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Dear Friends,

Accomplishments highlighted in the 2015 Annual Report illustrate the Watershed Council's leadership and professionalism in connecting protection of our water resources with citizens. Executive Director Gail Gruenwald along with her outstanding staff has led the organization to yet another level of excellence.

These successful efforts are rooted in the continuing development of the watershed academy initiative educating our youth and carrying through to volunteer stream monitoring participants. It is further sustained with the Low Impact Development program, the National Shorelines Partnership and the rain garden projects within the Stormwater Matters campaign.

Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council is also a respected leader in water resource issue management fostering communication of science based information for informed decision making. Advocacy by the Watershed Council with others led to the signing of the Microbead-Free Waters Act of 2015. In addition, the topic of oil and gas transportation in the Great Lakes has seen significant contributions and participation from stakeholders under the Watershed Council's facilitation.

Our activities are supported by a healthy financial position and a forward thinking strategic plan to sustain the organization for future needs. Thank you for your support and I believe the results demonstrate how worthwhile your involvement is!

Claire R. Rasmussen Board President



Protecting and restoring Northern Michigan's waters takes the coordinated effort of hundreds of volunteers, financial partners, and other like minded organizations who come together to plan, prioritize, and implement the actions needed to restore and sustain our water resources. Through these important connections and using sound science as our guide, our Watershed Protection Team was able to accomplish a great deal to protect our water resources in 2015.

### **Stormwater Matters: Low Impact Development Workshop**

As part of our Little Traverse Bay Watershed: Stormwater Matters project, the Watershed Council hosted a Low Impact Development (LID) workshop. The seminar was attended by over 30 engineers, architects, landscape architects, landscapers, and local government officials. Featured presenters were Don D. Carpenter, PhD, PE, LEED® AP, a professor of Civil Engineering and Director of the Great Lakes Stormwater Management Institute at Lawrence Technological University, and Ralph Reznick, P.E., Nonpoint Source Unit, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. Participants learned about the principles of LID and how to incorporate these water quality-friendly techniques into their work.

#### **Stormwater Matters: Water Quality Government Tours**

As part of a grant from the Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program in the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, the Watershed Council hosted a tour for local government officials in the Little Traverse Bay Watershed. On August 26th, we started the tour at Bear Creek Township Hall with breakfast and introductions. We also presented "Stormwater 101" to provide the basics of stormwater management concerns to officials. We then took a bus to the North Central Michigan College stormwater treatment system, followed by a stop at the Bear River to review stormwater management systems with the City of Petoskey. We then visited the new Tannery Creek footbridge and reviewed stormwater issues and plans for improvement at the site. The final stop was the Harbor Springs waterfront to visit the City's stormwater monitoring and treatment systems.

#### **Stormwater Matters: Rain Garden Workshop**

On September 26, 2015 volunteers joined Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council and homeowners Jane and Cliff Denay to install a rain garden at the Denay's residence in Petoskey. Attendees heard a short presentation about the benefits and design of rain gardens and planted a variety of Michigan native plants. Support for the rain garden workshop was provided by the Frey Foundation and Jane and Cliff Denay.



Homeowners Jane and Cliff Denay (forefront), along with Watershed Council volunteers, built a rain garden to protect Little Traverse Bay from polluted stormwater runoff during the Rain Garden Workshop.

Connecting People through...

**SOUND SCIENCE** 



### Statewide Natural Shoreline Recognition Program

Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council and the Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership (MNSP) promoted natural shorelines on inland lakes through education, research, trainings, and policy initiatives.

During 2015, we created a statewide program that recognizes lakeshore property owners who maintain or install natural shorelines. Mackenzie Dix, Huron Pines AmeriCorps member serving at Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, assisted with the initial coordination of this effort. The Watershed Council and MNSP enlisted the help of several area lake associations, including Mullett Lake Area Preservation Society, Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association, Pickerel-Crooked Lake Association, Crystal Lake and Watershed Associations, Glen Lake Association, and the Lake Charlevoix Association. The successful, statewide implementation of this program will make great strides in protecting the water quality of our inland lakes. The recognition program was launched in the Spring of 2016.

