

# RIDGELINE

A PUBLICATION OF THE SUPERIOR HIKING TRAIL ASSOCIATION

SPRING 2021



## SOUND ADVICE FOR A SUPERIOR EXPERIENCE

**The Superior Hiking Trail Association is planning for uncertainty through the 2021 trail season.** The questions we're asking ourselves to get ready are also being asked by other trail organizations across the country. How can we best prepare for another busy trail season? After a year of growing interest in all forms of outdoor recreation, will trail usage continue to increase? What can we do to manage expectations and ensure our footpath remains safe, welcoming, and enjoyable for new and returning visitors? Unfortunately, we cannot precisely predict how the evolving pressures of the pandemic will impact the Superior Hiking Trail this year. But we can offer you some advice to help make your SHT experience pleasant for you, your fellow trail users, and the Association who manages and maintains it all.

(Continued on page 2)



## Sound Advice for a Superior Experience (continued from cover)

### VEER AWAY FROM THE SOCIAL MEDIA HYPE

If you are out to chase Instagram photo ops, you are missing the true beauty of the SHT. Each section of the Trail holds its own. If you want to truly understand the North Shore and all its raw beauty, buck against the norm and visit a lesser-photographed section of the 300-mile SHT. It will be a different experience, likely a quieter one that allows you to get lost in your thoughts and connect to nature in a more meaningful way.

Have a favorite overlook or section of Trail that you feel compelled to visit every year? We all have a few of those along the Trail! Consider visiting it in a different season. You can truly build a relationship with a place by participating in and observ-

ing its seasonal cycles. Or, perhaps look at your favorite spot through a different light. A new challenge might be rolling out of bed before dawn and heading out on a beloved section for a sunrise hike or run.

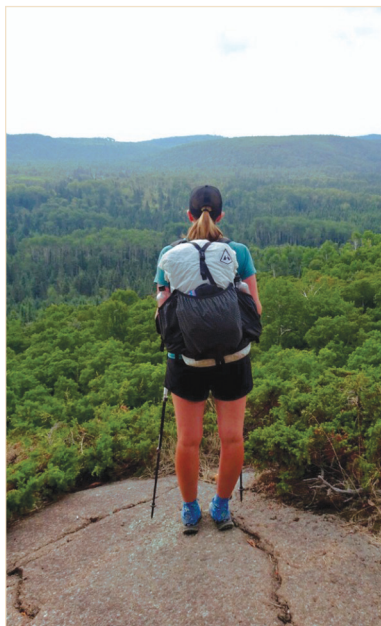
### JOIN OUR CHALLENGE OR CREATE ONE OF YOUR OWN

After a fun-filled and successful 2020 Summit Challenge, the SHTA will be launching it again in 2021! You can sign up and self-report your summits and visit lesser-known but amazing destinations along the Trail. Better yet, spend some time this spring mapping out your own personal or family challenge to inspire and connect to quieter places along the Trail. You can build your own adventure by research-

ing other trail systems that intersect with the SHT, and tap into your Do-It-Yourself trip planning skills to create a unique-to-you experience. We've heard of some cool, multi-sport adventures that start with a hike or run on the SHT and end with some cycling on a designated bike trail or a durable gravel or pavement path. Get creative!

### CHANGE YOUR PACE

When folks think of trip planning on the SHT, they understandably think of hiking. But have you considered incorporating a day or two of volunteering into your next visit? The Trail is "volunteer-powered," meaning that the annual and ongoing maintenance and stewardship of the SHT relies on hiking enthusiasts to step up into volunteer roles. Volunteering on the Trail



▲ With more users discovering the SHT than ever before, there's still plenty of room to find solitude by finding the paths less travelled. Photo: Michael Ivey



▲ Don't listen to this sign! The Summit Challenge destinations, and this particular vista, will impress!



▲ Digging latrines is one exhilarating, essential volunteer activity. Do our staff and volunteers a favor by never using a full latrine and reporting it to the SHTA right away.

connects you in a deeper way as you become a steward of the land you recreate upon. It can also be quite a workout if you are seeking some crossing training in your exercise route! Be a part of the movement: Flip to Page 5 or visit our website to learn more about volunteer opportunities with the SHTA.

## MANTRAS TO LIVE BY


The word is out: the Superior Hiking Trail is an amazing recreation resource to enjoy. In order for the Trail corridor to remain accessible and protected, we need folks to both memorize and follow these mantras—*Leave No Trace. Know Before You Go. See Something, Say Something.* More importantly, educate and share these practices with your friends, family, and even fellow trail users you meet along the way. The rules and considerations of the Superior Hiking Trail are good for all outdoor spaces and help build life-long stewards, so you can tread lightly whether you are traversing the ridgeline of the Sawtooth Mountains or the Tetons.

