

The Ice Age National Scenic Trail is...



The Trail heads towards a rise and sweeping view along the Cross Plains Segment. Photo by Xiping Wang.



... a thousand-mile footpath winding across Wisconsin, showcasing some of the nation's most beautiful natural areas along the way.

More than 12,000 years ago, an immense flow of glacial ice sculpted a landscape of remarkable beauty across Wisconsin. As the glacier retreated, it left behind a variety of unique features: moraines, eskers, erratics, kettles, drumlins, kames and dells. These glacial remnants are now considered among the world's finest examples of how continental glaciation sculpted our planet.

Wisconsin's tourism and travel industry widely recognizes the Ice Age Trail, one of only eleven National Scenic Trails, as a crown jewel in the state. The economic impact of the Trail is quantified at over \$355 million (and growing) annually. Its notable rise in popularity is reflected in the 2.3 million people from across the country who use the Trail each year. Convenient to a tri-state area, 18 million Americans living within a two-hour drive of the Trail are able to enjoy its benefits.

The Ice Age Trail Alliance, the organization charged with conserving, creating, maintaining, and promoting the Ice Age Trail, celebrated 60 years in 2018. This longevity is a testament to effective public, private, and corporate partnerships, active collaboration, and strong financial support. Another celebrated milestone, in 2020, included the 40th anniversary of the Ice Age Trail becoming a National Scenic Trail. Although the Trail is not yet complete, more than 500 miles of gaps remain between sections of it, the Alliance remains focused on a premier, continuous, permanently protected Ice Age Trail. This steadfast commitment is reflected in the 676 miles of Trail that are open and actively used by Trail enthusiasts.

The Ice Age Trail is a place where people of all ages and backgrounds come together to work and play. This linear park winds through woods, farm fields, small towns, and large cities, making Wisconsin's natural beauty accessible and available to both rural and suburban populations.

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Achievements of the Ice Age Trail Alliance on Behalf of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail

Engaging Outreach and Education Initiatives

The Ice Age Trail Alliance works hard to ensure the next generations of trailbuilders and land conservationists will continue. During the 2020 pandemic, Saunters, our award-winning youth engagement platform, and Think Outside – a National Park Foundation initiative to get 10,000 fourth graders out onto the Ice Age Trail – were put on hold. Instead, the Alliance's effort to engage youth went virtual as a five-part video series was developed. Teachers now have trail-related content to support their online instruction.

The Alliance also partnered with UW-Whitewater and a local company, Slipstream, LLC, which created an interactive mobile app. Using a smartphone, StriveOn! activates and connects hikers to unique places along the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. Grant funding through the **American Girl A Fund for Children** expanded the app's engagement points. Features found along four popular Ice Age Trail segments in Dane County for Think Outside hikes are now included. Students and their families will be able to expand their Trail knowledge beyond school-sponsored field trips.

In October, the Alliance celebrated its 40th anniversary of becoming a

National Scenic Trail with a Mammoth Hike 40 Challenge. This month-long event encouraged the growing number of new and long-time Ice Age Trail users and out of state tourists to hike, run, or walk 40 miles, as well as explore our 13 Ice Age Trail Communities. This wildly popular event engaged 3,921 hikers – many of whom were families with school-aged children – and generated 3,649 commemorative patches and 3,105 certificates. These adventures helped expand minds, positively affect mental and emotional wellbeing, and create a community culture across the glacial landscape.



Photos courtesy of Mammoth Hike Challenge participants.





A Beneficial Partnership: Ice Age Trail Communities

Most of the yellow-blazed Ice Age Trail segments fit the image of a traditional, off-road hiking experience. Some segments, however, lead hikers right down the main streets of 142 Wisconsin communities, connecting people with the Ice Age Trail. Currently, 13 municipalities (with more joining each year) have chosen recognition as an Ice Age Trail Community, underscoring the Trail's positive economic impact, locally. Together, the Ice Age Trail Alliance and Trail Communities promote the unique qualities that make the Trail, and the community it travels through, a meaningful destination.

Fruitful Land Conservation and Stewardship

The Ice Age Trail Alliance, in 2020, continued to make strides towards the completion of a continuous Ice Age Trail through Wisconsin. We worked to fill in the gaps by acquiring **5 properties** totaling **55 acres** and protecting approximately **2.2 miles** of Trail. Our partner organizations made progress on the Trail's behalf as well. They purchased **4 parcels** totaling **215 acres** and protecting **1.3 miles** of Trail.

Since 1986, we have collectively protected **20,073 acres** of land, which now host the Ice Age National Scenic Trail.

