



**Great
Lakes**
AQUARIUM

At Lakes Superior Center

Lake Superior Center Authority

2019 Annual Report to the Legislature

Submitted February 2020

Pursuant to Minn. Stat. 85B.06; 1990 Minn. Laws Chap. 535

Sec. 6 Lake Superior Center Authority must submit an annual report to the legislature detailing the activities, funding and organizational operations for Lake Superior Center dba Great Lakes Aquarium.

On behalf of the Lake Superior Center Authority, we are pleased to provide this annual report on the activities carried out by Lake Superior Center dba Great Lakes Aquarium in 2019. This year was another successful year with over 175,000 people visiting the aquarium from January – December 2019. The attendance was within .02% of the record numbers from the last two years. These guests had personal interactions with animals, participated in interpretive programming, camps and classes and socialized with friends, family and the public in our dynamic learning space.

Great Lakes Aquarium currently employs 28 full-time staff and approximately 33 part-time staff. These numbers vary seasonally. Operational changes in 2019 include Jay walker becoming the Executive Director and Darin Reinke becoming the Director of Husbandry both moving from interim to permanent positions. These changes took place in May of 2019. Additional information related to funding sources, assets, liabilities and administrative expenses is attached to this letter (Appendix A).

In 2019, we opened Raptor Ridge a display that showcases a bald eagle and a turkey vulture. Funding for this project came from operational funds, and from foundations and private donations. Fifteen thousand dollars came to us in honor of Lake Superior Center founding board chair Nick Smith for the Nick Smith Memorial Animal Care Facility connected to Raptor Ridge. In fall of 2019 planning began for an interactive exhibit focusing on the Great Lakes, watersheds, human use of water, and the properties of water.

Great Lakes Aquarium continued in 2019 to be a consistent community partner for a variety of initiatives, activities, and events. Each year, the Aquarium renews on-going relationships and builds new bridges with partners in the areas of environmental education, stewardship, inclusion, and business. Examples of such partners in 2019 include: North Shore Scenic Railroad, Vista Fleet, Lake Superior Zoo, Duluth Children's Museum, Bentleyville Tour of Lights, Duluth Public Schools, University of Minnesota Duluth, Minnesota Power/ALLETTE, Greater Downtown Council, Duluth Chamber of Commerce, Visit Duluth, Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center (DECC) and the Canal Park Visitor Association.

The future looks to be exciting as new features, new partnerships and new resources strengthen the Aquarium's positive impact on the region. Please feel free to contact us with additional information at any time.

Sincerely,

Jay Walker
Interim Executive Director
Great Lakes Aquarium

Elaine Hansen
Chair
Lake Superior Center Authority

Appendix A – Financial Statements

Income Statement

4000 · Admissions	1,587,419.15
4050 · Membership Income	201,172.21
4400 · Education Income	151,680.80
4200 · Donations	120,847.11
4300 · Retail Sales	460,367.30
4250 · Facility Rental \ Special Event	83,372.25
4600 · Parking Income	145,659.75
4500 · Miscellaneous	<u>19,498.38</u>
Total Income	2,770,016.95
Cost of Goods Sold	
6000 · Cost of Sales	249,020.59
6710 · Freight Charges, Product	<u>13,230.53</u>
Total COGS	<u>262,251.12</u>
Gross Profit	2,507,765.83
Expense	
66900 · Reconciliation Discrepancies	1,290.00
51100 · Freight and Shipping Costs	1,989.44
5100 · Admin. - Expenses	110,690.24
5101 · Admin Payroll	288,159.13
5200 · Education - Expenses	23,777.64
5201 · Education - Payroll	619,150.33
5300 · Husbandry - Expenses	124,315.51
5301 · Husbandry - Payroll	452,077.89
5400 · Operations -Facility- Expenses	452,862.45
5401 · Operations -Facility-Payroll	302,748.17
5700 · Operations-General Expense	214,288.06
5701 · Operations-Guest ServicePayroll	142,892.72
5500 · Facility Rental / Special Event	17,708.35
5600 · Store - Expenses	5,033.98
5601 · Store - Payroll	62,028.88
5000 · Depreciation Expense	<u>0.00</u>
Total Expense	<u>2,819,012.79</u>
Net Ordinary Income	-311,246.96
Other Income/Expense	
Other Income	
7305 · Minnesota Power Rebate Income	191.00
7304 · MN Power Match	0.00
7303 · Flood Damage	0.00
7000 · Purchase Discounts	1,021.57
7100 · Tourism Tax Operational Support	<u>360,000.00</u>
Total Other Income	361,212.57
Other Expense	
9042 · H2O Exhibit Expenses	16,470.02
9041 · Second Floor Remodel	2,879.33
9050 · Rebate Expenses	139.63
9040 · River Trek Expenses	108,687.13
9003 · Changing Exhibit Expenses	11,851.36
9002 · Flood Damage Expense	<u>200.00</u>
Total Other Expense	140,227.47
Net Other Income	<u>220,985.10</u>
Net In-	<u>-90,261.86</u>