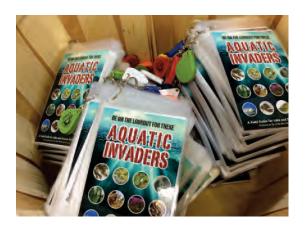


#### **Bay View Rain Garden Initiative**

The Bay View Rain Garden Initiative, which promotes the use of rain gardens throughout Bay View to manage stormwater runoff, was completed in the fall of 2015. The community rain gardens are located at the end of Encampment Avenue near the tennis courts, in front of the library on Park Avenue, behind the library on Encampment Avenue, and alongside Lakeview Avenue between Glendale and Fairview Avenues.

Rain gardens, also known as bioretention areas, are strategically located in the landscape to capture runoff from impervious surfaces. They help protect water quality by both reducing the volume of runoff that enters nearby surface waters or stormwater systems and by absorbing and filtering pollutants in the runoff.

This was the final component of the Little Traverse Bay Stormwater Management Initiative, a four-year project funded through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. A portion of this project was also funded by the Petoskey Harbor Springs Area Community Foundation.

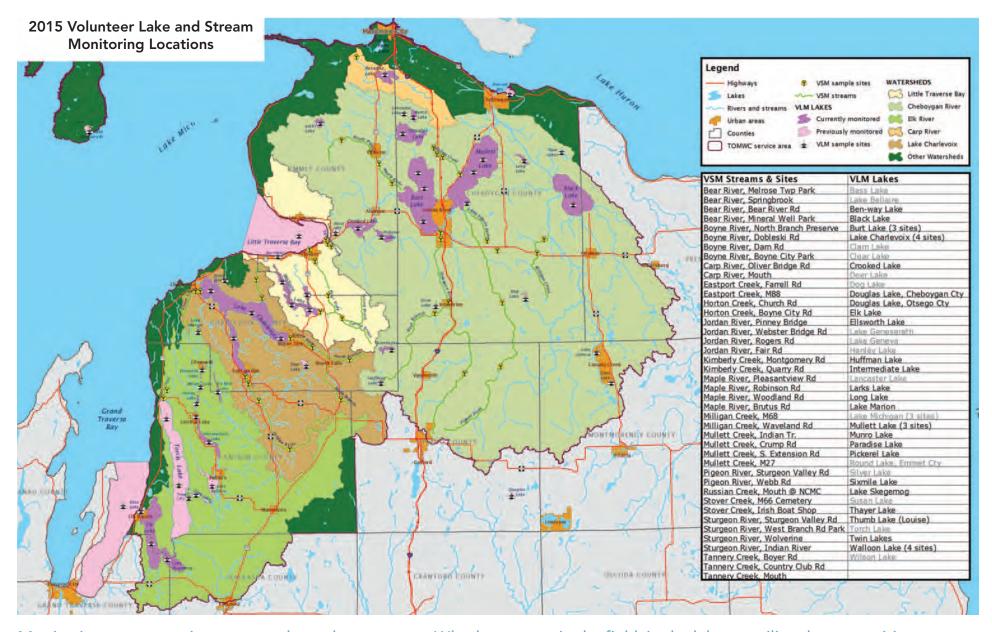


### **Aquatic Invasive Species Workshop**

Thanks to a grant from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's Clean Water Fund, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council in partnership with the Antrim Conservation District hosted an Aquatic Invasive Species Workshop in June at the Antrim Conservation District office in Bellaire. The 3-hour workshop taught residents in the Elk River Chain of Lakes area how to identify, document, and report a variety of aquatic invasive species.

# C.A.K.E. Group Formed to Battle Invasive Species

In 2015, the Watershed Council began participating in a new group: the Charlevoix-Antrim-Kalkaska-Emmet (CAKE) Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area. CAKE was funded through the Michigan Invasive Species Grants Program (MISGP) to develop a cooperative network of partners to combat invasive species on a local and regional scale using inventories, treatment and assessment, and education and outreach.



