



ITASCA WATERS

Team Up for Clean Waters



ANNUAL REPORT

ItascaWaters.org

2023



We are deeply saddened by the passing of Jesse Davis, whose exceptional leadership and unwavering commitment to Itasca Waters and the community we serve inspired us all.

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Cover photo of Deer Lake courtesy of Bill Marshall

MISSION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The mission of Itasca Waters (formerly Itasca Water Legacy Partnership) is to “Team Up” with other organizations and concerned citizens to maintain abundant, clean water for our continued health, enjoyment, and a strong economy.

Itasca Waters (IW) is pursuing its mission by:

- Promoting water stewardship through education and community outreach
- Engaging all Itasca County citizens to join in these efforts
- Promoting partnerships with other like-minded agencies and foundations
- Continuing its efforts to fund science-based research focused on water quality.

SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS

Our supporters and partners over the years have included the Blandin Foundation—Bush Foundation—Itasca County—Itasca Soil & Water Conservation District—ISD #318—Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources—Minnesota Department of Natural Resources—Minnesota Pollution Control Agency—U.S. Forest Service—National Fish and Wildlife Foundation—lake associations, other nonprofits, businesses, volunteers and individual members.

ACTIVE GRANTS

Itasca Waters has been fortunate to receive major funding from the Blandin Foundation and Bush Foundation. For 2023, only the Blandin Foundation grant funds continued to be used for programming.

Blandin Foundation Grants

In 2011, Blandin Foundation awarded the Itasca Water Legacy Partnership funds for its first Itasca Adult Water Summit (\$15,000). In the same year, we received a multi-year grant of \$155,000 for operations to build local capacity for water quality assessment and other activities to maintain Itasca County’s high-quality water. Some funds from this 2011 Blandin grant are still available for use for community events such as the Youth Water Summit.

In March 2018, the Blandin Foundation awarded Itasca Waters a \$150,000 grant to fund a three-year program focused on protecting and restoring shoreland areas in Itasca County to reduce nutrient loading in area lakes and maintain high water quality. The application included a request for a part-time coordinator to help implement the program, a first for Itasca Waters.



COORDINATOR & OFFICE

In early 2022, the Board hired a new part-time coordinator, Bethann Perendy. The office had been closed in late 2021. Bethann has been a valuable asset to Itasca Waters, helping us keep organized and on task. During 2023, Bethann published four newsletters with details about upcoming Itasca Waters activities and reporting on past events. Itasca Waters keeps meeting materials, resources, and archived files in Google Drive.

Below is a brief review of the work in 2023 of the active committees, including projects within each committee’s purview.

COMMITTEES

Education

Practical Water Wisdom Series

Practical Water Wisdom: A Virtual Learning Series completed its second year of production and, by all accounts, it was again very successful. You can watch any of the recorded programs by going to the Itasca Waters [website](#).

Topics covered in 2023 were:

- Feb 2, 2023---Loons and Bald Eagles: Can They Coexist?
- Mar 2, 2023--Water plants and woody debris in shallow water: Friend or foe?
- Apr 6, 2023--Decrease your water footprint and save money too!
- May 4, 2023--Do horsepower and wake boating matter to your lake?

- June 1, 2023--Are invasive cattails taking over your lake?
- Jun 12/13, 2023--Become an Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Detector
- Jul 6, 2023--Water-borne disease and symptoms: Can swimming make me sick?
- Aug 3, 2023--Impending AIS threats: Can they kill my pet or hurt my kids?
- Sep 7, 2023--How healthy is your well?
- Oct 31, 2023--SPECIAL: Supernatural lakes: monsters, ghosts, witches, fairies, and aliens.
- Nov 2, 2023--Ice formation and melting on lakes: What we know and why it matters.

The Practical Water Wisdom committee is working on the program for the 2024 season that will begin in February. Thank you to all who participated. We hope to see you in 2024.

