

IMPACT

Great Outdoors Foundation // 2021 Annual Report





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It's not every day that you get to be a part of an organization that is literally changing the landscape of a region. But, as a member of the Great Outdoors Foundation Board of Directors, that's exactly what I get to do. We exist to provide leadership, foster partnerships, increase awareness, and raise funds — serving as a catalyst to power passion and support for regional projects that expand and restore natural spaces, enhance outdoor recreation and learning opportunities, and promote conservation. Now, maybe I'm biased, but I can't think of a year in which we enacted that mission more clearly or effectively.

From launching the first-ever Wild Prairie Showdown to leading the charge on pre-fundraising for Polk County's \$65 million Water and Land Legacy Bond, I'm incredibly proud of the way the Great Outdoors Foundation is engaging with our community — everyday users and major corporations alike. It's through this collaborative, diversified strategy that we'll be able to fully realize the potential of conservation and outdoor recreation in Central Iowa.

The future is bright for the Great Outdoors Foundation. I truly believe that we're only just beginning to reap the benefits of our labor that all began twenty-five years ago. What started as a small group of people hoping to support the efforts of Polk County Conservation has now grown into a movement that's impact will ripple in our community for decades to come. Let's make waves.

CORY SHARP, 2021 BOARD CHAIR



2021 marked my fifth year with the Great Outdoors Foundation. For a number of reasons, it felt significant. Not only do we continue to grow in our influence and size, but most importantly in our impact.

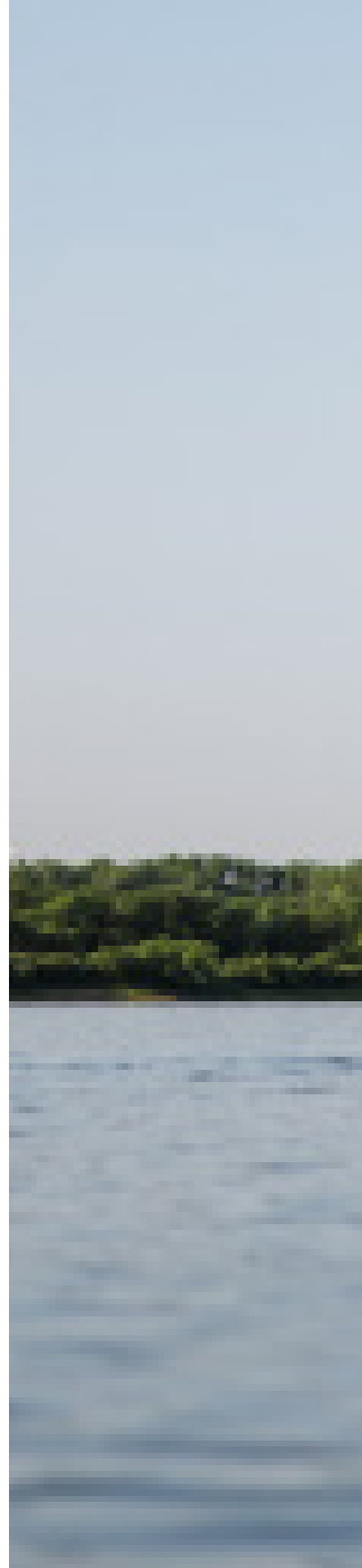
The same organization that was staffed by myself alone is now the employer of some of the best and brightest Des Moines has to offer. Where we used to be fundraising to purchase a few small pieces of equipment, we're now wrapping up multi-million dollar campaigns that will forever change the identity of our community. The Great Outdoors Foundation's aspiration to be *the* thought leader in conservation and outdoor recreation initiatives is being realized to a degree like never before.

Last year alone, we invested more than \$10 million in conservation and outdoor recreation throughout our region. These funds were used to provide programming for under-served communities, steward critical areas of our natural heritage and invest in infrastructure that connects Central Iowa's residents to the wonder of nature that surrounds them. When I think of all that we've collectively experienced over the last few years, I can't think of any better gift to give to our friends, family and neighbors. Better access. Cleaner water. Greater opportunity.

It's been fun to reflect on the last five years, but what energizes me, even more, is considering what lies ahead. When I think about our organization over the next five, ten, even twenty-five years, I'm filled with hope and expectation. If there's one thing that can connect us, it's the great outdoors. As we continue to explore new avenues by which we can affect change, I'm reminded of the way in which our organization has *always* moved forward — together.