Three Conservation Achievements:

- The ownership and management responsibilities of Swamplovers Preserve, a 433-acre property perched on the rolling hills of southwestern Dane County, transferred from the Swamplovers Foundation to the Ice Age Trail Alliance.
- A successful fundraising initiative added 22.7 acres to the Alliance-owned Rice Lake Preserve in Marathon County. This acquisition will eventually allow for a road-to-road connection for future Trail and boasts acres of beautiful, upland, wetland forest.
- In Dane County, a similar effort spearheaded by local Trail enthusiasts conserved a 46-acre property with an iconic shape, adding to the Alliance's Mammoth's Back Preserve. The distinct ridge line on the land is reminiscent of a woolly mammoth's double-mounded back, which inspired the preserve's name. The Alliance is busy restoring the land, including an ecologically significantly remnant hilltop prairie.



A summer bird's-eye-view from the top of Mammoth's Back Preserve. Photo by Kevin Thusius.



A stark winter palette highlights the distinct ridge line reminiscent of a woolly mammoth's double-mounded back. Photo by Kevin Thusius.

Restoration Highlight

Prairie restoration on National Park Service property at the Cross Plains Interpretive Site (which hosts a section of the Ice Age Trail along the Cross Plains Segment), converted a three-acre agricultural field from corn to oats in the spring to prairie seed in winter.

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An eight-step stone staircase offers hikers easy hillside navigation. Photo by Dave Caliebe.

Successful Trailbuilding and Maintenance

The Ice Age Trail Alliance began the 2020 Mobile Skills Crew Trailbuilding Season by burning piles of brush to reestablish prairie on two popular Alliance-owned preserves. This work aided in balancing habitat and providing hikers with phenomenal views. As winter progressed, volunteers cut through three-feet of ice to install a new boardwalk on the Holy Hill Segment.



Then pandemic arrived. The valuable work of volunteers was revealed as countless people discovered adventure near home. Parking lots filled and overflowed. Quiet, little known segments awoke with the footsteps and chatter of newly initiated hikers.

Despite an unsettling, pandemic-induced absence, by June, with extra safety precautions in place, volunteers eagerly dove back into the work of building and maintaining the Ice Age Trail. Boardwalks were built over perennially wet sections, new tread was crafted for Trail reroutes, and rock retaining walls and staircases took shape. By the season's end, 494 volunteers had donated 7,727 hours of effort to bring forth the following trailbuilding achievements:

- 9 MSC events, 494 volunteers, and 7,727 hours
- 7,434 feet of tread
- 1,277 feet of boardwalk
- 260 feet of rock walls
- 21 sawyers trained
- 1.3 miles of new trail



A boardwalk is constructed once a thick layer of ice formed over a perennially swampy area, providing the best access for volunteers, materials, and equipment. Photos by Dave Caliebe.

Mobile Skills Crew Season Sponsors

Outdoor Foundation
National Park service
REI

Duluth Trading Company
Sitka Salmon
Jones Dairy Farm
Sonic Foundry

Columbia County Dairy Promotion
US Fish and Wildlife Service
Endres Foundation
Culver's Foundation
Wisconsin DNR
Dudley Foundation

Philanthropy Highlights

The past year was one of the most challenging times in generations. World events made spaces like the Ice Age National Scenic Trail a place for thousands of new trail users to find enjoyment and quell anxiety. In turn, this significantly increased interest in the Ice Age Trail Alliance.

Many realized the viewsheds and boardwalks don't magically happen – dedicated Alliance volunteers create them. New members, a remarkable 1,716 in 2020, expressed their appreciation through financial contributions to the Alliance's mission and vision. Long-standing members also elevated their levels of giving to provide a solid foundation in a turbulent year.

New and seasoned friends alike helped the Alliance:

- Meet two match-campaigns designed to protect land and build new Ice Age Trail;
- Increase future land protection resources by expanding the Robert and Victoria Land Resource Fund;
- Finish the year with a very successful year-end giving campaign.

New partnerships and corporate contributions also played a vital role in our 2020 successes. The Alliance happily welcomed the Duluth Trading Company to the Corporate Friends family. This collaboration goes well beyond dollars and cents – their team eagerly joined us in the field to support volunteers and build new Trail.

As awareness and appreciation of the Ice Age Trail and Alliance continues to grow, so does the list of individuals, foundations, and corporations who sustain the organization's mission and vision. The Alliance looks forward to using this support to create new Ice Age Trail experiences across Wisconsin.

A fresh swale of tread fortified by a rock retaining wall greets hikers along the Ringle Segment in Marathon County. Photo by Dave Caliebe.