Youth Water Summit

On May 23, 2023, Itasca Waters, ISD 318 and Itasca Area Community Education partnered to organize the 10th Annual 5th Grade Youth Water Summit at the Itasca County Fairgrounds. Over 450 students from Grand Rapids, Cohasset, Bigfork, St. Joseph's, and Coleraine schools participated in some of the more than 45 presentations (aligned with Minnesota Standards in Science Education) from federal, state, and local agencies and municipalities, teachers, community members and organizations. Each learning station gave students an opportunity to learn about the importance of water and the vital role it has in our lives. Learning goals for the event covered the chemistry of water and related systems, quantity and quality issues, water safety, and environmental awareness, hands-on lessons, how to be a good steward for water, and applying critical thinking and problem-solving skills to water challenges.

Those of us lucky to volunteer at the event had a chance to visit some of the sessions presented at stations scattered around the Fairgrounds. Subjects included planting rain gardens, invasive species, aquatic invertebrates, making rain clouds, kayaking, the water cycle, using a secchi disk and testing water clarity, a rainfall simulator, septic systems, what is in our soils, getting the lead out, water art, native species, camping in the BWCA, tasting water, and much more.

Shoreland Initiative

The Shoreland Advisor program continued in 2023. Initially launched by the Planning Committee in 2017 with funding from the 2018 Blandin Foundation grant, the Shoreland Advisor program focuses on improving shoreland buffering in Itasca County. The focus is to use up the phosphorus that comes off the land surface through plants rather than have it end up in the water body.

Itasca Waters had 12 volunteer Shoreland Advisors in 2023 who completed several initial visits and follow-up interactions.

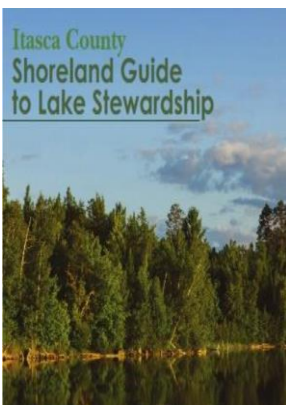
Shoreland Guide

Our popular 2018 Shoreland Guide continues to be well received in our community. Guides are available at all Itasca Waters' events. Realtors have been distributing the guide to people interested in purchasing homes and the Downtown Council has been giving them to new residents. Guides have been distributed to people and groups in connection with work on the Bush Foundation grant. Participants in our shoreland advisors' workshops received the guide and they in turn distributed them to lakeshore property owners they visited. The Guide is available online at our website. Shoreland Guides have also been mailed to new lakeshore owners in the County since 2019.

In 2022, Minnesota Lakes and Rivers adopted our Guide as the model for guides they will prepare for their Lake Stewardship program.

Native Plants

Itasca Waters partnered with District 318 horticulture students to grow a variety of native plants and grasses for use in future lakeshore restoration projects. Prairie Moon, based in Winona, donated high quality local origin seeds.



Community Projects

Mrs. Newman’s class germinated the seeds and once germinated the plants were transplanted. In late May, the seedlings were planted by the 5th grade students at the Youth Water Summit into the Fairground rain gardens that Itasca County oversees and maintains. Austin Steere from Itasca Soil and Water led the planting effort and by the end of the day more than 300 plants were permanently planted and continue to grow and be on display.

Itasca Waters volunteers visited the horticulture classroom to show the video Lakes and Lawns which provides a great introductory explanation why it is critical that landowners adopt large root systems into their buffer zones near the shoreline.

In combination with local commercial media, the Itasca Water Shoreland Initiative helps spread the message that good lake stewardship begins with the water’s edge.

Membership

Itasca Waters’ accomplishments for 2023 were made possible by the generous support from its members and dedicated volunteers. Financial contributions enable Itasca Waters to carry out its mission by providing funds for educational outreach, special events, and operational costs not covered by grant monies.

Donations totaling \$10,140 came from individuals, businesses, lake associations, and others, and ranged from \$25 to \$500.00, including “stock” donations.