*Leave Minnesota Nice at home.* If you see someone breaking a trail rule, please say something. Folks will be appreciative when you alert them that their action might be putting future trail access in jeopardy. And if you don't

feel comfortable doing peer-to-peer education, please fill out a Trail Incident Report form on our website so we can better understand what's happening on the Trail. Note: If you feel unsafe and/or someone is doing something dangerous or illegal please call 911.

While we here at the Superior Hiking Trail Association believe that all SHT users are exceptional people, you are not the exception to the rules.

## IN THIS TOGETHER

The trends and changes we're observing on the SHT are not unique to our trail. Other trails and associations across the country are having similar experiences in growth in usership during the pandemic and with the influence of social media. While there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to managing a trail, the SHTA is happy to have folks to learn from and share best practices. Our Association works hard everyday to stay on top industry standards and nimbly adjust our operations and practices to meet the needs of our land managers and landowners, trail users, volunteers, and funders. Things are moving pretty fast these days, so hold onto your water bottle—the view from the next ascent is new to us all! 

— By **LISA LUOKKALA**,  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

## PLAN TO LEAVE A LEGACY

As a supporter of the Superior Hiking Trail Association, you make our efforts on the Trail possible. By dedicating a legacy or planned gift to the Association, through your will, estate plan, or another mechanism, you can ensure the Trail will continue to be well-cared for when you're gone. Learn more about Legacy Gifts at [superiorhiking.org/legacy-gifts](https://superiorhiking.org/legacy-gifts) or contact Lisa Luokkala at [lluokkala@superiorhiking.org](mailto:lluokkala@superiorhiking.org) with any questions.

The Superior Hiking Trail Association protects, renews, and enhances the Superior Hiking Trail.



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### VOLUME 36, ISSUE 1

Cover image: "Wild Strawberries at Lake Agnes" by Tin Cup Design

PEOPLE.  
NATURE.  
FOOTPATH.

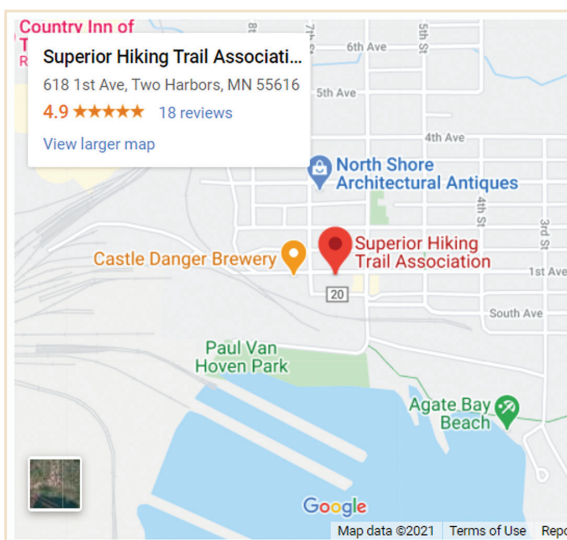


# FROM THE OVERLOOK



## A NEW WORLD HEADQUARTERS LOCATION FOR THE SHTA

**A**fter three decades in a familiar location along Minnesota's Highway 61, the Association has moved its office and store a few blocks to a new destination in beautiful, downtown Two Harbors. The move was prompted this summer by the sale of the P.K. Anderson House, where



the SHTA had leased its space. The Association is excited to reaffirm our dedication to the North Shore and join the bustling business and tourism district downtown.

While the office and store will remain closed to the public until it's safe to reopen, the Association is eager to eventually welcome you into the new

space located less than a block from Castle Danger Brewery's taproom and the Two Harbors Waterfront District. The new store space offers a comfortable area to peruse guidebooks, maps, apparel, and other neat things, while the rest of the office affords room for the Association to grow, host volunteer events and trainings, and store supplies on-site for convenient access. Please update your records to:

**NEW MAILING ADDRESS: PO Box 315, Two Harbors, MN 55616-0315**

**NEW OFFICE ADDRESS: 618 1st Avenue, Two Harbors, MN 55616**

## END-2-ENDER PROGRAM TO RECOGNIZE A SUPERIOR FEAT

**H**ave you, or someone you know, completed the entire Superior Hiking Trail? Whether you've done it in one trip or many, the Association would like to learn about your experience and recognize your accomplishments on the Trail through our End-2-End program. Applicants will receive a custom End-2-End magnet and a certificate of completion. Note: The program is based on the honor system and recognizes completions both before and after the Trail was extended from Two Harbors to the Minnesota-Wisconsin border.