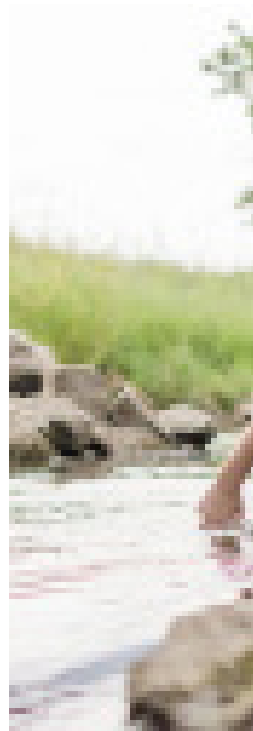
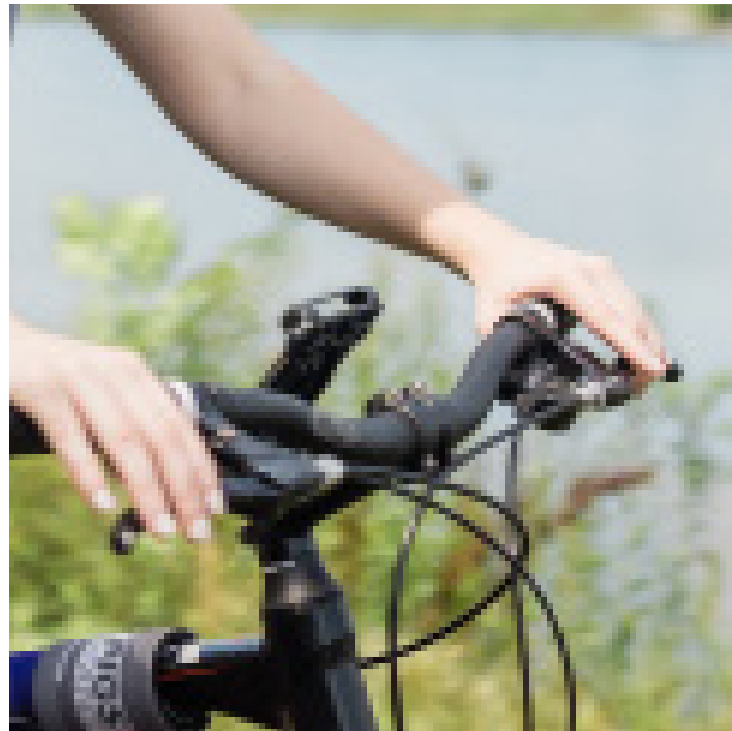
The work we do doesn't happen without the generous support of our community. You, as one of the hundreds who give of their time, talent and treasure to advance our cause, have made all that we've accomplished possible. When I look at what lies ahead, I'm confident because of the people I see beside me. Thank you.

HANNAH INMAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER





Mission Statement



We provide leadership, foster partnerships, increase awareness, and raise funds — serving as a catalyst to power passion and support for regional projects that expand and restore natural spaces, enhance outdoor recreation and learning opportunities, and promote conservation. We connect people of all ages and backgrounds to nature by collaborating with other organizations who share a common vision of healthy environments that provide a variety of outdoor recreation and education opportunities. Driven by our clear purpose, we challenge ourselves to seek and take on partner projects offering exceptional and long-term impact requiring a regional approach and creative funding.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Cory W. Sharp, Chair // Ben Arato // Pat Boddy // Chris Costa // Tara Deering-Hansen // Emily Kessinger // Tom Mahoney // Gene Meyer // Kurt Mumm // Tom Newton // Julian Seay // Joey Taylor-Moon // Rachel Woodhouse

EMERITUS BOARD MEMBERS

Dan Cornelison // Elizabeth Cox // Helen Eddy // Lori Gadelmann // Wayne Graham // Jim Hubbell // Bob Jester // Joy Johnson // Mike LaMair // Carole Reichardt // Davis Sanders // Bethany Wilcoxon

STAFF

Hannah Inman, CEO // Jen Cross, Vice President of Donor Relations // Maggie McClelland, Director of ICON Water Trails // Kaitie Hartmann, Marketing & Communications Manager

Polk County Conservation

Forward momentum. Making big plans.

