

2023 Annual Report

# From Shore to Shore: A Year of Impact



ALLIANCE *for the*  
GREAT LAKES



This year was a powerful one for the Alliance.

Thanks to our leadership, our region was able to secure a commitment from the states of Michigan and Illinois to fully fund the local share of construction costs for the Brandon Road project to stop invasive bighead and silver carp from entering the Great Lakes. While there are still final agreements to sign, this is tremendous progress.

Our agriculture team released new research demonstrating that current investments in stopping phosphorus pollution to Lake Erie are falling woefully short of solving the problem. This report is already reshaping agriculture policy in Michigan, and we are working to replicate this work in other parts of the lakes suffering from chronic farm pollution. Our efforts with community partners in Chicago and Cleveland are advancing drinking water service line replacement that will protect families from the dangers of toxic lead.

We notched initial policy wins in Illinois to start clamping down on the most problematic sources of plastic pollution to the Great Lakes and built momentum for action across the region. And our Adopt-a-Beach volunteers continue to demonstrate why keeping this pernicious source of pollution out of our waters needs to be a top priority.

At its heart, the Alliance is powered by your passion for the Great Lakes combined with a team of people who advance us toward our shared vision every day. Last year we added experienced professionals to our staff in the fields of water policy, communication, operational support, and fundraising. Enabled by your generosity, the caliber of our staff continues to rise to meet the needs of the lakes.

Your dedicated support has also ushered the Alliance into an era of fiscal and operational strength unmatched in our history. With your support, we're empowered to take risks and make bigger bets on Great Lakes protection than ever before – bets that we are confident will pay off in the form of cleaner water and a stronger Great Lakes community.

As our power has grown, we entered 2024 ready to decide how the Alliance can shape the next decade of Great Lakes protections. We are writing our next long-term strategy, and I'm confident in our ability to realize our vision of a thriving Great Lakes, clean water we can depend on, and a powerful Great Lakes movement. I look forward to sharing more with you this fall.

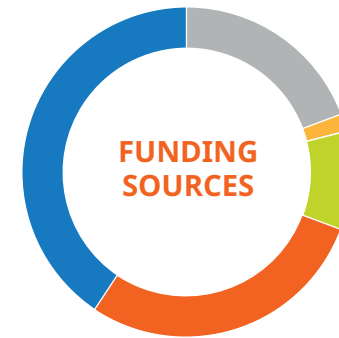
Finally, I want to share my thanks for the Alliance's Board of Directors. These esteemed leaders volunteer their time, skills and more to guide our strategy and ensure we have all the tools we need to succeed.

Most of all, thank you for your commitment to the Great Lakes and for your gifts that bring our work to life. I sincerely hope you find our accomplishments inspiring and our next steps energizing.

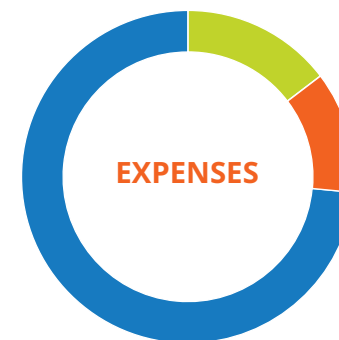
With gratitude,

**Joel Brammeier**  
President & CEO

# Treasurer's Report



GRANTS	\$1,759,000	41%
INDIVIDUALS	\$1,236,533	28%
BUSINESSES/ORGANIZATIONS	\$417,572	10%
GOVERNMENT	\$73,675	2%
OTHER		19%
Investment Gains	\$809,928	
Revenue	\$24,173	(Ticket sales, paddle raise, and raffle minus expenses for the Great Blue Benefit)



PROGRAMS	\$3,185,590	73%
FUNDRAISING	\$514,150	12%
ADMINISTRATIVE	\$634,402	15%



ASSETS	\$10,793,180
LIABILITIES	\$964,1661

**In 2023**, the Alliance for the Great Lakes enhanced its fiscal strength through successful fundraising, efficient operations and growth of the Lee Botts Strategic Fund.

The Alliance saw growth in Individual, Corporate, and Foundation giving resulting in annual revenue of over 3.5 million dollars. Our business partners supported the Great Blue Benefit and Adopt-A-Beach program. We nurtured our commitment to a lower-cost remote working environment and added regular opportunities for our staff teams to come together around the Great Lakes region.