Balance Sheet

Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
1000 · Cash and Cash Equivalents	39,219.70
Total Checking/Savings	39,219.70
Accounts Receivable	
1150 · Accounts Receivable	5,799.32
Total Accounts Receivable	5,799.32
Other Current Assets	
1300 · Other Current Assets	61,201.61
1380 · Undeposited Funds	7,794.77
Total Other Current Assets	68,996.38
Total Current Assets	114,015.40
Fixed Assets	
1200 · Fixed Assets	2,352,659.95
1250 · Accumulated Depreciation	-1,348,694.68
Total Fixed Assets	1,003,965.27
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>1,117,980.67</u>
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	
2007 · Accounts Payable, General	94,363.40
Total Accounts Payable	94,363.40
Credit Cards	
2700 · Employee Credit Cards	3,490.45
Total Credit Cards	3,490.45
Other Current Liabilities	
2530 · Capital Lease Payable-Current	2,398.57
2500 · Other Current Liabilities	183,104.89
2900 · Deferred Revenue	104,111.06
2520 · City Revolving Loan Payable	250,000.00
Total Other Current Liabilities	539,614.52
Total Current Liabilities	637,468.37
Long Term Liabilities	
2300 · Long Term Liabilities	150,000.00
2301 · Capital Lease Payable	7,363.08
Total Long Term Liabilities	157,363.08
Total Liabilities	794,831.45
Equity	
3001 · Fund Balance	-635,517.45
3200 · Unrestricted Net Assets	1,048,928.53
Net Income	-90,261.86
Total Equity	323,149.22
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	<u>1,117,980.67</u>



Appendix B – 2019 Accomplishments

The following list show cases some of the efforts and successes at Great Lakes Aquarium this past year:

1) Community Learning and Visitor Engagement

GLA provides on-site and outreach educational programming to learners of all ages. Daily interpretive programs give guests the opportunity to learn more about resident animals while watching them eat, play, or interact with our staff.

Classes and formal programming are provided to youth, while teacher workshops and visiting speakers provide enriching experiences for adults. Outreach programs bring the wonder of GLA to the community, especially those for whom a visit to the Aquarium is not feasible.



2019 Accomplishments:

- ◇ Annually provided programming for over 10,000 youth, 5,000 of whom are K-12 students through on-site field trips. More than 1,000 registered MN and WI teachers and school staff receive free admission each year.
- ◇ Visited schools, hosted outdoor classes and outreach programs, bringing learning experiences and animal encounters to approximately 1,000 students off-site.
- ◇ Offered fifteen summer camps focused on animal care, natural history of the Lake Superior region, connecting campers with local scientists and STEM.
- ◇ Approximately 500 youth ages 3-18 participated in structured and guided learning experiences such as Whirligigs Preschool Program, Polliwogs Kindergarten Program, day camps, overnights and after-school programs.
- ◇ Served 200+ teachers through professional development workshops between the
- ◇ Aquarium's Science Institute for Educators and other organizations' workshops and conferences hosted in the Discovery Center with Aquarium staff support.
- ◇ Collaborated with the Autism Society of Minnesota on a week-long camp to serve children on the autism spectrum.
- ◇ Welcomed more than 500 youth and adults to Toddler Tuesday programming during the winter months.
- ◇ During Fall 2019, the learning team at the Aquarium will launch new early childhood offerings to meet demand for nature based play and early learning in the Twin Ports.
- ◇ During Fall 2019, the learning team at the Aquarium will introduce new homeschool programming to attract homeschool families to learn about Lake Superior and waters of the world.
- ◇ The engagement team grew to include additional interpretation and animal encounter ambassadors to work directly with visitors on the exhibit floor. This growth was related to the new Feel Connected touch pools that opened in June 2018.
- ◇ Increased the number of special event and meeting rentals of Aquarium's spaces by 44.3%.

