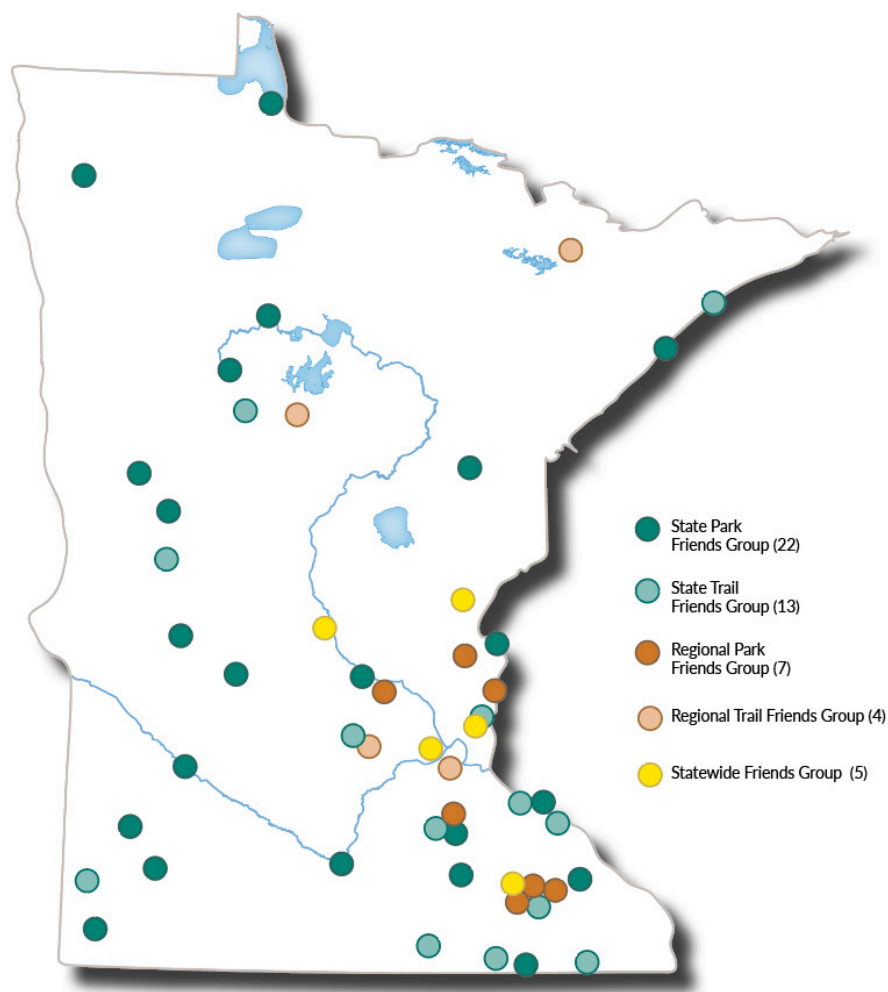


## Friends Group Partners Impact | 2022

Friends Groups do an incredible amount of work on behalf of Minnesota's parks and trails. Whether clearing brush, planning events, or raising funds, these volunteer-based community groups are often critical to engaging the community in stewarding of our state's natural heritage.



To better quantify this impact, Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota recently sent out a questionnaire to our 55 Friends Group Partners with the goal of learning more about the Friends Group experience between January and December of 2022.

The majority of our respondents track membership, but there is no set definition of a “Friends Group member.” For some groups, a member is anyone who has expressed an interest in their activities; for others, a member is defined as someone who pays their dues, which can range from \$5 per individual to \$500 for a lifetime membership.

The size of memberships also varied significantly, from less than 24 individuals to over 300. The majority of Friends Group respondents - 40% - had somewhere between 25 and 49 members. This is a significant number of people, especially in smaller communities.