The application process is simple: Visit our website to complete a brief survey about your time(s) on the Trail, and make sure you've made a recent donation, membership gift, or volunteer contribution to be eligible to receive the End-2-End Certificate packet. Applications are processed twice a year, in spring and fall. Apply today!

## EXPLORE NEW DESTINATIONS THROUGH THE 2021 SUMMIT CHALLENGE



**W**hen there are 300 miles of trail and countless unique features to experience, it might seem a bit hard to decide where to go. While popular spots like the Bean and Bear Lakes or Split Rock River loops are well-trodden for good reason, many lesser-known, but equally rewarding destinations await your discovery. You'll find up to 12 of those hidden gems, and avoid the crowds, by taking part in our 2021 Summit Challenge.

This year's challenge will take you to destinations you may not have heard of, such as Peace Ridge, Reeves Falls, Pine Ridge Overlook, and more. Taking part in the challenge is easy too. All you need to do is visit 8 (or more) of the 12 destinations and submit a report on the Summit Challenge page of our website by October 31, 2021. If you share photos of your trek on social media, be sure to use **#SHTsummitchallenge** to connect with other SHT users as you make progress towards the challenge. Watch for a mini-Challenge in Duluth this fall too! **PRO TIP:** *Bring along a friend to explore a challenge destination together, and teach them your mastery of Leave No Trace while enjoying the Trail!*



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# AN AMBITIOUS YEAR AHEAD: 2021 TRAIL PROJECTS

Maintaining and improving all 300 miles of our rugged, remote footpath is a unique challenge for the Association's staff, contractors, and dedicated volunteers. While some duties, like chainsaw clearing, weed whipping, and lopping, take place annually across the entire trail system, the SHTA focuses attention where it's needed most to protect the SHT and ensure it remains enjoyable for you and your fellow trail users. Here's a preview of our top priority projects this year.

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## **I Good to Go on the Gooseberry Gap**

Work will begin this year to close the "Gap"—where the SHT is detoured on the Gitchi-Gami State Trail and Blueberry Hill Road north of Gooseberry Falls State Park—by building a new, ecologically-sound route on public lands. Funding comes from a \$60,000 grant from the Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB) matched by donations from SHTA supporters.

## **I Renewing the Split Rock River Loop**

In late July, contractor Tim "Trail Eyes" Malzhan will lead a project with volunteer support to replace an aging structure and use stone to reinforce the Trail where there's significant erosion on the well-loved loop.

## **I Brand New Bridge at Kimball Creek**

In August, volunteers will be called to help replace the aging Kimball Creek Bridge with a sturdy, fiber-reinforced polymer

bridge (paid for by the US Forest Service) in a more sustainable location.



## **I Bear Poles at Lake Agnes**

After a successful experiment installing three bear poles for hanging food at campsites last season, two more will be installed this year—one at each of the Lake Agnes campsites.

## **I Finishin' Up at Fox Farm**

Trail Renewal Contractor Larry Sampson and crew will work to

complete a recent reroute near Fox Farm Road and build a new structure over a noteworthy beaver dam.

## **I Stone Steps at Sargent**

Pending final permits, work will commence this year to replace a wobbly, warped bridge over Sargent Creek with a pleasant stone step crossing not far from the soon-to-be-former bridge site.

## **I (Re)Blazing the Trail to Canada**

Once again, volunteers will be enlisted to help restore and refresh faded blue blazes on the SHT to keep users on the right path, particularly on the remote sections of the Trail up north.

## **I Silver Creek Reroute**

The SHT near Silver Creek is currently rerouted onto a road-walk detour. Once permission has been granted, the SHTA will build a temporary route through the woods with a more permanent route as the ultimate goal.

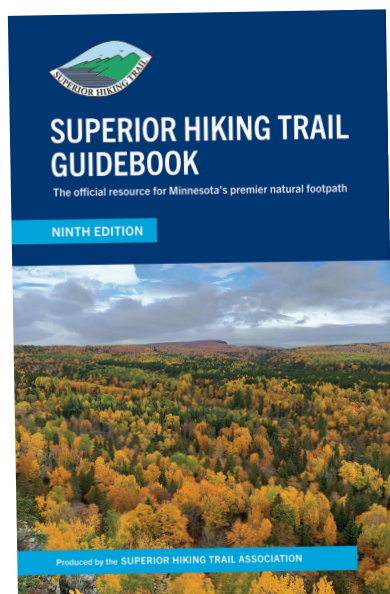


## **➔ Watch for Training Opportunities**

Two training opportunities are being planned with instructor Tim "Trail Eyes" Malzhan to help engaged volunteers sharpen their own trail eyes and learn the art and science of trail plumbing. Keep an eye out for more opportunities to hone your trail building skills!