We continue to see healthy growth in the Lee Botts Strategic Fund, established in 2022. The Fund preserves and responsibly grows our long-term assets to support strategic program expansion. Thanks to the generosity of our donors and recent major and estate gifts, this legacy-enabling Fund stood \$6.3 million at the end of 2023.

I would like to recognize my fellow board members on the 2023 Finance Committee, including Bill Henry, Laura Payne and Nicole Chavas, for their dedication.

I would also like to thank Joel Brammeier, president and CEO, and Kelly Farley, our vice president of Finance and Operations, for their guidance. We're committed to ensuring that your support receives the highest standard of financial stewardship.

We are truly grateful for the growing number of supporters who have entrusted us with carrying out our critical work. The Alliance's fiscal strength means we can use the organization's resources strategically to continue leading Great Lakes protection and restoration for generations to come.

—Susan McDermott, Treasurer

*Our annual audit was in process at time of printing. Audited financials will be posted to our website in summer 2024.*



**FOR MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY**, the Alliance for the Great Lakes has been at the forefront of efforts to safeguard our precious Great Lakes - Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie, and Ontario. Each year, we galvanize tens of thousands of advocates and volunteers who dedicate their time and resources to protecting these vital bodies of water.

In 2023, we focused on three pivotal goals to benefit the lakes and the communities that depend on them:

**Protecting Safe and Clean Water:** We are committed to ensuring that safe and clean Great Lakes water is a reality available to everyone who lives here.

**Restoring Thriving Great Lakes:** We advocate for healthy lakes, fish and wildlife that support our way of life and enable communities to depend on the lakes for everything from drinking water to swimming, boating, and fishing.

**Listening to Voices of the Lakes:** We strive to listen to and include people who rely on the lakes for their health and vitality in decisions that impact their daily lives and futures.

**With the unwavering support of our donors and partners, we are thrilled to report progress towards our ultimate vision: a thriving and healthy Great Lakes for everyone.**

## ADVOCACY & LEADERSHIP

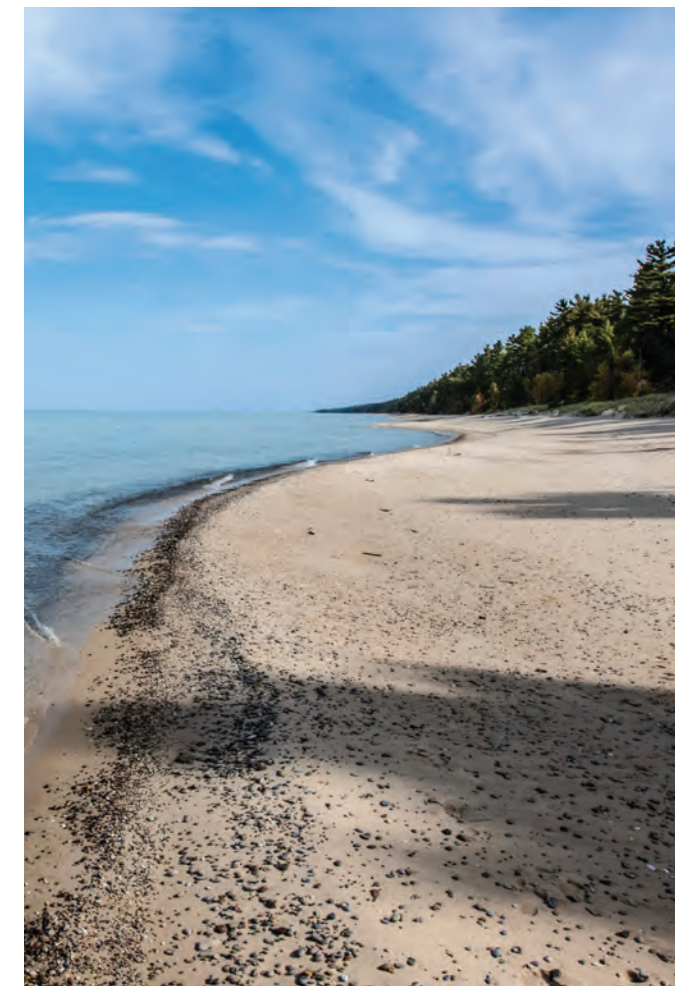
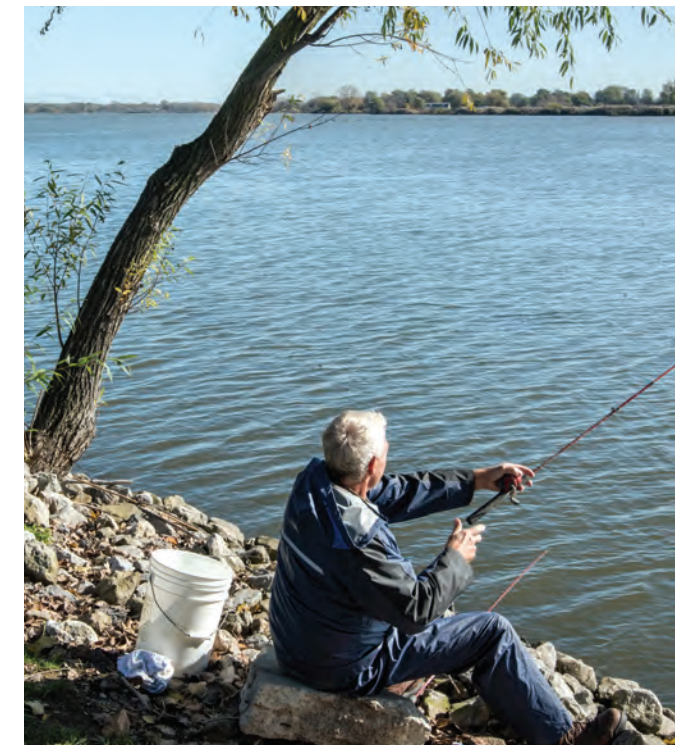
**Invasive Species:** Building on the momentum of previous successes, we secured essential state funding for the Brandon Road Lock and Dam project, crucial for keeping invasive carp out of the Great Lakes. Michigan and Illinois contributed a substantial \$114 million towards this initiative.