Monitoring our waters is a perpetual year-long process. Whether we are in the field, in the lab, compiling data, or writing reports, there is always something to do. Our monitoing efforts rely heavily on the assistance of trained volunteers from the community that share our passion for protecting our water resources. Keeping a watchful eye on the health of our waters each year is an enormous job and we couldn't do it without their help.



### **Volunteer Lake Monitoring Update**

In 2015, 52 volunteers monitored 30 sites on 20 lakes. The Tip of the Mitt Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program is our longest standing water quality monitoring program, with data on some lakes spanning three decades. The Watershed Council provides a training session each spring, equipment, and technical support to volunteers. In return, volunteers provide a wealth of data, which we use to assess the water quality and biological productivity of our lakes. Data are collected from early June through late August. Each week volunteers venture onto the lake in their personal watercraft to record water transparency and surface temperature while every other week they collect water samples for chlorophyll-a analysis. In addition, volunteers on a handful of lakes monitor dissolved oxygen.

#### **Volunteer Stream Monitoring Update**

Our Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2015. Armed with waders, bug nets, and microscopes, adventurous volunteers examined the macroinvertebrates (bugs) of local streams to understand stream health. A healthy stream has a diverse community of pollution sensitive bugs. A stream with water quality problems will experience a decrease in macroinvertebrate diversity and a change in the community towards pollution tolerant bugs. One hundred sixty volunteers monitored 37 sites on 15 local streams. Data is used to track stream health over time and support restoration of degraded streams.



### **Northern Michigan Pipeline Education Project**

On August 27th, approximately 100 community members gathered at North Central Michigan College to spend the day discussing pipelines. The Watershed Council hosted the Michigan Pipeline Workshop to provide the public with accurate information about pipelines in our area. The workshop was also intended to foster open communication by providing the opportunity for dialogue and direct communication between community members, pipeline operators, and federal agencies.

Representatives from Enbridge Energy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Coast Guard, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and more were on hand to present detailed information on aspects of pipeline operation, safety, and spill response. In addition, Peter Manning with the Michigan Department of Attorney General provided a keynote presentation on recent recommendations made by the Michigan Petroleum Task Force. The workshop was extremely successful, leaving attendees with an improved understanding of pipeline operations and safety within our community. (A video of the workshop is available on the Watershed Council website.)

The workshop was just one part of our Northern Michigan Pipeline Education Project, which was funded by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration. The Pipeline Education Project also included development of a publication: *Understanding Northern Michigan Pipelines, which is a citizen's guide to pipeline identification, spill prevention, emergency response, and safety.* The citizen's guide is available online, at our office, or by calling 231-347-1181.

### **Pipeline Update**

- In the Spring of 2015, Jennifer McKay, Policy Specialist for Tip
  of the Mitt Watershed Council, was appointed to the Michigan
  Pipeline Safety Advisory Board by Governor Snyder. The focus
  of the Board is to help protect Great Lakes natural resources
  from the risks posed by the State's network of pipelines.
  Jennifer McKay represents environmental groups on the Board.
- In early October, Senator Gary Peters met with Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council staff and representatives of the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and the Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Emmet County Office of Emergency Management regarding pipeline safety.
- On September 24, 2015, over 700 people, including staff from Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, were involved in a pipeline spill simulation in the Straits of Mackinac. Also involved were numerous Enbridge staff from around the U.S. and Canada, representatives from the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, state and local government agencies, first responders, and spill contractors, all of which will be involved should an actual spill occur. Although no oil was used in the simulation, actual techniques and equipment were deployed.
- Also in 2015, the Watershed Council assisted in the development of language for federal bills regarding pipeline safety.



#### Microbeads - Banned

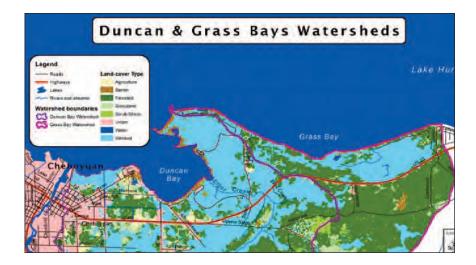
The Watershed Council advocated for a ban on microbeads in beauty and personal care products in 2015. President Obama signed the Microbead-Free Waters Act of 2015 on December 28, 2015. As a result, the manufacturing of plastic microbeads will stop by July 1, 2017 and the sale of new cosmetic products containing microbeads will end by July 1, 2018.