In 2023 5 new members joined Itasca Waters plus additional new “gift” memberships were received. The generous donations made by both new members and members who have supported Itasca Waters since its inception, make a powerful statement about how much the people of Itasca County value our water resources and Itasca Waters’ efforts in maintaining the high quality of those resources. Itasca Waters feels blessed to have the support of so many in the community.

Fishing Line Collected for Recycling

This was the third year for collecting monofilament fishing line for recycling. Itasca Waters volunteers constructed 13 collection containers in 2021 that were placed on public fishing piers in the County at the following locations:

Grand Rapids Ice (Crystal) Lake

- Grand Rapids Forest Lake
- Grand Rapids Sylvan Bay
- Grand Rapids Mississippi River by Library
- Cohasset Tioga Beach
- Cohasset Mississippi River
- Coleraine Trout Lake
- Mud Lake Dam on the Leech River
- U.S. Army Corps (3 containers)
- Scenic State Park (2 containers)

Perry and Shirley Loegering checked the City and Mud Lake Dam containers and again on October 21. The U.S. Army Corps staff turned in their collection on October 25. The Corps was very pleased with the usage by the fishing community. A total of 1 ½ pounds of monofilament line was collected from nine containers (compared to one pound from 13 containers in 2021). The fishing piers at Trout Lake and Tioga Beach had already been removed for the winter on October 21 and no line was collected from them earlier. There was no line collected at Scenic State Park because the main pier was down for repairs. However, they do wish to participate again next year.

While it is discouraging that people ignore the “No Trash” symbol, we can at least feel good that those items are not going into the lake.

The monofilament line was cleaned of major debris and trash, and was mailed to Berkley Recycling at Spirit Lake, Iowa.

2023 FINANCIAL REPORT

Mississippi River Planting

On May 15th team of Master Gardener Susan Lick, David Lick and educator Rachel Newman’s class used a combination of native perennials the students grew over the winter, along with divisions from established plantings ready for thinning, to augment the hillside planting along the pedestrian bridge over the Mississippi in Grand Rapids.

Itasca Waters provided the seeds for Monarda, Butterfly Weed, Prairie Clover and Blue Sage, which the Horticulture class nurtured over the winter. Now those plants are growing at several locations around the county!

Itasca Waters contracts with Blake & Lind, CPAs accounting firm, for compilation and general ledger services. This firm records all receipts and expenses, reconciles the bank statement, and provides financial statements each month. This is a valued service to strengthen our internal controls.

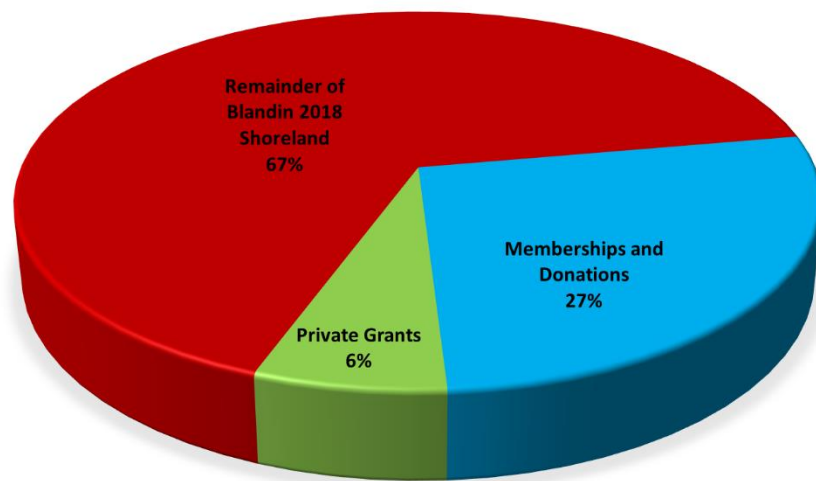
Education for youth, our annual sponsored and planned Youth Water Summit, was held in May 2023. It was a great success, and we are thankful for the Blandin Foundation allowing us to use a portion of the remainder of their grant for this valuable educational experience for the Itasca County 5th Graders.