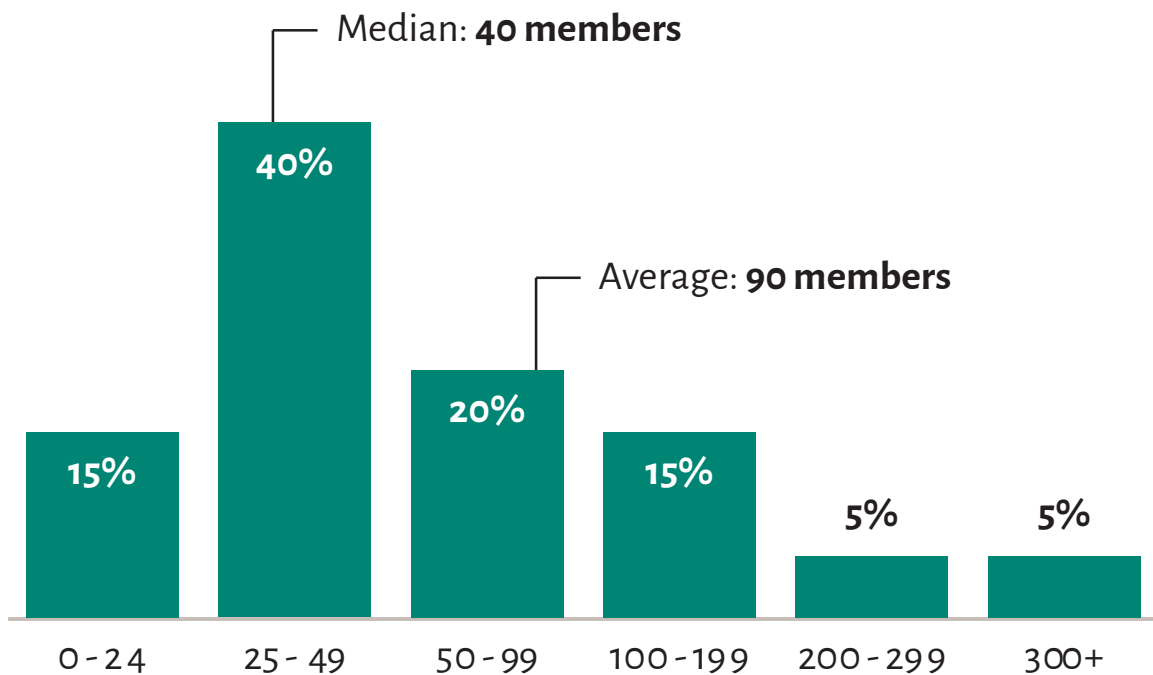
## Membership definition

Word cloud based on Friends Group Partners' definition of "member"



## Friends Group Partners by membership size

% of Friends Group Partners with \_\_\_\_\_ members

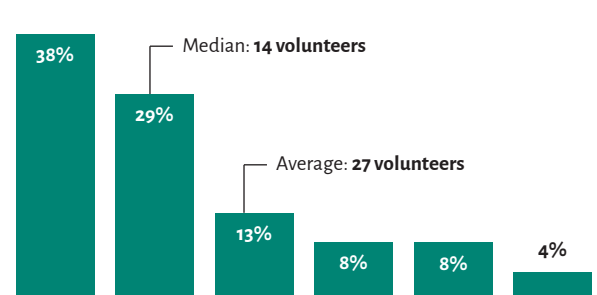


# Volunteers

Volunteers are defined as anyone who has contributed time and talent in support of the Friends Group. This definition, like the definition of “member,” can be fluid, however - most groups consider volunteers to be members, but not all members are considered to be volunteers. What is consistent across the board is that volunteers, however they are defined, are essential to the success of the group and its goals.