The Microbead-Free Waters Act of 2015 enjoyed an unusual level of bipartisan support, sailing through Congress in less than one month with little controversy. This was truly a momentous win for the Great Lakes.

#### **Net-Pen Aquaculture on the Great Lakes**

In September 2015, the Watershed Council Policy Team provided public comment on the issue of net-pen aquaculture in the Great Lakes. While the Watershed Council is not opposed to aquaculture in general, we are opposed to exposing the Great Lakes to massive amounts of concentrated fish effluent and other organic waste.

In late 2015, Senate Bill 0526 was introduced to ban fish farming in the Great Lakes and connecting waters. It was then referred to the Senate Agriculture Committee for review.



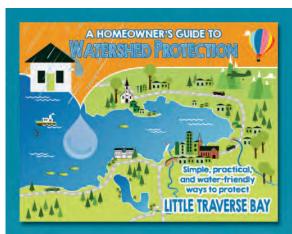
In 2015, the Watershed Council worked on the first draft of a new Watershed Plan for Duncan-Grass Bays on Lake Huron outside of the City of Cheboygan. This draft was reviewed by members of the newly formed Advisory Committee. Next year, we will submit the plan for approval to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

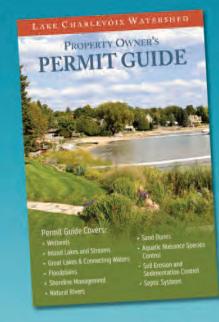
#### Elk Rapids Chain of Lakes Watershed Management Plan

In 2015, the Watershed Council recruited a team of University of Michigan School of Natural Resources and Environment (SNRE) Master's students to create a comprehensive first draft of a stand-alone Watershed Plan for the Elk River Chain of Lakes (ERCOL) in Antrim County. This new Plan will come under the umbrella of the larger Grand Traverse Bay Watershed Plan, which will be updated by our friends at The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay starting in 2016.

In the summer of 2015, the SNRE team surveyed 101 road/stream crossings (RSX) and performed "spot checks" on 37 additional crossings in the Elk River Chain of Lakes Watershed. This inventory work is essential to identifying water quality and fish passage problem areas.

The results of their study and the new Watershed Management Plan are scheduled to be completed in spring of 2016.







#### Stormwater Matters: A Homeowner's Guide to Watershed Protection

In 2015, the Watershed Council developed and distributed a 20-page booklet for Little Traverse Bay residents. The publication promotes strategies for stormwater management. Whether to satisfy the prescriptive standards for a new build or remodel, as a voluntary retrofit for an existing stormwater system, or simply to beautify the landscape, readers can learn about various low-impact development techniques such as rain gardens, green roofs, permeable pavements, greenbelts, bioswales, native plants, and rain barrels.

Funding for this project was provided in part by the Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program, Office of the Great Lakes, Department of Environmental Quality, under the National Coastal Zone Management Program, through a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, and a grant from the Frey Foundation.

#### Lake Charlevoix Property Owner's Permit Guide

Our actions in and around Lake Charlevoix can have direct, and often times adverse, impacts on natural resources. For this reason policies have been adopted at the federal, state, and local levels to regulate certain activities to insure water resources are protected. In January 2015, the Watershed Council published a booklet to help property owners better understand which permits they need when doing certain types of work. Funding for this project was provided by the Charlevoix County Community Foundation.

#### **Digital Information at your fingertips**

In 2015, the Watershed Council focused on additional ways to reach out to the community through electronic communications. In the summer, we launched a new website that offers over 450 pages of topic-specific information ranging from current policy and advocacy issues, to watershed quality monitoring, invasive species, and over 200 publications available for downloading. Visit and bookmark our site at: http://www.watershedcouncil.org.

Another avenue of reaching out via electronic communications was by video recording workshops and meetings and posting them on our YouTube Channel. This allows people to view the content online at their convenience and to share our message with others.

