

LAKE HURON COASTAL CENTRE

# STRATEGIC

# PLAN

2021 - 2028

Steering the course for the future



LAKE HURON  
COASTAL CENTRE

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*Approved by the Board of Directors of the Lake Huron Coastal Centre on May 28, 2021. Revised May 31, 2024.*



**LAKE HURON  
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An aerial photograph of a coastal wetland. A large, forested island is in the foreground, surrounded by shallow, greenish water. A winding waterway or canal cuts through the wetland, leading towards a larger body of water in the background. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. The text "THE VOICE FOR THE COAST" is overlaid in the center-right of the image.

# THE VOICE FOR THE COAST

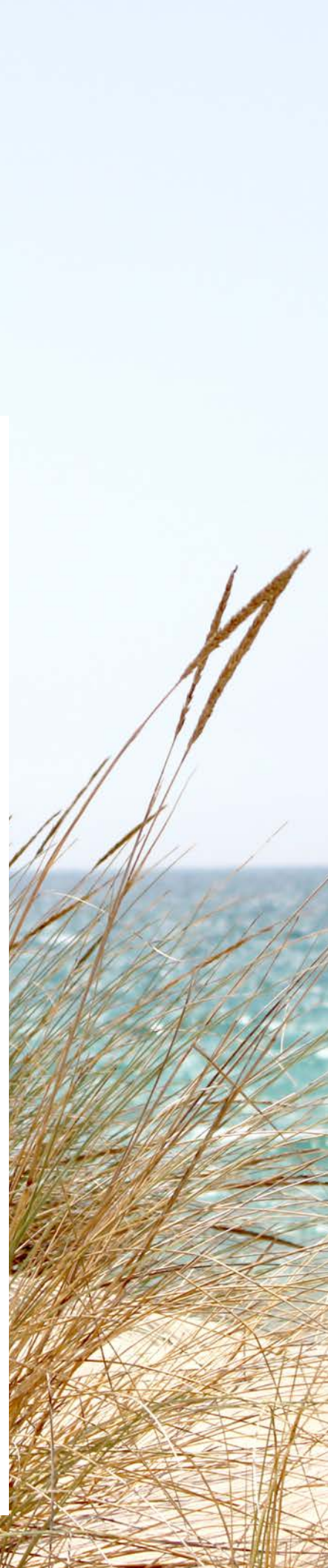
# BRINGING HOPE AND ACTION TO COASTAL CONSERVATION


The need to protect Lake Huron's coast has never been more urgent. The Lake Huron shore is under stress. The research that produced the Lake Huron Coastal Centre's Coastal Action Plan studied 10 coastal ecosystems and uncovered the extent of the threat to the lake's southeastern corridor, identifying 16 major stressors on these fragile ecosystems. These include rapid shoreline development, the arrival of invasive species, increased plastic pollution, habitat degradation and the yet-unknown impacts of climate change.

These threats are intensifying as industries expand and more people choose to live year-round in lakeshore communities, bringing demand for ever-more services and infrastructure. Unless this expanding human presence is accompanied by careful protection and wise stewardship of Lake Huron's natural resources, our activities risk overwhelming the natural coast. The loss can be irreversible.

The creation of the Lake Huron Coastal Centre (LHCC) in 1998 anticipated the need for knowledgeable management of this collision between communities and the coast. The Lake Huron Coastal Centre was established to provide science-based evidence and raise public awareness around the threats to fragile ecosystems. The LHCC's programs have engaged residents of all ages in hands-on protection and restoration of sand dunes and wetlands, or in the management of invasive species. And the Centre has helped an array of stakeholders – from cottagers and municipalities to farmers – better understand how to mitigate those risks to the coastline, and to appreciate the economic benefits a healthy Lake Huron provides.

But while we've been doing this important work, the conservation landscape has evolved. In recent years, conservation has moved from a special interest movement to a force at the heart of a global environmental wave that is upending everything from politics to capital markets. It is no longer the preserve of small bands of professionals, abetted by committed citizens. Elevated by the sense of emergency surrounding climate change, conservation is a high priority political issue, with conservation activities attracting greater funding and investment, drawing wider engagement and greater sophistication in its tactics.





The LHCC is well-positioned to meet this moment. We have a strong foundation in climate change education. We connect people to the best available coastal science – the intellectual tools for good conservation. We provide people with opportunities to get their hands dirty on behalf of nature, delivering an emotional connection to the state and fate of the lake. We work with landowners to take care of their shoreline properties, showing how individual acts and small, incremental improvements lead to benefits for the entire lake. Our ethos – inclusive, experiential, hopeful, rooted in science and driven to share knowledge – aligns with the nature of conservation today. And we are blessed with a committed, talented staff, imbued with a strong sense of mission in their work.