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What YOU Said About the Mammoth Hike Challenge!

Our 15th anniversary is on Sept 30, we decided to start section hiking the Ice Age Trail together. Being in LaCrosse, we have to organize day hikes and the 2-4 hours of travel to get there. It's been something we both look forward to and has brought us hours of alone time and laughs. We have included friends and family into our adventure and some have started hiking the Trail as well. Also, I'm a COVID nurse and have found this Trail and Mammoth Hike Challenge to be the light at the end of a very long and hard tunnel every week. I hope the volunteers who work so hard on the Trail know how much joy and relaxation it brings to people. We appreciate the hard work and dedication they have to get people out to explore our great state.

– Kelsey and Adam Lyons, LaCrosse, WI

The Mammoth Hike Challenge was a wonderful way to socialize and stay active with my mom during the pandemic. My 81-year old mom had not really hiked much in the past. We challenged ourselves to some tough trails along the way, like the gorgeous but leaf, root, and stone-filled Pike Lake Segment. We both used trekking poles for the first time, visited beautiful new trails, and enjoyed visiting communities we had never been to before like Slinger and Hartland. My husband joined in on the fun for half of the hikes and he was happy to discover new-to-us trails that we will definitely return back to in the future. It was such a memorable experience and we are thankful for this opportunity!

– Lisa M. Ponto and Mary Bruemmer, Waukesha, WI

As a college student, it's pretty common for me to need a break. Especially since it's my last semester and classes have truly gone overboard on making it as stressful as possible. I spent a lot of time out on the Brooklyn Wildlife portion (the Crane Overlook is my favorite spot to take pictures), straying over to Indian Lake County Park (gorgeous year-round, especially in fall) every so often. It's such a peaceful trail with gorgeous scenery-and wildlife! I've seen a good variety of birds, from waxwings to cranes to turkey vultures. Early one morning, I even scared a turkey (and it scared me right back!). I hope to one day be able to say I've hiked the entire Ice Age Trail, particularly after the wonderful experience I've had this month. Hiking with family was even more fun – especially when they could tolerate my many, many stops to take many, many pictures. We could talk and guess what birds were by their songs and learn about all sorts of different trees. It felt amazing to get out and hike again. The Trail is a beautiful resource, I'm grateful it exists for all to share.

– Brienne Dorn, Cambellsport, WI

My boyfriend and I started hiking the IAT back in March this year. I had no idea when we started how meaningful the Ice Age Trail would become to me. I've discovered parts of myself, our relationship has grown stronger, and I have new found meaning in seeing kames, eskers, and kettles. We're almost half way done, but I know the Ice Age Trail will forever leave a yellow blaze on my heart. The Mammoth Hike Challenge was such a blessing – to be able to see the changing of the season up close and personal with Wisconsin nature.

– Jazmin Martens, Little Chute, WI

We greatly enjoyed exploring the Ice Age Trail during such a beautiful month of the year. I have been a resident of Madison for most of the past 25 years and I have only been on the Verona Segment of the Trail. We explored parts of Wisconsin we had never been to before and each time we were on the Trail we were just astounded by its beauty. Thank you to the Ice Age Trail Alliance for hosting this challenge. We are now lifelong supporters of this natural gem!

– Andrea Dinndorf and Roberto García Delgado, Madison, WI

Coree Aussem-Woltering Sets Fastest Known Time (FKT) Record

It took 21 days, 13 hours, and 35 minutes – along with 14 pairs of shoes – for 30-year-old Ottawa, Illinois, native Corey Aussem-Woltering to run the entirety of the 1,147-mile Ice Age Trail. A North Face athlete, Aussem-Woltering, began his endeavor on June 1 from the western terminus in Polk County, capturing the attention of a staying-safer-at-home, pandemic nation. He quickly won hearts with his determination, positive attitude, and desire to raise money for a good cause. Aussem-Woltering reached the Trail's eastern terminus in Potawatomi State Park at 8:35 p.m. on June 22, a damp, drizzly evening. He had beaten the previous Fastest Known Time (FKT) record by a little more than five hours and raised \$21,000 for Feeding America.



Coree Aussem-Woltering on day 16 of his FTK adventure.
Photo by Kevin Youngblood.

Each year, hikers submit the application certifying their status as Thousand-Milers – the exalted who have walked all the segments and suggested connecting roads which currently compose the Ice Age National Scenic Trail route.