We also expanded our social media reach by creating an Instagram account (@tipofthemittwatershed) and participating in Petoskey News Review audio podcasts. Visit http://www.watershedcouncil.org/videos-presentations and click on the "Video Playlist" button.











Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council is dedicated to providing students with educational opportunties that focus on watershed protection. Whether we are modeling good stewardship through a river cleanup, exploring the hands-on watershed model, or peering through the microscope at the exciting world of aquatic macroinvertebrates, we know that we are inspiring the next generation of watershed protection stewards.

### **Watershed Academy**

In the Spring of 2015, the Watershed Council launched the The Tip of the Mitt Watershed Academy. This program engages high school biology students in citizen science efforts and place-based education. Academy members learn stream monitoring techniques and collect data that contributes to Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council's water quality monitoring efforts. The Watershed Academy provides an opportunity for members to connect with both their communities and local water resources. Academy members participate in meaningful environmental stewardship, gain insight into relevant conservation issues and new career opportunities, as well as share their experience with the greater community.

Schools participating in the Watershed Academy pilot program included: Alanson High School, Boyne City High School, East Jordan High School, Harbor Springs High School, and Pellston High School. The Watershed Academy pilot program also engaged other local resource partners, including: Little Traverse Conservancy, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians Natural Resources Department, University of Michigan Biological Station, Friends of the Boyne River, and Friends of the Jordan River.



Financial support for the 2015 Watershed Academy was provided by:







#### **Oleson Foundation**









and Watershed Council Members

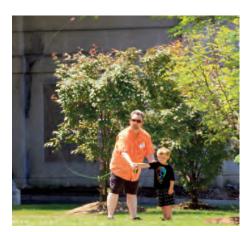


#### Waganakising Bay Day

In June, the first ever Waganakising Bay Day water festival was held at Bayfront Park in Petoskey. Designed to connect the community with the Little Traverse Bay region, the free, family-friendly event was attended by hundreds of people of all ages who enjoyed over 20 hands-on booths hosted by a number of local organizations. Funding for this event was provided by Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, DTE Energy, Cranbrook Institute of Science, Petoskey-Harbor Springs Area Community Foundation, Little Traverse Conservancy, Walloon Lake Trust and Conservancy, and Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians.











#### **Ice Breaker Speaker Series**

Our annual winter speaker series offered a wide variety of topics. A feature presentation by award-winning writers, photographers, and conservationists Joanie and Gary McGuffin filled the library conference room at North Central Michigan College (NCMC). This featured presentation was offered in partnership with NCMC and Lake Superior Watershed Conservancy. Other speaker topics in 2015 included presentations on the Elk River Chain of Lakes fish shelter project, new aquatic invaders, close encounters of the macroinvertebrate kind, microbeads, and the Sturgeon for Tomorrow's Guardian Program.

#### **Students Experience Lake Charlevoix**

Over 350 students from the Lake Charlevoix Watershed boarded the Beaver Islander Ferry for a cruise on Lake Charlevoix and hands-on water science activities. Students learned how to protect the water quality of the Lake Charlevoix Watershed. This marked the 21st consecutive year of this program hosted by Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council and the Lake Charlevoix Association.



### **Inland Seas on Little Traverse Bay**

In June 2015, the Watershed Council, in partnership with Inland Seas Education Association, offered local students a unique educational opportunity on board the 77-foot schooner Inland Seas. A variety of hands-on activities took place dockside and then the students set sail on Little Traverse Bay.

### **Boy Scout Camporee**

In the spring of 2015, Watershed Council AmeriCorps member Matt Claucherty was asked to participate in the annual Boy Scout Camporee centered around Sturgeon for Tomorrow's Sturgeon Guardian program. Boy Scouts from all around Michigan learned about aquatic macroinvertebrates, water quality, and stream monitoring on the Black River.

### **Raven Hill Career Expo**

During the spring of 2015, students learned how fun and rewarding a career in science can be during the Raven Hill Career Expo. Watershed Council staff and interns introduced students to aquatic macroinvertebrates, water quality, and stream monitoring techniques.