Learn how you can get involved at: [superiorhiking.org/volunteer](https://superiorhiking.org/volunteer)

# NEW SUPERIOR HIKING TRAIL GUIDEBOOK COMING SOON



**A** fresh, new Superior Hiking Trail Guidebook is in the works and will be available later this year from the SHTA and a local retailer near you.

When you open your copy of the new guidebook, you'll notice a few changes. After eight editions and nearly 30 years of updates to the original text, the Association has entirely revamped, refreshed, and rewritten the guidebook to ensure it's reliable and relevant to the SHT users of today and tomorrow. Inside, you'll find descriptive summaries and overview maps of the entire SHT; detailed snapshots of each section, trailhead, spur trail, and campsite; illustrative maps for several unique areas; quick reference indexes for trailheads and campsites; and more information to help you explore the Trail.

While much is new in this latest, ninth edition of the guidebook, what remains unchanged is the SHTA's commitment to presenting useful, accurate, and easy-to-interpret information about the ever-evolving Superior Hiking Trail and how to enjoy it.


Though the new Guidebook isn't available just yet, you can still find many other new products in the SHTA's online store! From the

hand-made Waxed Journal Pocket Notebook to the locally-printed 2021 SHTee shirt (see what we did there?), you'll find cool SHT gifts and gear at [shop.superiorhiking.org](http://shop.superiorhiking.org). All sales support the Trail! 

## EXPANDING OUTDOOR ACCESS AT LAKE COUNTY ROAD 6

**A** PROJECT TO EXPAND THE TRAILHEAD PARKING AREA at Lake County Road 6, near the Section 13 cliffs, is underway to better serve Trail users and other visitors to the scenic recreation area.

The Association has coordinated with Lake County on the expansion, which will offer nearly four times the current parking capacity. In addition to providing more access to SHT users and climbers who enjoy the nearby cliffs for their sport, the new parking lot will be built at a more ecologically-sound location near the current lot to add a protective buffer for the nearby Sawmill Creek. It's good timing too, as the SHTA recently completed a major trail renewal project to rebuild the boardwalk across Sawmill Creek Pond (pictured)—a structure and serene scene worth visiting! Once the new parking area is built, the old lot will be given back to the forest.

We expect the new trailhead parking area to be opened later this year. In the meantime, the existing parking area remains open for spring use. 



The SHTA recently rebuilt the boardwalk across Sawmill Creek Pond. 



# SUPPORTERS STEP UP: A SNAPSHOT OF THE SHTA'S FINANCES

**A**fter a year of much uncertainty, the Superior Hiking Trail Association emerged with a stronger financial outlook than any year prior in its 35 year history. How did the Association manage to grow through hard times? Recognizing the value of the Trail, thousands of individual and business supporters, agency partners, and other funders stepped up in a big way to show their dedication when it was needed most. And we're grateful for it; your generous support means a better, more sustainable future for the Trail and the Association.

## HIGHLIGHTS:

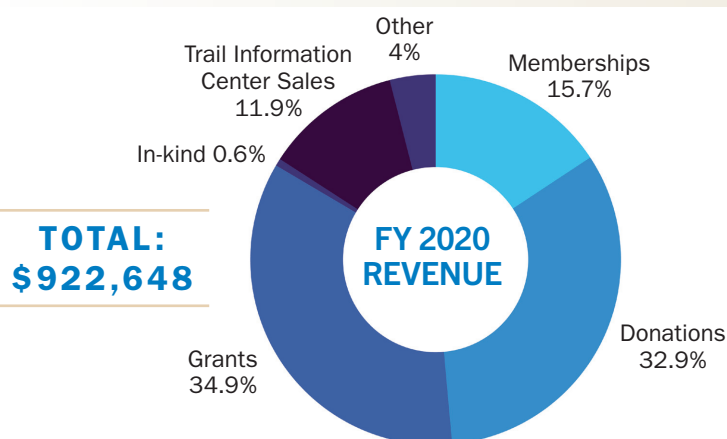
**I Grant funding** was provided by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources, the Federal Recreational Trail Program, the Lake Superior Coastal Program, Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation, and Lake County.

**I Business partners** like REI, Fika Coffee, Duluth Pack, Castle Danger Brewery, Cook County Whole Foods Co-op, and Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts provided major investments in the Association's efforts.

