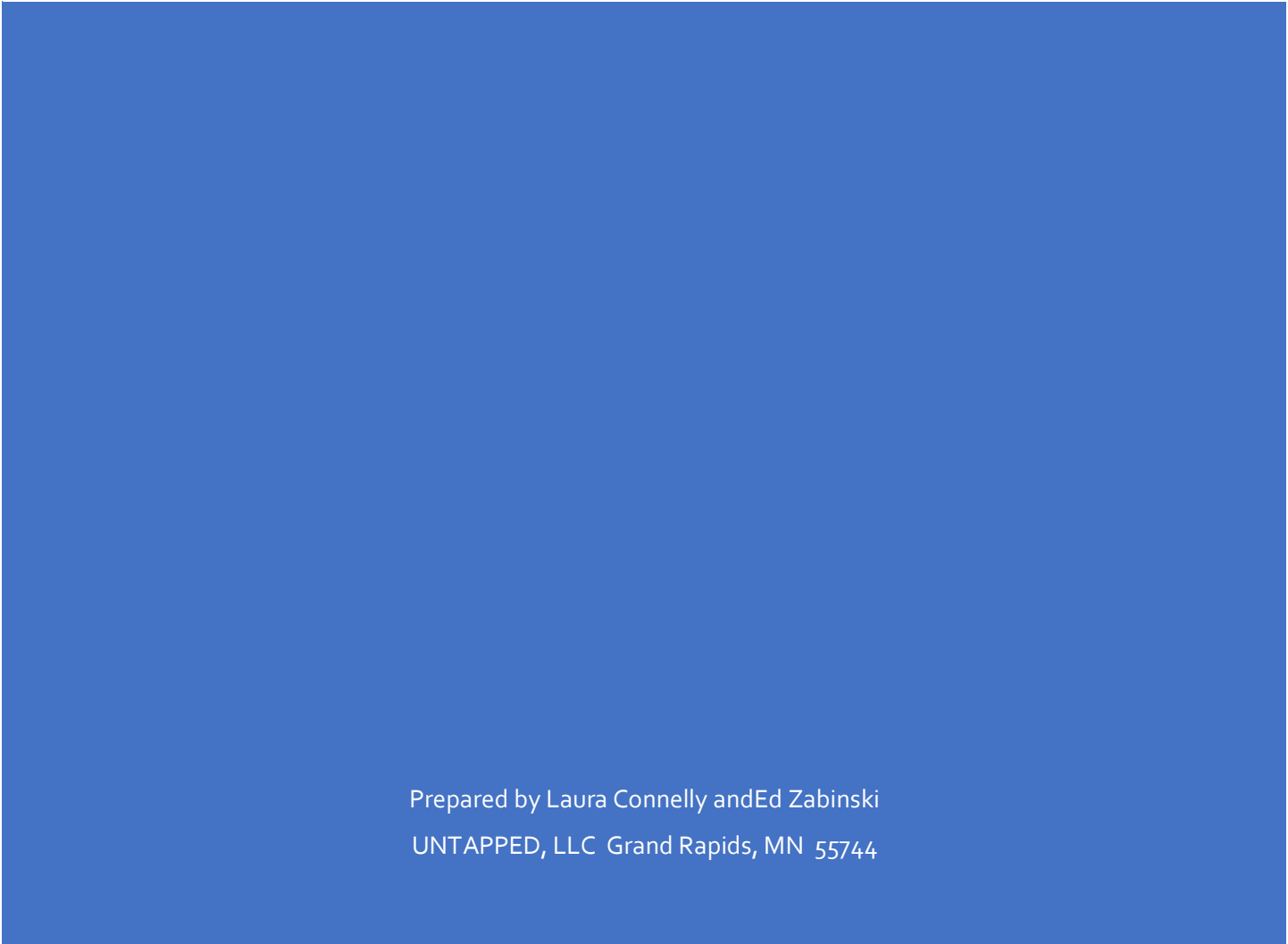




# ITASCA WATERS STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK PLAN 2021-24

Prepared by Laura Connelly and Ed Zabinski  
UNTAPPED, LLC Grand Rapids, MN 55744