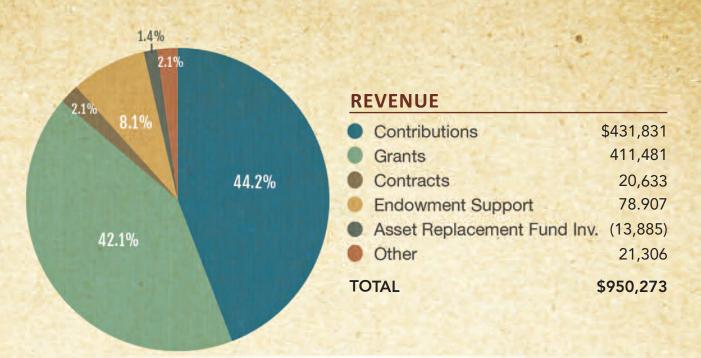
### **Bear River Cleanup**

On August 22, 2015, 126 volunteers participated in the 11th "Healing the Bear" Bear River Cleanup. These volunteers cleaned 10.5 river miles and 21 road crossings of the Bear River and its tributaries, removing approximately 10 cubic yards of trash and recyclables. Volunteers were treated to breakfast, lunch, and t-shirts donated by local businesses in return for participation in the family-friendly event.

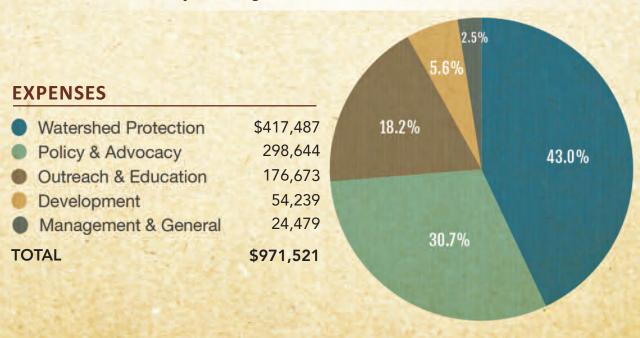
Support for this project was provided by Michigan Volunteer River, Stream and Creek Cleanup Program, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Great Lakes Commission, Petoskey Plastics, Meijer, BC Pizza of Petoskey, Plath's Meats, Emmet County Recycling Center, Rotary Club of Petoskey Sunrise, D&W Fresh Market, the Grain Train Natural Foods Market, McLaren Northern Michigan, City of Petoskey, Bearcub Outfitters, Michigan Maple Block, Northern Michigan RiverSweep, and Petoskey News-Review. Thank you to all for sponsoring last year's cleanup!

# 2015 FINANCIALS

After 36 years we are still going strong thanks to our members and financial supporters. Our strategic financial practices assure our partners that they are making a wise decision when investing in the Watershed Council. They know an investment in us is an investment in the future of our great water resources for generations to come. It is a privilege and honor that we do not take lightly.



## **Operating Fund Financials at a Glance**





To view our audited financial statement go to www.watershedcouncil.org/annual-reports

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Lauren Dey
Paul Drevnick
Doug Fuller
Melissa Hansen
Heather Huffstutler
Caroline Keeson
Adam Kennedy
Sarah Mayhew
Peg and Tom Myers
Heidi Shaffer
Teresa Sherwood
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Roger Drinkall
Ed Strzelinski
Larry Levengood
Snowapple Landscapes
Sarah Wolf
Sophia Cinnamon
Brittny Rohrer
David Spieser

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Sharon Brown Gretchen Peck

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Mackenzie Dix

#### **Summer Interns**

Althea Arnold Dylan Hayes Kate Laramie Alexis Schefka

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Brandon List Stephanie Miller Elliot Nelson Kevin Peterson Lauren Silver

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Bob Pursel Sherry Pursel Alexis Shefka

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Anne Zukowski

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Cliff Biddick
Dr. Art Budden
Jim Burke
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Dylan Clapp
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Randy Barnhart
Gary Batka
Kathy Batka
Sue Bissel
Tec Cummings
Kimberly Dowd
Kady Elkins
Dana Fields
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Harry Lennick
Linda Moore
Ron Moore
Tom Myers
John Porter
Mary Rose
Ray Rose
Gary Thurston
Judy Thurston
Carole Vial

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