Itasca Waters total 2023 expenditures were \$38,115 consisting of general operating expenses of \$10,592 include annual membership dues, cell phone, office supplies, postage, accounting fees, membership drive, insurance and website expenses, an increase of \$1,200 over 2022.

Over half of the Itasca Waters budget (\$21,283) was spent on the Coordinator salary – a very important and integral position to keep this organization and programs moving forward. The remainder is spent on Education and Program Supplies. Membership donations in 2023 were \$10,140.

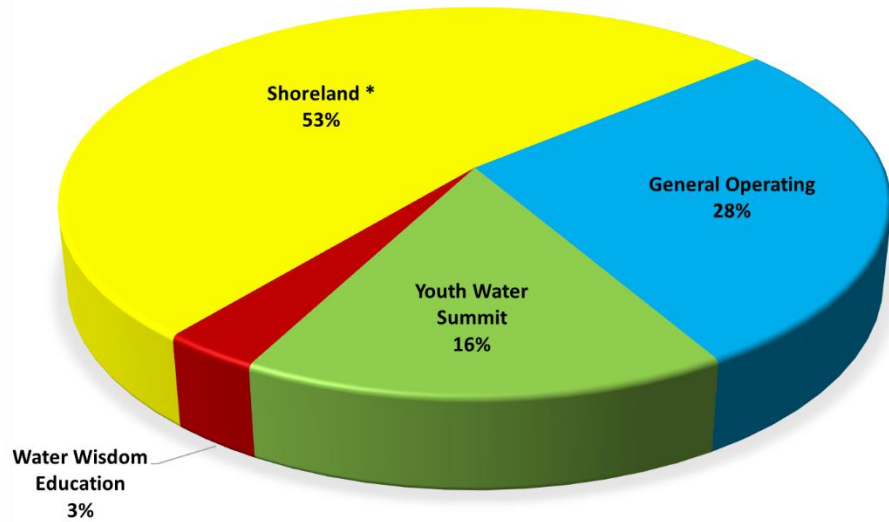
Itasca Waters continues to actively pursue additional board members and funding sources. Please contact us today if you are interested in being a board member or donating time or resources to the Itasca Waters Organization.

2023 SOURCE OF FUNDS



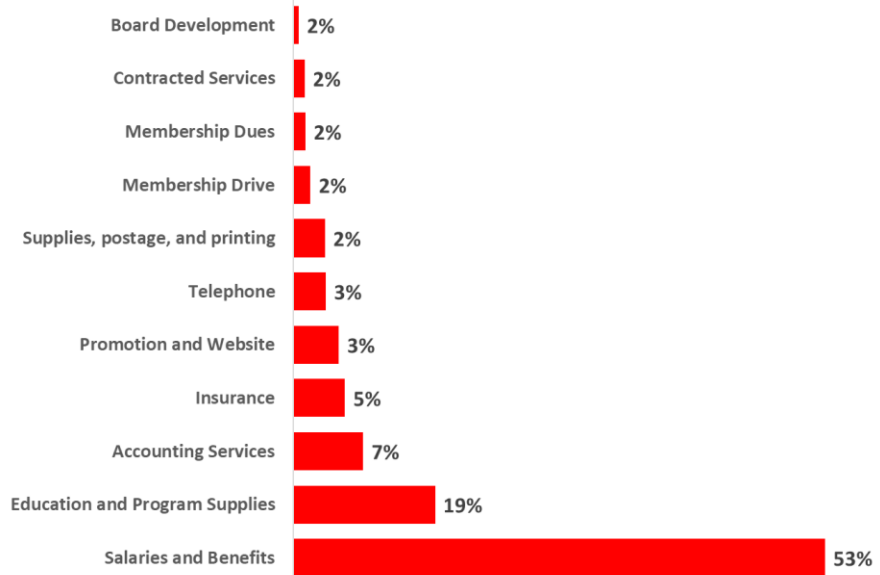
NOTE: 2023 funds received other than remaining Blandin Funds were \$10,140

2023 SPENDING BY PROGRAM



Note: Most of Coordinator salary is included in this category

2023 Spending by Activity



NOTE: 2023 spending totaled \$38,115.