2) Exhibits/Husbandry

Great Lakes Aquarium features individual animals from over 400 unique species found within the Great Lakes Basin, other freshwater ecosystems, and saltwater habitats.



2019 Accomplishments:

- ◇ Opened the Raptor Ridge display. This unique indoor/outdoor display features a bald eagle and turkey vulture.
- ◇ Added three new exhibits to the Amazon gallery: Discus, Anableps, and Vampire fish.
- ◇ Installed new culture room systems, including: rearing tanks, and new algae and zooplankton rearing systems.

3) Community Outreach

GLA staff, board, and volunteers are present in the community and actively participate in activities that support the Aquarium's mission. Tickets are provided to individuals and groups to support charitable events in the community. GLA makes its facility available to individuals, businesses, and community groups that are looking for unique meeting and events spaces.



2019 Accomplishments:

Donated over 2,000 passes and 50 memberships to community silent auctions and charity events. In addition, GLA distributed 800 free family passes to community members during the Tw in Ports Thanksgiving Buffet event at the DECC; 242 of the tickets were redeemed in 2018. Plans are underway for our participation in the 2019 event in November.

Our inclusion coordinator is actively recruiting collaborators to increase community access to the Aquarium. Recent partners include the Masonic Language Center,

Lighthouse Center for Vision Loss, Dementia Friendly Duluth and Access North.

Upcoming goals are to work with the Native American Community, NAACP and deaf and hard of hearing services.

Our team has participated with committees and boards including the planning committee for the 2019 Lake Superior Youth Symposium, the WDSE recruitment committee, Visit Duluth Board, and Minnesota Access Alliance Board.

Aquarium staff participated with many outreach activities including participating in tabling at events such as Duluth Days in St. Paul, Northland Wellness Community day, Duluth Pride Fest and the NAACP Juneteenth Youth Nation event. We have presented at various schools, clubs, and at Hermantown Chamber of Commerce and Duluth Chamber of Commerce.

The Aquarium provides free meeting space for nonprofits including Mentor Duluth and The Nature Conservancy.

4) Development, Marketing and Strategic Planning

GLA is committed to increasing support for the Aquarium by re-engaging with individuals and the funding community, planning for its long-term future, and maintaining a brand that supports its mission and is easily identifiable to the public.

Marketing in 2019 focused on Raptor Ridge – a new exhibit featuring Bogey the bald eagle and Horus the turkey vulture. The display featuring an indoor/outdoor experience for the raptors, striking graphics and dramatic feature animals offered a unique marketing opportunity for the Aquarium to create iconic exhibit branding featured in multiple ads and displays in the Tw in Cities market. The Aquarium's summer attendance, while down slightly from 2018, has been solid with continued strength in numbers coming from the Tw in Cities market.

In terms of diversifying our funding base, we hosted our first annual fundraiser, Aqua Affair: Water, Whiskey, and Wine, on November 3, 2018. This event, to support the building of the Raptor Ridge exhibit at the Aquarium, raised just over \$16,000. The second annual Aqua Affair will be held on Saturday, October 12, with fundraising efforts going to support a redesigned main floor interactive exhibit, H2O, opening in 2020.

2019 accomplishments:

- Recorded the highest visitor attendance in both 2018 and 2019 (projected) since 2002.

- Reached over 12,093 followers on Facebook, 4294 followers on Instagram doubling our numbers from 2018, and 1,522 followers on Twitter as of August 2019.

- Received widespread press coverage for all major Aquarium events.

- Partnered with North Shore Scenic Railroad and Vista Fleet to offer the Must-See Duluth Pass for discounted admission for all three local attractions.

- Received media coverage in the Tw in Cities market related to the Lake Superior exhibit at the Minnesota State Fair.

- Secured sponsorship support and collaboration from local businesses for upcoming AquaAffair.



5) Sustainability

Energy Efficiency

For the past six years, the Aquarium has committed to working towards reducing our energy consumption. Working with Minnesota Power and Energy Insights, we developed an energy reduction plan. The plan included equipment upgrades such as:

- Installation of six frequency drivers to pumps. These drivers will reduce the amps dependent to what the flow needs are. This helps the pump to run more efficiently, increases the life of the pump and reduces energy use.

