



Inland Seas

EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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ANNUAL
REPORT



Keeping Course in Uncharted Waters

Early on this year, it became clear 2020 would be one like no other. Just like so many around the world, Inland Seas Education Association was faced with great uncertainty about what a global pandemic would mean for our organization. If schools move to remote learning, what would that mean for our programs? How would health and safety restrictions affect our presence in the community? Would the economic impact threaten the funding we need to do the work we believe to be so critical? In the wake of some very exciting years, how do we keep momentum moving forward?



Though 2020 presented what may be the most significant challenges we have faced, they were hardly the first. With over 30 years driven by innovation, we had developed the wherewithal to anticipate the proverbial storms on the horizon and plan early. Protecting the Great Lakes is no small undertaking, yet Inland Seas has been leaning into that challenge for many years by focusing on our mission, making efficient use of our resources, and approaching the work as a collaborative community—all key facets that sustained our work through the past twelve months.

The best things often lie just outside the comfort zone. As 2020 forced ISEA outside our comfort zone, we found engaged staff, volunteers, and a donor base prepared to create, adapt, and implement a safe range of programming.

We found the time to complete a significant repair to our primary vessel, *Inland Seas* to prevent disruption to future seasons. Capacity precautions and fewer groups provided the freedom to pilot a range of new programming utilizing our renovated campus. Adhering to safety regulations opened up new avenues for training, meetings, collaboration, and engaging our constituents. The process has revealed much about what we do and how we do it that will prove beneficial long into the future.

Without the flexibility and steadfast support of our volunteers, donors, and grant funders, this annual report might be telling a different story. We sincerely thank our volunteers for adapting to virtual training and meetings, adhering to safety protocols, and being willing to try new things. Our donors remained dedicated, many even increasing their contributions through this uncertain time, and we are so grateful. The foundations that support the work of ISEA demonstrated their confidence in the organization and the mission with continued funding and flexibility to enable creative new ways of delivering our mission. Because of this community of stewardship, we are proud to reflect on ISEA's 2020 story as one of resilience, perseverance, creativity, and ultimately the formation of a stronger and more impactful organization.

Fred Z. Sitkins
Executive Director

John Seefeld
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Mission

To inspire a lifetime of Great Lakes curiosity, stewardship, and passion in people of all ages.



ISEA safely served over 300 K-12 students and over 400 public participants in 2020 by adapting our programs and reaching out to new audiences in remote and at-home learning.

Adapting and Learning

This year, Inland Seas embraced limitations as an opportunity to invest in important projects that would otherwise be sidelined by a busy sailing season.

We were grateful to host two interns, Logan Waggoner (Ohio Northern University) and Gavin MacDonald (Central Michigan University) who not only gained a wealth of hands-on experience, but were instrumental in working with the ISEA staff to create digital resources with both immediate and lasting value. The team produced online video training for volunteers, a virtual field trip video, and the *Going to the Water* short film series featuring community leaders from the Traverse City region sharing their stewardship inspiration.

ISEA provided training for 13 educators working with underserved youth from SEEDS 21st Century Community Learning Centers as part of our watershed partnership grant with NAAEE. In

addition, teachers who participated in the 2019 NOAA B-WET Great Lakes Watershed Field Course put their knowledge into practice as over 900 of their students implemented stewardship action projects—exponentially expanding the scope of our mission.

With health precautions aboard the ship, traditional programs not only provided the same intimate experience with the Great Lakes, but making adaptations for smaller groups proved to be an invaluable practice for our education team.

The resolution to continue the work, despite the challenges, stretched our team to discover new methods that simultaneously met the current need and informed the shape of our future programs. Because of this experience, ISEA is better prepared to effectively meet students' needs in an evolving educational landscape.



Students in ISEA programs learn about water quality, microbiology, invasive species, and the food web. These hands-on experiences provide a framework that sets the stage for their personal stewardship ethic.

Above and Beyond

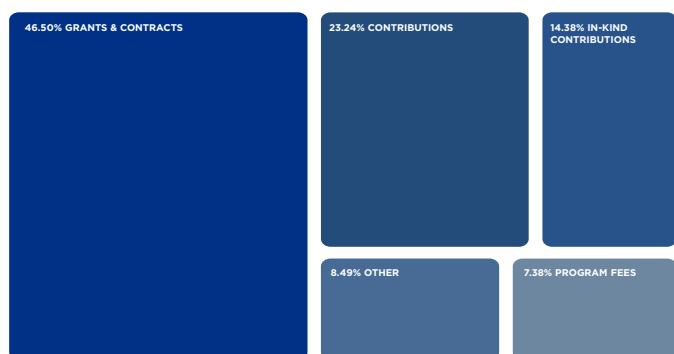
An engaged community is critical to our success in inspiring Great Lakes curiosity, stewardship, and passion.

During a difficult 2020, Inland Seas volunteers still contributed over 2,247 hours of service, valued at \$61,118. In addition, dedicated donors continued their financial support, and foundations remained an important contributor to the mission—many providing extra flexibility for funding, allowing ISEA to thrive. We greatly appreciate the trust and

participation of financial supporters as we adapt to new ways of fulfilling our mission.

The continued support is creating space to expand our offerings beyond Schoolship to take full advantage of our Suttons Bay facility with shoreside programs and impactful multi-day STEM experiences that shape the way young people see the world and the great privilege they have to care for our Great Lakes.

Total Revenue \$1,321,906



Total Expense \$1,092,794



The work of Inland Seas is made possible in part by:



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For a full list of ISEA donors, you can find financial reports online: schoolship.org/about



The future is exciting and bright for Inland Seas thanks to many dedicated supporters and volunteers. As we look “beyond Schoolship” to add year-round STEM programming to our offerings, we invite you to be part of this new and exciting journey.

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