ORGANIZATION HISTORY

Local water quality advocates came together in late 2006 to identify and implement a set of activities that would ensure clean water resources and quality habitat in the major watersheds of Itasca County. IWLP formalized its operations as a community coalition by establishing a board and executive committee to guide partnership activities. In 2009, IWLP completed its first surface water assessment grant to assess water quality for previously untested lakes in the county.

2010: IWLP's Certificate of Incorporation and Articles of Incorporation as a nonprofit organization were filed under the laws of the State of Minnesota.

2011: Qualified for 501(c)3 status with the IRS and organized a full-day adult water summit at Itasca Community College.

2012: Strengthened financial reporting and implemented an informal system for tracking the completion of Board and committee activities; hosted a series of evening meetings for adults; and organized the first Youth Water Summit for fifth graders.

2013: Released the Deer-Pokegama Study; hosted several educational events; completed a second surface water assessment grant assessing the Bigfork River Watershed; and, helped create a Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) in collaboration with Leech Lake Band, Itasca County land department, MN Department of Transportation, USFS, DNR, University of Minnesota Extension and ICOLA.

2014: Cooperated with partners to develop a program for prevention and eradication of aquatic invasive species; released results on the economic value of water in Itasca County; hosted several educational events; and was awarded the Itasca County Outstanding Conservationist Award.

2015: Continued work with the Itasca County Aquatic Invasive Species program; sponsored educational events for children and adults (including a second Adult Summit in partnership with the forestry community); shared in the Outstanding Conservationist Award given to the Aquatic Invasive Species Partnership of Itasca County; and continued support for the water lab at ICC.

2016: Sponsored several educational events; continued work on the AIS Technical Advisory Committee; and negotiated the successful transfer of the AIS program to the Itasca County SWCD.

2017: Completed transfer of the AIS program to Itasca County SWCD; rebranded IWLP to Itasca Waters; hosted the 6th Youth Water Summit; began work on the Shoreland Initiative and Shoreland Guide; and, agreed to host a six-week 2019 event, We are Water.

2018: Won a \$150,000 grant from the Blandin Foundation focused on protecting shorelands; hosted the 7th Youth Water Summit; hired a part-time coordinator and opened an office; erected a billboard and updated the website; published the Shoreland Guide; hosted a Septic Secrets seminar; continued to work on We are Water 2019.

2019: Won a \$114,040 grant from the Bush Foundation focused on using community driven solutions to protect water and Board development; hosted the eighth Youth Water Summit; successfully hosted the Minnesota Humanities Center exhibit We are Water, and related events; rolled out the Shoreland Advisors program; worked with the University of Minnesota at Morris to survey Itasca County residents about attitudes and practices focused on water quality in the county; and, developed a plan to restructure the operations of Itasca Waters to better work through committees.

2020: Continued work on Bush Community Engagement Grant and the Shoreland Advisor Program; created targeted marketing (including a billboard, radio spots, videos, newsletters and social media) to promote healthy shorelands.

2021: Finished work on the Bush Community Engagement Grant and continued the Shoreland Advisor Program; set up containers to collect fishing line for recycling.

2022: Hired a part-time coordinator, started the Practical Water Wisdom online education series, continued the Shoreland Advisor program, restarted the Youth Water Summit, and continued the fishing line recycling program.

2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Itasca Waters is governed by an all-volunteer Board of Directors who come from a wide variety of backgrounds. The full Board meets six times a year and the Executive Committee, consisting of the officers, meets as needed. The board consists of both voting board members and non-voting technical advisors.

Sandy Anderson, Treasurer



Sandy moved to Minnesota in the early 80's and to Grand Rapids in 2001. With a Masters in Geography and a GIS certification, Sandy worked as a site location analyst for Dayton-Hudson Corp. for years before starting Lakehomes.com Realty in 1999 with her husband, Dan. With a family cabin on Lake Ontario and Dan's experience growing up on Rainy Lake, they brought their love of lake property to the business. In 2013 Lake Homes Realty grew into the Move It Real Estate Group keeping a strong emphasis on waterfront sales. With a strong history of waterfront sales in Northern, Minnesota, she and Dan understand the importance of clean waters on the environment and a community's growth potential.

