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# Where does the money go?

## How your donations help protect our freshwater future

**Jennifer DeMoss**

Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council

Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council is a membership-based organization. That means that, like a lot of nonprofits, we depend on donations to fund some of our programs and staff. We are the fortunate recipient of grants from generous supporters like community foundations and state and federal agencies. However, without people like you, our organization wouldn't be able to protect Northern Michigan's waters. So, where does the money go? How do we spend the funds that come in from our members?

There are so many ways that donations make our vital work possible. Take, for example, the work of our interns. Every summer, interns monitor area streams, kayak for miles while performing shoreline surveys, help students collect data during our educational programs, assist during monitor training events, prevent the spread of invasive species during our mobile boat washing events, create maps and other outreach pieces based on the data they collect, and so much more. We're currently running a fundraiser to provide more financial support to our interns, who can struggle with living expenses in the summer months. Generous members who have donated to the fund are helping us monitor the health of our freshwater resources.

Future watershed stewards come through our high and middle school education programs every year. Water Resources Education Coordinator Eli Baker travels as far as Mackinaw City and Beaver Island to work with students in our service area. Students don't just learn about water chemistry and aquatic wildlife when they're out in streams with Baker — like interns, they also collect valuable data for our monitoring programs. We've been very fortunate for recent educational grants from the Great Lakes Fishery Trust, the Great Lakes Energy Electric Cooperative, and Petoskey Rotary Club Charities, Inc. However, getting those students out with nets and waders is still partially funded by our donors. It's just another way members contribute to watershed health in Northern Michigan.

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Have you ever met our policy team? Policy Director Jennifer McKay and Policy Specialist and Staff Attorney Kacey Cook work ceaselessly to promote legislation that protects our freshwater resources. They conduct site visits, comment on permits that have the potential to affect our waters, attend countless meetings to advocate for conservation laws and ordinances, and provide an immense amount of citizen support. Whether it's advocating to control stormwater runoff or working to prevent an oil or natural gas liquids disaster from the Line 5 pipeline, a large part of our policy team's work is donor funded. Your support makes it possible for our policy team to act as a voice for our waters.

What about the really tangible products, like educational materials? Our newsletter is written, edited, and printed with donation money. While some of our printed products are grant funded, others have been produced because we see a need to communicate about an important issue. A significant portion of our outreach on important topics, such as harmful algal blooms and stormwater pollution, is funded by donations. Staff time to inform the public about our initiatives through magazine and newspaper articles, videos, social media, webinars, and some of our communications for lake associations is member funded.

Lastly, you keep the lights on. Our office on Bay Street is a hub of activity, especially in the summer months. Staff and interns come and go with our Boston Whaler or mobile boat washing station in tow.

Volunteer monitors pick up equipment and drop off water samples. Citizens arrive with questions and leave with handfuls of brochures to share with their neighbors. Without you, our organization would have a tough time maintaining the successful programs you've come to depend on. So, thanks so much for supporting us. With your help, we'll always be here to protect our region's most precious resource.

For more information about our programs, visit [watershedcouncil.org](http://watershedcouncil.org). Have a question? Call 231-347-1181.

*Jennifer DeMoss is communications director for the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council.*