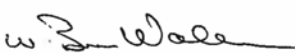
## **At our core, we are a home for community conservation**

A strategic focus on community conservation offers us a source of strength. community-focused activities provide people with a sense of agency over a climate future that is overwhelmingly cast as gloomy. Our early shift towards greater digital outreach has already yielded encouraging fundraising dividends. The inevitable need for the Lake Huron Coastal Centre to have a greater digital focus was accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic but also reflects the reality that our organization must function seamlessly in the digital space, merging our activities in the natural world with the opportunities for growth and greater impact that the virtual world affords.

This plan lays out objectives for a medium-term strategic pathway to guide that mission, through the pandemic and beyond. It sets achievable targets to refresh the identity of the Centre. It ensures we use our resources wisely. And it sets a course towards developing a business model that is sustainable, giving the Lake Huron Coastal Centre the institutional resilience to carry on its mission for years to come.

Success for the Lake Huron Coastal Centre depends on being clear about our purpose. The Lake Huron Coastal Centre must unrelentingly cultivate its identity as a home for community conservation. Every program, piece of communication and fundraising initiative should be delivered through that prism. It is an iteration, not a revolution. But if we have the discipline to follow this strategic path, the Lake Huron Coastal Centre will have a differentiation and relevance in coastal conservation that will make us stronger, ensuring us an indispensable role in the fight to conserve the Lake Huron coast for generations to come.



  
Bruce Wallace  
Chair, Board of Directors



  
Alyssa Bourassa  
Executive Director



# OUR MISSION

Lake Huron Coastal Centre fosters community awareness and action for a healthy Lake Huron coast, inspiring this generation to protect and restore coastal waters, life and landscapes for those that follow.

# OUR VALUES

Our values represent who we are as an organization and guide our actions, factoring into every decision we make.

## **INTEGRITY**

We are a science-based organization and strive to be an unbiased, non-partisan source that is trusted to turn the best coastal science and knowledge into action. We work to the highest ethical and professional standards.

## **INCLUSION**

We celebrate the diversity of nature and our society and are open to anyone who wants to conserve what they love about the coast. We value equity, inclusion and dignity for all. We strive to treat others with respect and honesty, and are committed to the health and safety of both people and the environment.

## **COLLABORATION**

We are community-minded and work in the spirit of collaboration. We are committed to building and strengthening partnerships to work together with our volunteers, partners, and the community to achieve our shared goals.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

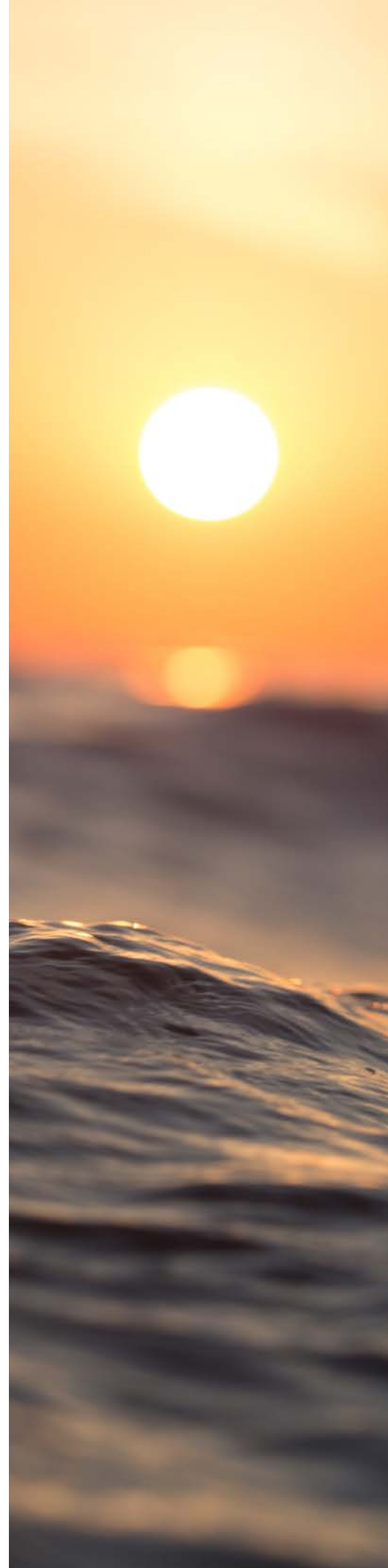
We are transparent and accountable to our donors, partners, and the public. We earn trust by following through with our commitments.