So much changed for Polk County Conservation in the span of just 365 days. The positive, forward momentum was invigorating and affirming for our staff.

Early in the year, our indoor facilities began to carefully and safely reopen as the pandemic and various COVID-19 variants tapered off. It was so good to see families back in the Jester Park Nature Center. Even more inspiring was the fact that park and trail usage remained high, regardless of season or public health recommendations. More than 3.8 million visitors biked, camped, meditated, fished, or watched for wildlife in our 20+ parks and trails. The natural world truly continues to be a place of refuge for Polk County residents.

Extremely exciting this year was the opening of the Lauridsen Skatepark, followed by the national skateboard competition Dew Tour. Many, many in central Iowa contributed to the design and creation of the skatepark and PCC is proud to operate this world-renowned recreation facility. It is a new and unique opportunity to draw more people outdoors and build infrastructure and momentum for the much anticipated ICON Water Trails.

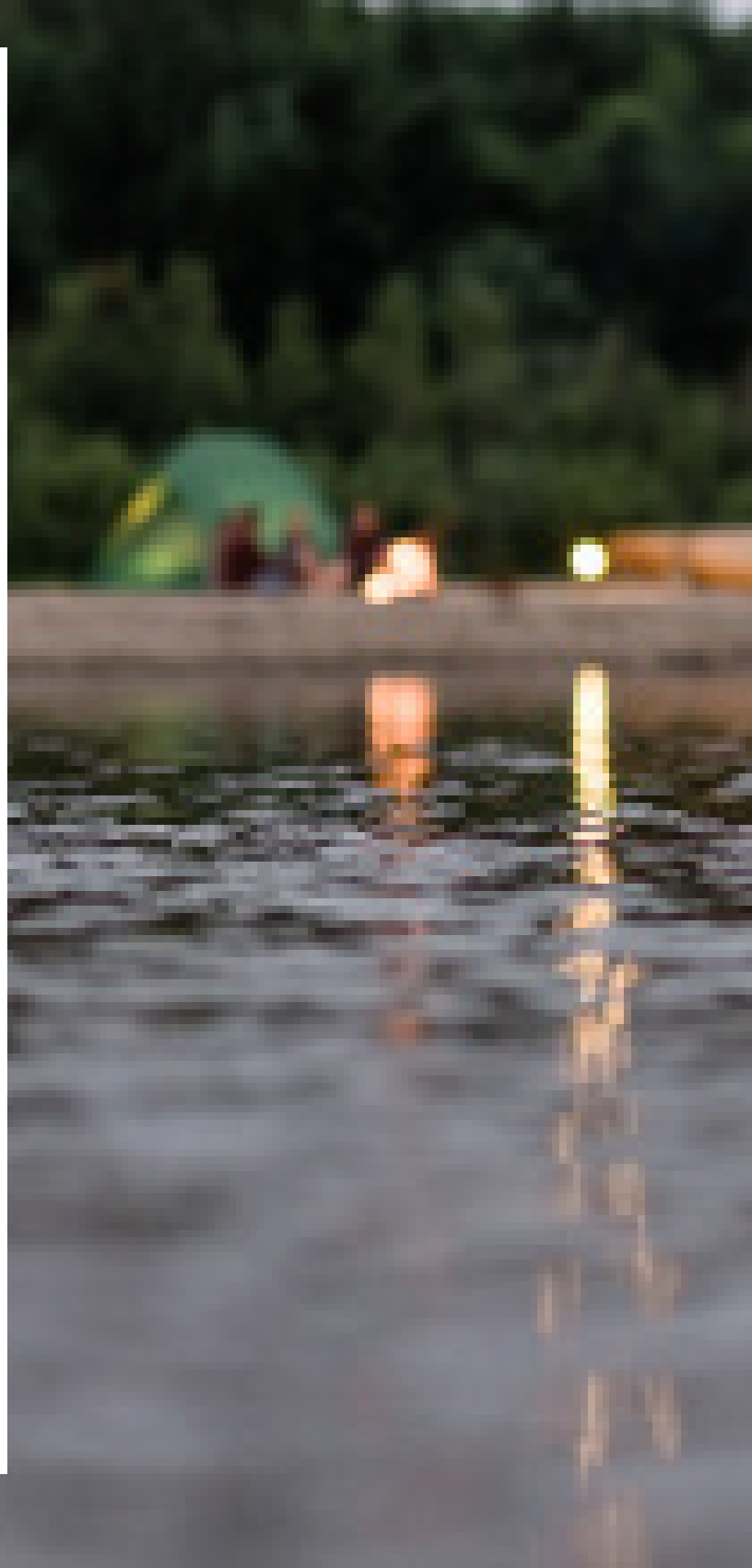
The fall brought great news for the future. In November, Polk County voters approved the \$65 million Water & Land Legacy Bond to further our collective work. Great Outdoors Foundation has our great thanks and appreciation for its leadership on this bond referendum. The Foundation team planned, organized and advocated for needed resources to enrich our recreation and conservation efforts.