Kathy Cone, Vice-President



Kathy served IWLP as Education Chair from 2012 when she joined the Board to 2020. In addition, Kathy works full time as an accountant, has two children, and volunteers on the Community Cafe Board and completed a two- year training in "Leadership for the Century".

Kathy enjoys spending time raising meat birds, pork, beef, and laying hens for the farm fresh eggs as well as raising vegetables. She also likes to paint with watercolor and oil, hunting, fishing, crafts, and spending time with friends.

Jesse Davis, President



A native of Colorado, Jesse and his husband are 4th generation family farmers in Trout Lake Township. Active in local farmers' markets and the local food community and principal viola player in the Itasca Symphony. Jesse is presently a Realtor with the Move It Real Estate Group. Jesse feels that healthy lakes and waters are integral to the economic, cultural, and social sustainability of the Greater Itasca area.

John A. Downing



John is currently the Director of the Minnesota Sea Grant College Program, a research scientist at the Large Lakes Observatory, and a tenured Professor in the Department of Biology at the University of Minnesota Duluth. His research and teaching dossiers concern many aspects of the aquatic sciences. His leadership experience has included positions in the US and Canada. He has founded and run several small businesses in the US and Canada. He has a long-standing record of success in securing research funding from federal, state, provincial, and local agencies. He maintains current international research collaborations with Canada, Brazil, and Holland.

John's family has conserved and managed a shore-habitat and forest area in northern Minnesota for 108 years. He is a certified diver, a once-professional musician, and volunteers to help citizens across the US Midwest with local water quality concerns.

Bill Grantges



Bill is the Itasca County Aquatic Invasive Species Program Manager. He is a board member of Itasca Waters. He is currently serving on the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center's (MAISRC) Center Advisory Board. Bill had previously served on the Technical Committee of MAISRC for four years. He is a past Vice-President of Itasca Coalition of Lake Associations (ICOLA). Bill received his master's in business administration from the University of Rhode Island and worked as a program manager for Siemens Medical Systems before coming to Minnesota in 1999. He has certifications from the Minnesota DNR as a Lake Service Provider and as a Level 1 & Level 2 AIS Watercraft Inspector. He is also a certified University of Minnesota Extension AIS Detector. In 2020, Bill was awarded the Carol Mortensen Award for Individual Achievement from the Minnesota Invasive Species Advisory Council (MISAC). Bill is passionate about building partnerships to help preserve and protect our strong outdoor traditions.

Dave Lick



Dave is retired as principal owner of Itasca Reliable Insurance Agency, Inc., has a B.S. degree in biology, a minor in chemistry, past president of Itasca Coalition of Lake Associations, responsible for septic compliance for Wabana Township Lakes, past board member for Advocates for Family Peace, lifetime member of Izaak Walton League, current member of Minnesota Power's Citizen Advisory Board, active organizer of Citizens Advocating Responsible Power Production "CARRP," public school science teacher for four years, and he directed Youth Conservation Corp camps for the USFS for two years.

Dave's additional interests are forest landownership and sustainable forest management (from 1994 to present he converted 70 acres back to white pine), beekeeper, gardener, woodworker, avid bike rider and cross-country skier, canoeist, and scuba diver. He is married and has two children.

Jan Sandberg, Secretary



Jan joined the IWLP Board in 2012 and helps ensure that the board's work is kept on track. She compiles the annual report and assists with Google Drive and Dropbox.

Since retiring as a program evaluator with the Office of the Legislative Auditor in 2007, Jan and her husband, Richard spend much of the summer at their Pokegama Lake cabin that they purchased in 1986. In 2017, they welcomed their first grandchild and plan frequent visits to Vancouver, British Columbia to "help" as needed. Jan makes Minneapolis her urban home,

serving on the Minneapolis Charter Commission.