**Itasca Waters mission: *To team up with other organizations and concerned citizens to maintain abundant, clean water for our continued health, enjoyment and a strong economy.***

*Note: The 2011 application filing for 501(c)3 status states the mission is: "To work collaboratively on water issues and mobilize on-the-ground actions that encourage diverse sustainable use, protection, recovery and enjoyment of the Itasca County's world-class water and shoreland resources that are critical to a strong economy."*

**Itasca Waters exists:** To educate the public about the economic, social, and environmental value of our clean water. To proactively work to preserve our water resources by educating the public about actions they can take to protect, preserve, maintain and conserve our clean water.

**Beneficiaries of the work done by Itasca Waters:** Everyone who lives and works in, and visits, Itasca County.

**Itasca Waters services/programs:** Water quality education and advocacy.

**Itasca Waters theory of change:**



Inputs:  
Knowledgeable  
volunteers.  
Educational  
materials.  
Shoreland  
Advisors.



Outputs: The public is  
more aware of the  
economic, social, and  
environmental value of  
our clean water and  
what actions they can  
take to help preserve it.



Outcome: More  
people take action  
and make  
behavior changes  
needed to  
preserve our  
water resources.



Impact: Our  
water resources  
are preserved  
in perpetuity.

Itasca Waters believes that when a group of committed, knowledgeable volunteers creates and disseminates educational materials, the public will become more aware of the economic, social, and environmental value of Itasca County's water resources, as well as actions they can take to help maintain the clean water. As a result of the education and advocacy efforts, more people will take action and change their behavior in ways that preserve the water resources. If all people are informed of the value of Itasca County's water resources and the actions and behavior changes needed to protect the water quality, Itasca County's water resources will be preserved in perpetuity.

**Partners of Itasca Waters:** The board of directors identified the following list of organizations, agencies, and businesses as key stakeholders to fulfilling Itasca Waters mission.

***Funders & Human Capital***

Blandin Foundation  
Bush Foundation  
Donors  
Volunteers

***Water Quality/ Environmental Groups***

Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)  
Itasca County Lake Associations (ICOLA)  
Department of Natural Resources (DNR)  
Minnesota Lakes and Rivers (MLR)  
Minnesota Pollution and Control Agency (MPCA)  
Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR)

***Nonprofits & General Public Entities***

Visit Grand Rapids (VGR)  
Like-minded nonprofits  
Itasca County school districts  
Fishing community (guides, people who fish)

***Economic Development & Businesses***

Grand Rapids Chamber of Chamber  
Itasca County Business Community  
Itasca Economic Development Corporation (IEDC)  
Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority (GREDA)  
Northern Minnesota Builders Association  
Resort owners

***Governmental Bodies***

Government officials (city, county, and state)  
Leech Lake Band  
Iron Range Resource and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB)  
Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)  
Chippewa National Forest  
Law enforcement

## 2021-24 Strategic Goals

1. Develop a fundraising strategy to sustain the organization, including hiring staff to coordinate projects and finding dynamic board members.
2. Evaluate the organization's governance structure, identify areas for improvement, and implement changes.
3. Continue a focus to educate youth about water quality issues.
4. Increase education efforts of area residents and visitors of Itasca County about actions they can take to help preserve the water resources.
5. Create a campaign to explain how clean water creates a strong economy in Itasca County.
6. Build and strengthen partnering relationships with area agencies and organizations to achieve Itasca Waters' goals to involve the community in addressing water related issues.

## Strategic Action Steps

The following tables identify the strategic actions, timeline, the lead person or group responsible for those actions, and the measurable effects of those actions.

