural world.

- Debby Wilson



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I love supporting organizations that enlighten individuals on our environment.

Janet Hawkinson

178 Volunteers added immeasurable value to the Discovery Center this year!

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My favorite thing about being a volunteer coordinator is the personal connection with the volunteers. We are so lucky to have amazing and dedicated volunteers, all who show a passion for the NLDC mission. I love seeing them interact with visitors and sharing all the great things about the Discovery Center.

Megan Graffius Facilities and Volunteer Coordinator

MEMBER COMMUNITY

"I'm endlessly inspired by our community of members and the remarkable impact you achieve year after year. Your unwavering dedication has propelled us to accomplish extraordinary milestones this year. Together, we've preserved vital habitats and ignited a passion for nature in countless individuals. I'm truly thankful for the opportunity to engage with all of you, let's continue to protect and celebrate the beauty of the Northwoods!"

Samantha Wolter
Marketing and Membership Coordinator

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281 Generous donors contributed to the Discovery Center this year!

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CAPITAL CAMPAIGN: PATHWAY TO NEW DISCOVERIES

We are delighted to announce that Phase 1 of our capital campaign, Pathway to New Discoveries, is complete:

- Our staff moved into the new offices they so richly deserve in our freshly renovated, geothermally heated and cooled Historic YCC Lodge.
- The Lodge's large meeting room is buzzing with year-round programs and events for children, adults and groups of all sizes.
- Our new cabin connections each contain bathrooms and showers for residential groups, an important element of our growing business. Connecting more and different groups of people to Northwoods nature is what we're all about.
- Construction is underway on Phase 2, our Discovery Hall addition with its knock-your-socks-off nature center and fully equipped classrooms.

Becoming a true year-round campus fulfills the Discovery Center's 25-year dream -all because of you, our more than 600 donors.

You have our most heartfelt and sincere thanks.

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