Cory Smith

Itasca County Commissioner District 1

EMERITUS BOARD MEMBER

Harold E. Dziuk



As a young kid, Harold first learned to appreciate the wonders of nature on a small dairy farm in Benton County, MN. He left the farm to embark on undergraduate and graduate studies in Veterinary Medicine and a career in teaching and research. His graduate studies were delayed for two years while he was on active duty in the U.S. Army Veterinary Corps at the Biological Warfare Laboratories, Fort Detrick, Maryland.

His employment included a wide range of public and private venues, including the Tuskegee, Minnesota and Iowa State universities, General Electric, and the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.

His primary role in IWLP over 8 years of service on the Executive Committee was to seek grants to support IWLP's many initiatives.

2023 TECHNICAL ADVISORY BOARD

Andy Arens, District Manager, Itasca County Soil and Water Conservation District



Andy Arens graduated in 2001 with a Forest Management Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Andy has been with the Itasca County SWCD since 2003, as Forestry and Shoreland Specialist initially, and District Manager and Water Plan Coordinator since October 2015.

Ben Benoit, Chippewa National Forest, Deer River District Ranger



Born in Hartford Conn, Ben likes to jokingly tell people that he has lived the Ojibwe migration story. Starting on the East coast and ultimately making his way to Minnesota, Ben went to high school in Anoka, began college at St Cloud State and finished with a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities in Biochemistry. After college, Ben worked for a few years in industry, as a microbiologist and chemist and when he began looking for a house but decided that city life wasn't for him, and it was time to rejoin his family in the North. The best parts of Minnesota are found in this area. Some of the most pristine lakes and watersheds in the county and he is committed to protecting them for future generations to rely on as his family does today. He was taught that if we care for the manoomin, land and waters, they will care for us. That is the mission Ben works towards in his former role as Leech Lake Environmental Director and as an Anishinaabe man. He hopes that through working with Itasca Waters he can further develop relationships between local governments, help push projects that benefit all parties and share the core values that bring people together to care about the water.

Meghan Christianson, Visit Grand Rapids



Megan has been the Executive Director of Visit Grand Rapids since 2012. Megan has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Concordia University, St. Paul Campus. She has 20 years of marketing, public relations, and trade industry membership/advocacy experience. She is currently Chair of the Minnesota Arrowhead Committee and is the NE Minnesota representative on the Explore Minnesota Tourism Council. She serves on the Mississippi River Parkway Commission from Grand Rapids to Brainerd. She is also a Blandin Foundation Community Leadership Alumni.

Megan lives in Cohasset Minnesota with her husband (Chad) and their two children (Madison, 17 and Caleb, 15). She enjoys being on the lake, scrapbooking, and spending time with family and friends.

Stephanie Kessler, Itasca Coalition of Lake Associations



Stephanie was born and raised in Grand Rapids. She has two Geography degrees: a Bachelor's degree from UMD and a Master's degree from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, where she focused on water resources. She worked for the Federal Emergency Management Agency for 24 years in the Mitigation Division, mostly with flood recovery programs and floodplain management. She served eight years on the Itasca Water Plan Implementation Committee, eight years in leadership roles with the Itasca Coalition of Lake Associations, and now is President again with ICOLA. She has been her lake association president since she attended her first meeting, 20 years ago.

She and her husband have two teenage children. She volunteers for Girl Scouts, Itasca Synchronized Swimming Club, and 4-H. She has done event planning as a consultant, and she currently makes a cooking show for the local TV station, ICTV. She recently was hired as the

part-time City of Cohasset Parks and Rec Coordinator. In her spare time, she likes to be outside in all the seasons. She grew up on the water and has valued water as a critical resource for as long as she can remember.

Eric Raitanen, Fisheries Biologist, Chippewa National Forest

Chad Severts, Board Conservationist, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources

2023 STAFF

Bethann Perendy, Coordinator



Bethann was hired in 2022 as Itasca Waters part-time coordinator. She works with the Board and all committees and helps organize the Youth Water Summit.