2020 Thousand-Miler Fun Facts:

- 31 = Thousand-Milers in 2020
- 1,885 = Most days spent completing the Trail
- 21 = Fewest days spent completing the Trail
- 21 days, 13 hours, and 35 minutes = Newest Fastest Known Time (FKT) record
- 16 = Number of female hikers; average age 60
- 38 = Age of youngest female hiker
- 75 = Age of oldest female hiker
- 15 = Number of male hikers; average age 57
- 27 = Age of youngest male hiker
- 76 = Age of oldest male hiker

Ice Age Scenic Trail By the Numbers

5,560

Ice Age Trail
Alliance members

1,499

organization-wide
volunteers

3,921

official Mammoth Hike
Challenge hikers

13

Trail
Communities

9

properties
acquired

270

acres
protected

53,297

organization-wide volunteer hours

9

MSC
Events

260 ft

of rock walls
built

3,649

Mammoth Hike Challenge
commemorative patches mailed

7,727

Mobile Skills Crew
volunteer hours

20,073

acres protected
since 1986

3.5

miles of Ice Age Trail
protected

494

Mobile Skills Crew
volunteers

1,277 ft

of
boardwalk
constructed

1.3

miles of new Ice Age Trail built

21

sawyers trained

7,434 ft

of tread constructed

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A Year to Remember

For the Ice Age Trail Alliance, 2020 began with a cooperative Lands/Trail/Outreach event in January at the Muir Preserve in Marquette County. Innovation stole the show in February as a 332-foot-long boardwalk rose above the ice. Then the pandemic. While it brought hardship and sorrow to Wisconsin, our nation, and the world, it also encouraged the discovery of simple joys: hikes on the Ice Age Trail, which remained open and accessible.

That the Ice Age Trail is open to all was underscored in our commitment to making the Trail and its community of supporters a safe and inclusive experience. Our willingness to re-envision trailbuilding and stewardship events enabled volunteers to reconnect with the Trail after a three-month absence. With extra safety precautions in place, they maintained and built trail through the summer and fall months.

Land protection successes throughout the year closed gaps and expanded preserves. Pivoting and outside-the-box-thinking dreamed up the wildly popular Mammoth Hike Challenge in October. The excitement this event generated fostered a successful year-end fundraising campaign.

We're grateful for each of our members, volunteers, partners, and sponsors. Their support in time, talents, and dollars helped us meet the past year's unique challenges.

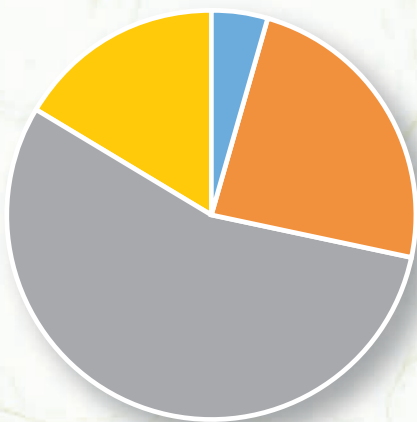


Mike Wollmer
Executive Director

2020 Membership Success!

The Ice Age Trail Alliance's membership rose by 1,716 new members – an increase of 42% over 2019 – for a current total of 5,560 members.

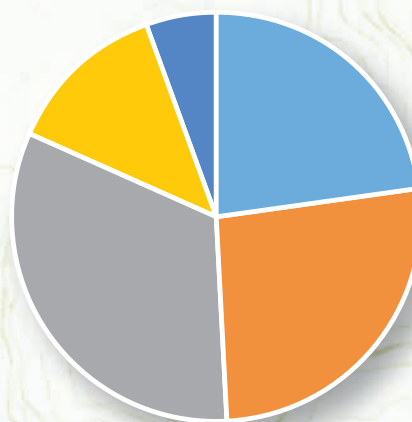
IATA Revenue & Expenses 2020



- Government (state & local) - \$101,106
- Government (federal) - \$511,280
- Individuals & foundations - \$1,189,185
includes chapter and in-kind contributions
- Other (events & sales) - \$350,396
includes investment income and gain on sale of land

Total revenue - \$2,151,967

Note: In addition, IATA received \$1,209,700 that was used to acquire land in 2020. Of this total, \$430,200 was from governmental units; the remainder was from private sources.



- Trails - \$433,649
 - Lands - \$495,427
 - Outreach - \$609,426
 - Administration - \$242,024
 - Fundraising - \$103,475
- Total expenses - \$1,884,001**

Note: These numbers include estimated in-kind services from Celtic, Godfrey Kahn, and others. It also includes chapter expenses.

Based on January 15, 2021 numbers.

Working to Conserve, Create, Maintain, and Promote the Ice Age National Scenic Trail.

Ice Age Trail Alliance

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