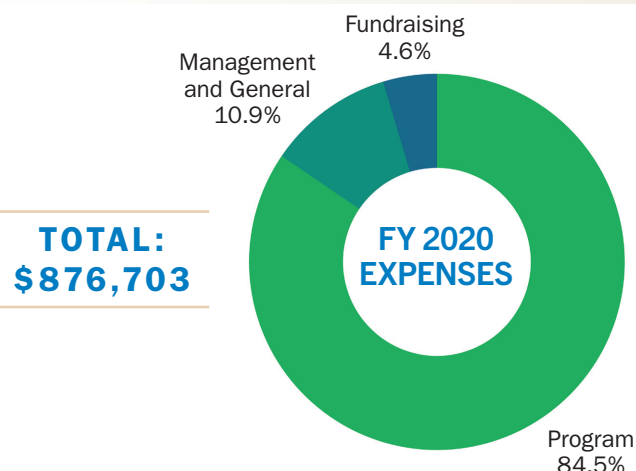
**I Monthly sustainers**—who, on average, give about \$15 per month—contributed a total of nearly \$35,000 throughout the year.

**I Sales of guidebooks, maps,** and other neat items through the Trail Store grew by more than 20%, even as sales moved entirely online during the pandemic.

### FISCAL YEAR 2020 REVENUE



### FISCAL YEAR 2020 EXPENSES



## QUICK STATS:

**\$414,000** — Total donations and memberships from 3,624 individual contributors

**\$11.06** — Amount raised for every dollar spent on fundraising

**84.5%** — Percent of budget spent on programs

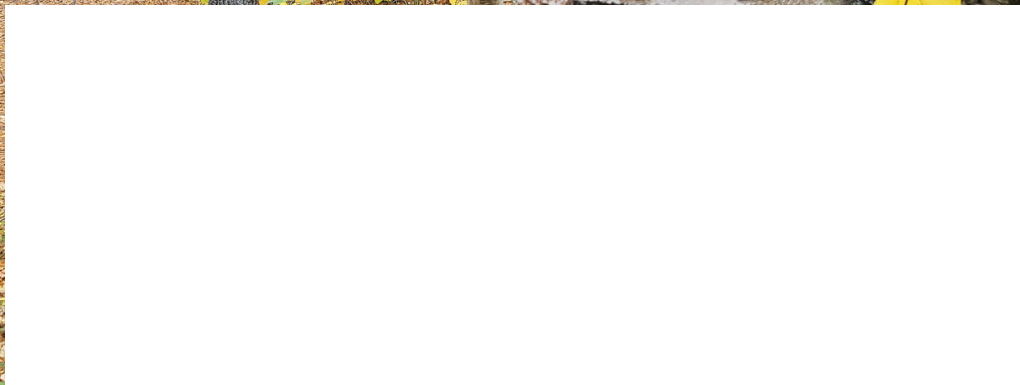
**2x** — Twice as much spending on maintenance and renewal compared to the previous year



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▲ Watch for blue blazes like this to stay on the main SHT; white blazes mark spur trails to overlooks and trailheads, as well as loop spurs. Want to help re-blaze the Trail? Head to page 5 to learn more!

#### RULES REMINDER:

## Stay on the Trail and Camp at Designated SHT Campsites

“Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces,” is a familiar refrain of the Leave No Trace mantra. But when it comes to the SHT, it’s crucial to go one step further: Stay on the Trail and only camp at designated campsites. You’ll find trail markers and painted blazes throughout the SHT to help you stay on the right path, and you can check a map or watch for signs to find one of 94

shared, backcountry campsites to enjoy on your overnight treks.

Following these rules helps not only to protect the sensitive ecosystems along the Trail, but also ensure continued access to the public and private lands that host the SHT. **PRO TIP:** *Avoid overcrowding at SHT campsites by having a Plan B and Plan C if your preferred site is already at its carrying capacity.* ▲▲

## See Something? Say Something Via the Trail Incident Report

Say you’re out on the Trail, and you encounter a new downed tree, a wobbly staircase step, or a latrine that is due for re-digging. Or worse, you encounter poor behavior by fellow trail users or discover resource damage from a natural or human cause. Unfortunately, it happens—but you can help! Please report anything you find that doesn’t look right or needs immediate attention through our Trail Incident Report form at [superiorhiking.org](https://superiorhiking.org). You can share a photo, GPS point, or just a description of what you saw to help us address the issue promptly. Remember too: if you or someone you encounter has a medical emergency or a law enforcement response is needed, be sure to dial 911. ▲▲