**Great Lakes Restoration Initiative:** We successfully advocated for an increase in funding to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, securing a \$368 million appropriation. This funding supports on-the-ground restoration projects across the region, from wetland restoration to cleaning up toxic hotspots.

**Protecting and Providing Clean Water:** We collaborated with national partners and took the lead in several states, including Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Indiana, to advocate on state intended use plans, which guide how water infrastructure funds are spent to keep sewage out of our lakes and homes, and to provide safe drinking water. We pushed for equitable and climate-resilient investments focused on the communities most in need.

**Plastic Pollution:** In partnership with the Ocean Conservancy and the Illinois Environmental Council, we achieved major legislative victories in Illinois aimed at reducing plastic pollution, enhancing reuse systems, and improving data collection to support future policymaking efforts.

**Climate Change:** We secured additional funding for the Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study, a federal project supporting coastal communities dealing with extreme water levels.



## EDUCATION & ACTION

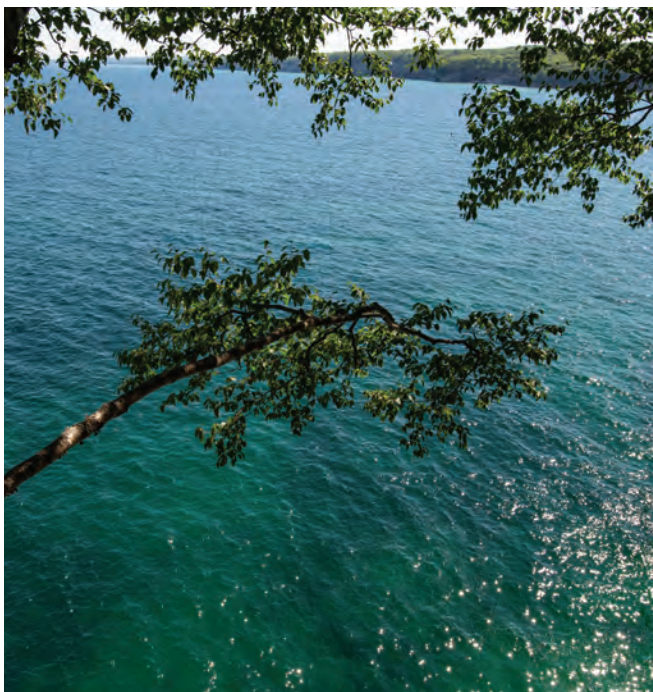


**Action Alerts:** Our network was more vocal than ever, with supporters sending over 12,000 emails to Congress advocating for vital water issues, including infrastructure improvements, combating invasive species, and supporting key legislative measures like the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the Clean Water Act.