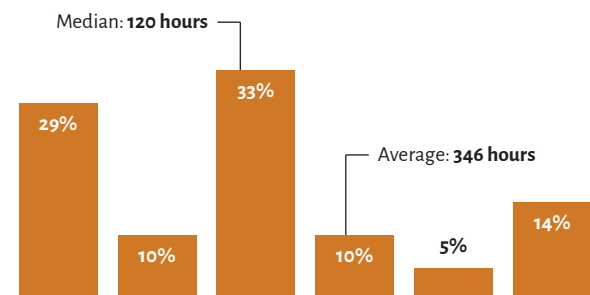
## Number of volunteers

% of Friends Group Partners who engaged \_\_\_\_\_ volunteers



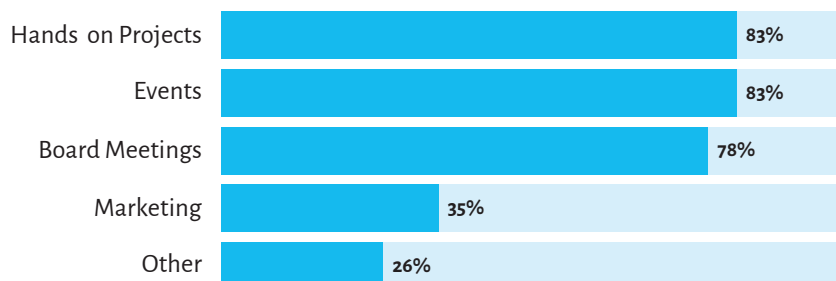
## Volunteer hours

% of Friends Group Partners whose volunteers contributed \_\_\_\_\_ hours



## Types of volunteer help

% of Friend Group Partners who had volunteers engage in \_\_\_\_\_



Volunteers can fill any number of important roles within a Friends Group, and many wear multiple hats over the course of their tenure. These graphs give you a good idea of some of the roles people filled over the course of 2022, and how many hours they put into making them successful.

## Value of volunteer support

Average volunteer contribution



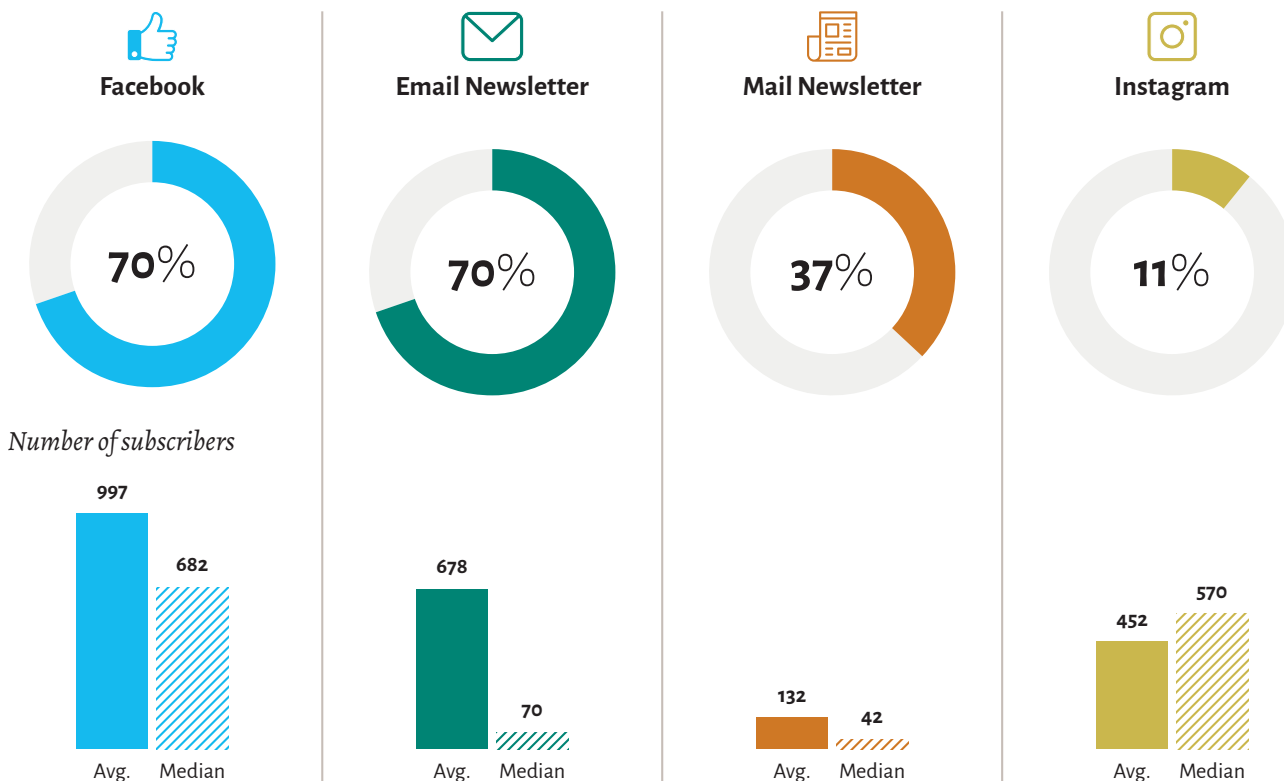
Time is money - or at least, it is when it comes to volunteering. According to research by Independent Sector, the value of each volunteer hour in Minnesota is \$34.47. In 2022, the average Friends Group volunteer contributed 11.1 hours of their time, which adds up to the equivalent of \$381.13 in value.