## **RESILIENCY**

We strive for a resilient Lake Huron and organizational resiliency. We ensure that the financial and human resources of our organization are sufficient to support our mission over the long term.

## **INNOVATION**

We are forward-thinking and open to new ideas, technologies, tools and partnerships that further our goals. We strive to inspire and encourage new and creative solutions to conservation issues.



# COASTAL PRIORITIES

## COASTAL PROCESSES

With a focus on the understanding and preservation of such coastal ecosystems as beach and dune systems, coastal wetlands, cobble beaches, woodlands, alvars, gullies and bluffs.

## WATER QUALITY

With a focus on issues affecting drinking water quality for the 2 million basin residents and the long term sustainable use of the lake as a shared public resource.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is already impacting the Lake Huron coastline. Our focus is on public education, and the delivery of stakeholder adaption advice and assistance.

## BIODIVERSITY

With a focus on invasive species management, native species protection, and natural habitat stewardship and restoration.







# THE **COMMUNITY** CONSERVATION MODEL

## WHAT DOES A COMMUNITY CONSERVATION MODEL LOOK LIKE?

It's inclusive.

It's about engaging people (as opposed to activism).

It realistically aligns with our capabilities.

It retains our science and education ethos.

It offers a sense of hope and the ability to act to mitigate climate change and environmental degradation. Activities can be tailored to work in an increasingly digital world.

## BENEFITS OF THE COMMUNITY CONSERVATION MODEL TO THE LAKE HURON COASTAL CENTRE

Provides clarity on our strategic direction and purpose – for the organization, donors, and the public.

Gives the LHCC relevance for people, businesses and organizations along the coast.

Gives the LHCC distinction that protects its position from competitors.

Offers an attractive path to new revenue.

Develops an asset for the organization: a bank of committed supporters with a shared cause. Extends



# GOAL ONE

**DEVELOP AND SHARE SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATIVE APPROACHES THAT ADVANCE DECISION-MAKING AND LEAD TO ON-THE-GROUND ACTION**

## **ACTIONS**

Develop innovative approaches in coastal management including nature-based solutions and green infrastructure, and demonstrate their environmental, social and economic benefits.

Identify and address coastal science data and information data gaps.

Develop informative and user-friendly communication materials and channels to share our coastal science with our partners and the public.

# GOAL TWO

## CONNECT COMMUNITIES WITH THE COASTAL ENVIRONMENT TO PROMOTE AWARENESS, APPRECIATION AND ACTION

### ACTIONS

Maintain and create relationships with shoreline property owners and users, community groups, government organizations, and other stakeholders to better understand their interests, concerns and opportunities.

Engage volunteers, landowners and community members to connect with the coast, restore shoreline ecosystems, plant native plants, remove invasive species and embrace best practices to help make the coastal environment healthier.

Build capacity for our stewardship and education programs to increase coastal environmental literacy among people of all ages.

Continue to develop and implement a marketing and communications strategy that promotes the Lake Huron Coastal Centre, our programs, and environmental awareness and action.



# GOAL THREE

## **BUILD A CLEAR IDENTITY FOR THE LAKE HURON COASTAL CENTRE AS A HOME FOR COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AND POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION**

### **ACTIONS**

Review existing programs to ensure they comply with a community conservation mandate, driving inclusiveness and expanding engagement (inclusive in age, race, gender, ability, and level of understanding about Lake Huron).

Ensure that the Lake Huron Coastal Centre's identity is reflected in new programs and initiatives, including the content of online programming (seminars, workshops, conferences, etc.) and fundraising.

Infuse the Centre's identity as a home for community conservation into all events, communications and marketing materials, including a strong visual representation.

Leverage the community conservation identity to raise the Lake Huron Coastal Centre profile.





# GOAL FOUR

## **ACCELERATE THE MIGRATION TO A DIGITAL ORGANIZATION, BOTH INTERNALLY AND IN PUBLIC-FACING PROGRAMS**

### **ACTIONS**

Increase the capacity of the Centre to function as a digital organization (internal operations, fundraising, media, managing relations with volunteers, donors and other stakeholders).

Conduct a review of the inventory of Lake Huron Coastal Centre content (particularly educational content) and update relevant content with best digital practices.

Explore and act on opportunities to use digital technologies to expand the Centre's reach and impact, notably on awareness-raising and public education initiatives. Digital tools (eg. apps, education kits) and data-based programming (an improved Coast Watchers program, for example) can enhance the Centre's impact and attract potential partnering organizations.