Anticipating the infusion of bond funds drove Conservation staff to dream big and make exciting plans for 2022 and beyond. Over the next ten years we'll use bond dollars to enhance water quality, strengthen park infrastructure, acquire ecologically important tracts of land, and restore natural resources.

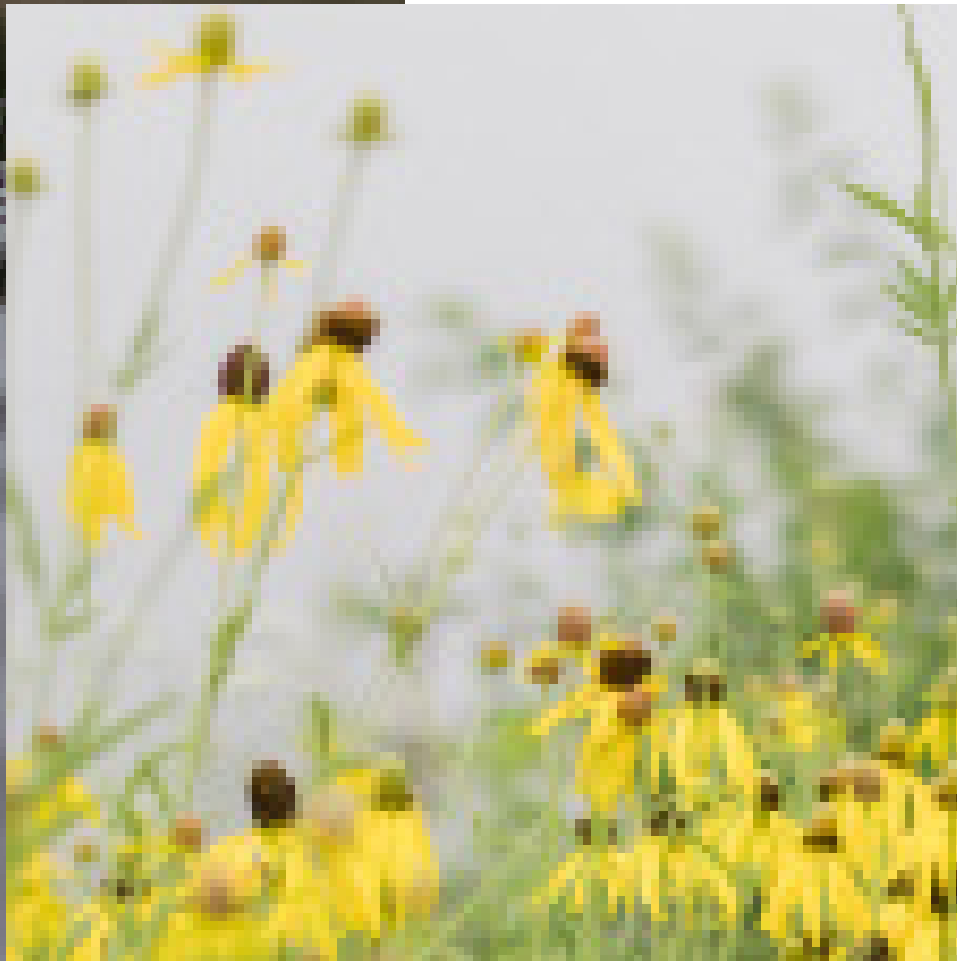
We are honored to have Great Outdoors Foundation partner with Polk County Conservation. We have proven that in working together our environment and the community benefit.