- Replacement of incandescent lights with LED fixtures and bulbs.

- Installation of occupancy sensors in rooms, so lights will automatically shut off when the space is not in use.

Future plans include: using harbor water to cool the building and exhibits, utilizing heat produced in our building's mechanical rooms to heat Aquarium water, and exploring the potential of installing a solar array on our building and a portion of the parking lot.

Other Efforts

The work towards energy efficiency has merged into an Aquarium-wide vision of becoming a sustainable organization in all aspects of our facility. This past year was no exception as we continued to replace infrastructure and fixtures with more energy efficient products.

- The Sustainability Committee has continued to identify opportunities to reduce our environmental impact and facilitate behavior change in the community. We have transitioned a primary area on the first floor into an "Eco Corner." The intent of this area is to show case the negative impacts of plastics on the Great Lakes and provide steps to mitigate negative impacts from single-use plastics.

- We have increased the capacity of our culture/rearing room. Our staff raises algae and zooplankton, which is used to feed the animals and is sustainable in many ways. The food we raise decreases the budget for food we have to purchase. It is also healthier for the animals and decreases the carbon footprint for the shipping and removal of wild collections.

- The Aquarium also has an outdoor garden to grow vegetables to feed our animal collection during the summer. We have increased the capacity of the garden to reduce the amount of food we have to buy from external sources.

While these efforts have a minimal direct impact on our bottom line and do not necessarily increase our attendance numbers, they continue to advance our mission and help connect us to efforts for Lake Superior.

2019 accomplishments:

- Added compost pickup for Aquarium staff and events

- Increased composting efforts in Husbandry

- Required the use of compostable or reusable dishware for all events in our space including private facility rentals)

- Increased the number of sustainable and local products available for purchase in the gift store. The gift store also focuses on selling a variety of items, from school supplies to toys, made from recycled materials.

- Staff assisted all school groups to sort waste into recycling, composting, or landfill.

- Future sustainability goals include:

 - Creating staff and visitor incentives for sustainable commuting.

 - Quantifying the carbon footprint of Aquarium projects and programs

 - Further reducing the Aquarium's energy demand

 - Ensuring that we use recyclable, compostable, and/or reusable materials whenever

possible

 - Increasing the number of locally made products sold in our gift store

6) Inclusion and Accessibility

At the Aquarium, we are committed to creating a culture of diversity, inclusion, and accessibility for visitors, employees, volunteers, and other stakeholders of the organization. In order to make these values a reality, the Aquarium has included inclusion and accessibility objectives in our strategic plan and dedicated a staff position to focusing on these efforts. Our prior research highlighted the deep value of partnerships with the disabilities community, and so much of our work this year has focused on building partnerships and specific programming to support a growing diversity of learning experiences.

Listening sessions and focus groups have enlightened us to some of the challenges and barriers the disabilities community faces in community spaces. This year, we have taken great pride in making physical building changes, which included: improving lighting, adding color contrasting to stairs and benches, and intentional tactile elements built into the design of our newest raptor exhibit.

Our Inclusion Coordinator dedicated many hours this year to attending local meetings to share a message of welcome. This has led to a growth in volunteers, staff, events and visitors from the disability community.

Expanded programming this year will also support adults living with dementia and their caregivers, and people of all ages with vision loss through our new tactile tour program. Through a growing partnership with the Lighthouse Center for Vision Loss, the tactile tours are complemented with braille summaries of exhibits, audio descriptions, and large print options for all visitors. Providing a group care membership to Lighthouse Center for Vision Loss has allowed for orientation and mobility lessons to happen in our space, building the confidence of those new to vision loss to feel confident and independent in public spaces and welcome at the Aquarium. In this work, we reflected that our efforts on site cannot benefit visitors unless they are able to safely travel to our space. Building on the stories and concerns from more than a dozen community partners, we successfully petitioned the Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) to trial a year round bus route for locals to enjoy and participate in everything near the waterfront.

Efforts around inclusion, accessibility, and equity are vital to helping us advance our mission and ensure all people have the opportunity for a meaningful and educational experience at our organization. Our vision to be involved community wide and state-wide in access to cultural experiences is taking shape through our participation on the board of the Minnesota Access Alliance and involvement on the Duluth Commission for Disabilities. We look forward to welcoming everyone in our community and pushing to raise the bar for access on-site and far beyond