Take advantage of the vast digital data set collected to complete the Coastal Action Plan and utilize the data and data visualization tools to enhance our education and awareness programs.

# OUR STRATEGY

## CONSERVE YOUR COAST

Our community engagement programs inspire people to play an active role in conservation work, such as beach clean-ups, invasive species management, and our Green Ribbon Champion beach stewardship program.

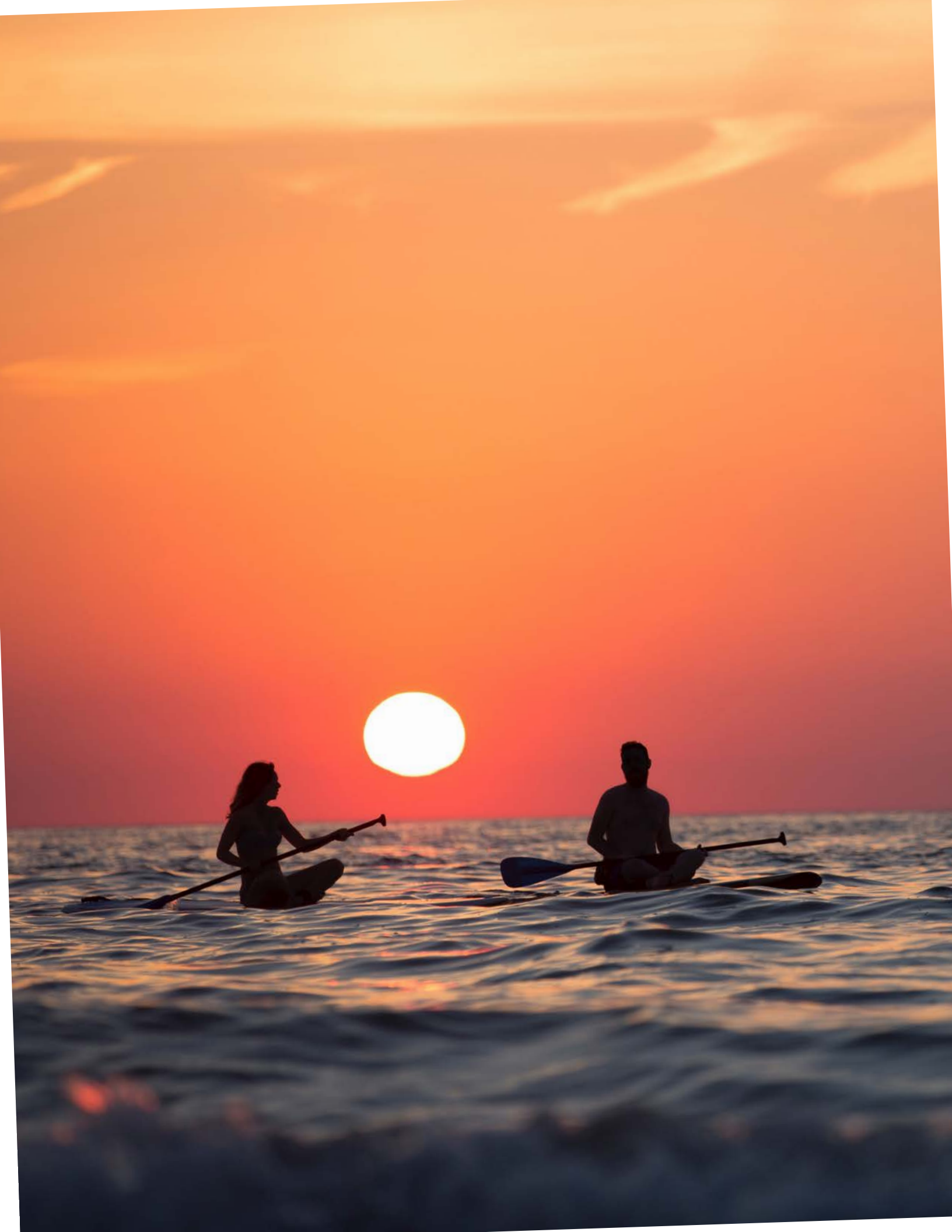
## KNOW YOUR COAST

Our coastal science and research initiatives, such as the Coastal Action Plan and our Coast Watchers community science monitoring program collect and analyze coastal environmental data while engaging citizens in the process. We strive to be a trusted source to turn the best Great Lakes science and knowledge into action.

## FUTURE COAST

Our public awareness initiatives and educational programs find creative ways to communicate science, creating a network of informed citizens to act as coastal ambassadors committed to the protection of the Great Lakes. We are working with youth to create the next generation of coastal environmental champions.







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