### Strategy 1: Develop a fundraising strategy to sustain the organization, including hiring staff to coordinate projects and finding dynamic board members.

| Actions   | Timeline | Lead               | Measurable Effects   |
|---|----------|--------------------|--|
| Identify funding gaps by exploring how Itasca Waters is funded today, identifying the greatest fundraising challenges, and determining what the organization might achieve with more money. | Sep 2021 | Board of directors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A written value proposition stating the unique value provided to donors and the ultimate impacts created with donor support.</li> <li>• Written strategy to close the funding gaps.</li> </ul>                                    |
| Create a fundraising and development strategy/plan  | Dec 2021 | Pat Leistikow      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual fundraising strategy in place, including an annual fundraising event, membership drives, and grant requests.</li> <li>• Conduct cost/benefit analysis of annual events, membership dues, grants, and donations.</li> </ul> |
| Explore different sources of nonprofit funding, including foundations, governments, businesses, wealthy donors and small donors.  | Ongoing  | John Downing       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one new grant source secured during plan period.</li> </ul>  |

### Strategy 2: Evaluate the organization's governance structure, identify areas for improvement, and implement changes.

| Actions   | Timeline | Lead          | Measurable Effects   |
|---|----------|---------------|--|
| Review the structure and make changes as needed, including reviewing committee roles and processes. | Q4 2021  | Jesse, Jan S. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear decision-making process is in place.</li> <li>• Staff and board roles and responsibilities are defined.</li> <li>• Staffing plan in place.</li> </ul> |
| Recruit new board members and volunteers.   | 2021     | Brian, Jan B. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New board members recruited.</li> <li>• Volunteer hours are logged monthly.</li> </ul>  |

**Strategy 3: Continue a focus to educate youth about water quality issues.**

| Actions  | Timeline | Lead    | Measurable Effects   |
|--|----------|---------|--|
| Focus on the Youth Water Summit and one other event for 2022.                    | 2021     | Dave    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth Water Summit is convened annually during plan period.</li> <li>Participant goals are met or exceeded.</li> <li>Participant feedback is measured.</li> </ul> |
| Form a committee with like-minded youth organizations (e.g., Green Team, et al). | 2022     | Shirley | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationship formed with at least one like-minded group.</li> </ul>   |

**Strategy 4: Increase efforts to educate area residents and visitors to Itasca County about actions they can take to help preserve the water resources.**

| Actions  | Timeline | Lead                   | Measurable Effects   |
|--|----------|------------------------|--|
| Develop a plan to improve our social media campaigns.  | 2021     | Megan, Sandy, Jan B.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social media objectives and goals created.</li> <li>Target audiences are identified.</li> <li>Most effective platforms are identified.</li> <li>Impact metrics are analyzed.</li> </ul> |
| Organize an adult water summit.  | 2022     | Shirley, Sandy, Jan S. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least one Adult Water Summit is hosted.</li> <li>Cost/benefit analysis is done.</li> <li>Participant feedback collected.</li> </ul>  |
| Find ways to communicate current scientific data and best practices for maintaining high water quality to strategic audiences. | Q4 2022  | Jesse, John, Sandy     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data gathering process in place.</li> <li>Target audiences for data communications identified.</li> <li>Communications tailored for target audiences.</li> </ul>                        |

**Strategy 5: Create a campaign to explain how clean water creates a strong economy in Itasca County.**

| Actions   | Timeline | Lead         | Measurable Effects   |
|---|----------|--------------|--|
| Use John Downing’s recent document about why we should care about clean water and present it to area businesses, chambers of commerce, County commissioners and other key stakeholders. | Q3 2021  | Brian        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data gathering process in place.</li> <li>• Target audiences for data communications identified.</li> <li>• Communications tailored for target audiences.</li> </ul>  |
| Reach out to IEDC along with chambers of commerce of adjacent communities.  | Ongoing  | Dave & Jesse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted key stakeholders are identified.</li> <li>• Strategy to engage with key stakeholders is created.</li> <li>• The number of key stakeholders working with Itasca Waters to promote the value of our clean water is tracked.</li> </ul> |

**Strategy 6: Build and strengthen partnering relationships with area agencies and organizations to achieve Itasca Waters’ goals to involve the community in addressing water related issues.**

| Actions   | Timeline | Lead               | Measurable Effects   |
|---|----------|--------------------|--|
| Identify which groups Itasca Waters should have close working relationships with and participate in those organizations’ efforts. | Ongoing  | Board of directors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted key stakeholders are identified.</li> <li>• Strategy to engage with key stakeholders is created.</li> <li>• The number of key stakeholders working with Itasca Waters to promote the value of our clean water is tracked.</li> </ul> |