See you on the trails,

RICH LEOPOLD, DIRECTOR



*MORE THAN **\$700,000**
INVESTED IN 2021 POLK
COUNTY CONSERVATION
INITIATIVES //
\$65 MILLION LEVERAGED
THROUGH PRELIMINARY
FUNDRAISING AND
ADVOCACY FOR THE WATER
AND LAND LEGACY BOND*





Last year, in many ways, was the fulfillment of several major goals within what was Central Iowa Water Trails. For the first time ever, this \$125 million project became an independent organization with its own board of directors, operating budget and brand. Through our governance process, we were able to secure twelve jurisdictional partners who now make up the geographical footprint of ICON Water Trails.

ICON still, and will always, have a strong relationship with the Great Outdoors Foundation. Because of the fundraising leadership that Hannah and Jen provide, our organization can focus solely on implementing this gargantuan plan, completely transforming the way Central Iowans interact with our waterways.

In addition to the work that we did organizationally, we also made headway on the projects themselves. Significant progress was made on the BUILD Grant sites, and despite some schedule adjustments made in response to inflation and supply chain challenges, we continue to move forward with our original projected completion date. Additionally, we began shifting our focus to the design of our Fleur Drive and Center Street sites, strategizing how we can activate our self-sustaining business model as quickly and effectively as possible.

From a funding standpoint, we secured several million dollars in private dollars, bringing us even closer to our \$33.5 million goal. We also announced the creation of the MidAmerican Energy Regional Fund, a \$5 million investment in ICON Water Trails that will be granted out to our partner jurisdictions as a means of



activating their sites within ICON's system.

In July, when we publicly launched the brand of ICON Water Trails, I was blown away by our community's support. We were able to raise more than \$10,000 in our first-ever grassroots campaign, 80 Days of ICON. Every month, we have hundreds of people visiting our new website, eager to learn more about the project and eager to find out what's next. As the project gains more and more recognition from our region, I'm grateful for those early champions — the Great Outdoors Foundation included — who were bold enough to set this once-in-a-lifetime project in motion.

MAGGIE MCCLELLAND, DIRECTOR OF ICON WATER TRAILS

*NEARLY \$29 MILLION IN
PRIVATE INVESTMENTS
SECURED //*

*MORE THAN \$48 MILLION
IN PUBLIC FUNDING GRANTED,*

I'll never forget the first time I secured a million-dollar gift for the Great Outdoors Foundation. It felt — as it should — so significant. It truly speaks to the credibility of our organization as an expert in conservation and outdoor recreation fundraising that last year alone, we were able to procure \$10 million in investments.

That amount shouldn't be skipped over. Not only is it an incredible win for our community, but it's a literal manifestation of our influence in the community. I'm so proud of the ethos the Great Outdoors Foundation has. We are trusted, time and time again, with the generous donations of our supporters who have full faith that we will steward their investments well.

This is perfectly demonstrated in the fundraising campaigns we've been tasked with for both the City of Clive's Greenbelt Triad and the City of West Des Moines' Raccoon River Pedestrian Bridge. These projects are game-changers for the surrounding communities, utilizing outdoor recreation as a catalyst for environmental conservation. We are honored that when faced with a multi-million dollar budget line, local municipalities turn to us to turn the vision into reality.

Because of the vast opportunity for these quality of life projects, we've developed our Conservation Circle program to ensure we are able to provide sustainable funding for conservation and outdoor recreation on an ongoing basis. This, along with our grassroots campaigns and events, will allow us to lead the way in our region, consistently providing creative solutions for complex conservation and outdoor recreation projects.

JEN CROSS, VP OF DONOR RELATIONS



Partner Projects



Marketing & Events



*30+ NEWS FEATURES
// 32%* AVERAGE
OPEN RATE FOR
NEWSLETTERS // MORE
THAN 900 COMBINED
FOLLOWERS ADDED
TO OUR SOCIAL
MEDIA COMMUNITY***





NEARLY 300 INDIVIDUAL EVENT ATTENDEES // MORE THAN \$60,000 IN EVENT REVENUE

FIRST-EVER WILD PRAIRIE SHOWDOWN // INVOLVED MORE THAN 144 INDIVIDUAL DONORS



*2021 average open rate is +7% above industry average

**2021 metrics are a combination of both Great Outdoors Foundation and ICON Water Trails Initiatives

2021 Donors & Sponsors

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION

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GREAT
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FOUNDATION

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Des Moines, IA 50309 //

(515) 452-0024 //

greatoutdoorsfoundation.org

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