**Adopt-a-Beach:** Celebrating 20 years of critical data collection, our volunteers have been pivotal in researching plastic pollution in the Great Lakes, an increasingly concerning issue. The data they've gathered is starting to fill significant research gaps.

**Ambassadors Program:** Our Ambassadors have been instrumental in deepening community ties from Minnesota to New York, engaging thousands through educational events and beach cleanups.

## RESEARCH & ANALYSIS



**Agriculture:** A pivotal study released by the Alliance revealed that current efforts to reduce phosphorous runoff in the Western Basin of Lake Erie are insufficient. Without increased funding and conservation practices, achieving phosphorus reduction goals will remain out of reach, leaving the area vulnerable to toxic algae blooms.

**Local Initiatives:** In Chicago, we worked with local environmental justice partners to propose successful strategies for lead service line replacements and water affordability. In Cleveland, our partnership efforts have dramatically strengthened the environmental advocacy coalition and shifted city water policy goals.



As we move forward, our focus remains clear:

- Protect and nurture the critical Great Lakes policies and funding that our lakes and all of us depend on.
- Ensure that all Great Lakes communities can enjoy safe, clean and accessible water.
- Reduce the agricultural pollution that is harming our lakes, health and economy.
- Stop the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species.
- Protect our water from diversion and wasteful uses.
- Foster local leadership for Great Lakes water.
- Mobilize a broad coalition of volunteers and advocates to speak for the Great Lakes.

Thanks to your support, we're not just dreaming of a healthier Great Lakes—we're making it a reality, one step at a time.

## Thank You from the Alliance Board and Staff

The Alliance for the Great Lakes would like to recognize and thank our board member Quentin James for his years of service. We also extend a warm welcome to our newest board member Timothy Alston, who joined in 2023.

In addition, Laura Payne was elected to a second two-year term as Vice Chair of Development. Bill Henry was elected to a second two-year term as Board Secretary.

Thank you to all of our board members – past and present – for their dedication and leadership.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jo-Elle Mogerman, *Chair*

Vanessa Tey Iosue, *Vice Chair – Policy*

Laura Payne, *Vice Chair – Development*

Susan McDermott, *Treasurer*

Bill Henry, *Secretary*

Tom Langmyer, *Nominations Chair*

Joel Brammeier, *ex officio*

Timothy Alston

Nicole Chavas

Tim Frick

David Hackett

Katherine Jones

Daniel Guzman King

Kimberly Hill Knott

Candace Jeffers LaRochelle

Dr. Wren Montgomery

Dr. Alan Steinman

Dr. Sri Vedachalam

Christopher Winters

### EMERITUS

Paul Culhane

James Griffith

### STAFF

*Executive Staff:*

Joel Brammeier, *President & CEO*

Molly Flanagan, *COO & Vice President for Programs*

Matt Altstiel, *Vice President for Development*

Kelly Farley, *Vice President for Finance and Operations*

Jennifer Betzen, *Development Associate*

Patricia Brown, *Finance Manager*

Don Carr, *Media Director*

Michelle Farley, *Staff Writer*

Tom Fazzini, *Director of Communications*

Genevieve Fletcher, *Individual Giving Manager*

Judy Freed, *Senior Marketing Manager*

Chrystopher Garzón Rivera, *Water Policy Analyst*

Meleah Geertsma, *Director of Clean Water & Equity*

Luz Gomez, *Office Manager*

Jon Heuring, *Foundation & Corporate Giving Manager*

Don Jodrey, *Director of Federal Relations*

Angela Larsen, *Director of Planning*

Jennifer Lumpkin, *Cleveland Local Partnerships Manager*

Cristal Ramírez, *Volunteer Engagement Coordinator*

Olivia Reda, *Volunteer Engagement Manager*

Darryn Suttles, *Data Manager*

Helena Volzer, *Senior Agriculture Policy Manager*

Jenna Voss, *Program Manager, Clean Water & Equity*

Justine Weidel, *Executive Assistant*

Tom Zimnicki, *Agriculture & Restoration Policy Director*

*Our staff are headquartered in Chicago, with additional offices in Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Washington D.C.*



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**GREAT LAKES**

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