## Timeline of Strategic Actions

The following tables array the strategic actions chronologically.

| July-September 2021   |          |                    |  |
|---|----------|--------------------|--|
| Identify funding gaps by exploring how Itasca Waters is funded today, identifying the greatest fundraising challenges, and determining what the organization might achieve with more money. | Sep 2021 | Board of directors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A written value proposition stating the unique value provided to donors and the ultimate impacts created with donor support.</li> <li>• Written strategy to close the funding gaps.</li> </ul>                                    |
| Use John Downing's recent document about why we should care about clean water and present it to area businesses, chambers of commerce, County commissioners and other key stakeholders.     | Q3 2021  | Brian              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data gathering process in place.</li> <li>• Target audiences for data communications identified.</li> <li>• Communications tailored for target audiences.</li> </ul>  |
| October-December 2021   |          |                    |  |
| Review the organization's governance structure and make changes as needed, including reviewing committee roles and processes.   | Q4 2021  | Jesse, Jan S.      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear decision-making process is in place.</li> <li>• Staff and board roles and responsibilities are defined.</li> <li>• Staffing plan in place.</li> </ul>   |
| Create a fundraising and development strategy/plan  | Dec 2021 | Pat Leistikow      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual fundraising strategy in place, including an annual fundraising event, membership drives, and grant requests.</li> <li>• Conduct cost/benefit analysis of annual events, membership dues, grants, and donations.</li> </ul> |
| Recruit new board members and volunteers.   | 2021     | Brian, Jan B.      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New board members recruited.</li> <li>• Volunteer hours are logged monthly.</li> </ul>  |
| Focus on the Youth Water Summit and one other event for 2022.   | 2021     | Dave               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Water Summit is convened annually during plan period.</li> </ul>  |

|  |         |                        |  |
|--|---------|------------------------|--|
|  |         |                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant goals are met or exceeded.</li> <li>• Participant feedback is measured.</li> </ul>  |
| Develop a plan to improve our social media campaigns.  | 2021    | Megan, Sandy, Jan B.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media objectives and goals created.</li> <li>• Target audiences are identified.</li> <li>• Most effective platforms are identified.</li> <li>• Impact metrics are analyzed.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>2022</b>  |         |                        |  |
| Form a committee with like-minded youth organizations (e.g., Green Team, et al) to educate youth about water quality issues.   | 2022    | Shirley                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship formed with at least one like-minded group.</li> </ul>   |
| Organize an adult water summit.  | 2022    | Shirley, Sandy, Jan S. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one Adult Water Summit is hosted.</li> <li>• Cost/benefit analysis is done.</li> <li>• Participant feedback collected.</li> </ul>  |
| Find ways to communicate current scientific data and best practices for maintaining high water quality to strategic audiences. | Q4 2022 | Jesse, John, Sandy     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data gathering process in place.</li> <li>• Target audiences for data communications identified.</li> <li>• Communications tailored for target audiences.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>2021-2024 (Ongoing)</b>   |         |                        |  |
| Reach out to IEDC along with chambers of commerce of adjacent communities.   | Ongoing | Dave & Jesse           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted key stakeholders are identified.</li> <li>• Strategy to engage with key stakeholders is created.</li> <li>• The number of key stakeholders working with Itasca Waters to promote the value of our clean water is tracked.</li> </ul> |



|   |         |                    |  |
|---|---------|--------------------|--|
| Explore different sources of nonprofit funding, including foundations, governments, businesses, wealthy donors and small donors.  | Ongoing | John Downing       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one new grant source secured during plan period.</li> </ul>  |
| Identify which groups Itasca Waters should have close working relationships with and participate in those organizations' efforts. | Ongoing | Board of directors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted key stakeholders are identified.</li> <li>• Strategy to engage with key stakeholders is created.</li> <li>• The number of key stakeholders working with Itasca Waters to promote the value of our clean water is tracked.</li> </ul> |

Last revised: 5/15/21  
5/20/21