## Outreach

Friends Groups play an important role in spreading the word about their park or trail. They advertise upcoming events, talk about projects, and share interpretive information. In 2022, a majority of Friends Groups shared information with their members via e-newsletter or Facebook posts, nearly 40% still used physical mailing lists, and a small but growing minority used Instagram.

### Friends Groups Partners outreach activities

% of Friend Group Partners that have...



## Events & Projects

Public events and stewardship projects are the main activities that Friends Groups undertake.

### Public Event Examples

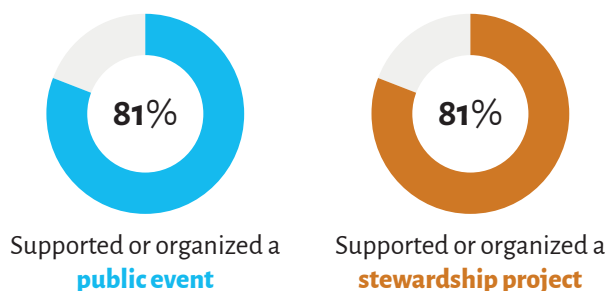
Buckthorn Removal · Earth Day · Art in the Park · Rummage O'Rama · Apple Fest · Scavenger Hunt · Honey Extraction · Fall Festival · Photo Contest

### Stewardship Project Examples

Highway Cleanup · Nature Play Area · Bur Oak Tree Project · Violet Propagation · Trail Clearing · Bluebird Houses · Graffiti Removal · Seed Collection

### Events and projects

% of Friends Group Partners that supported or organized events or projects

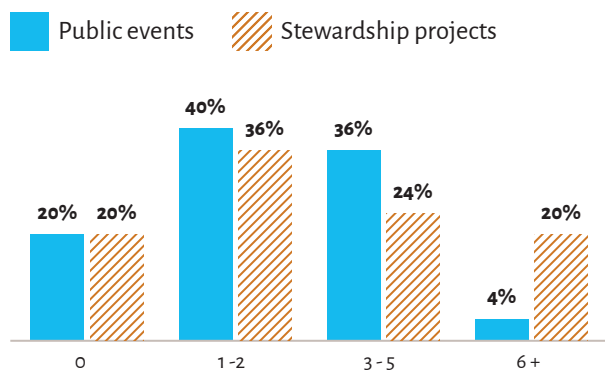


# Events & Projects

Each group approaches events and projects differently, depending on their mission and capacity. They may just do one event per year, engage in a project or two, or hold event series or long-term projects that span months. Friends Groups might be involved in planning these events and projects, promoting and funding them, or adding volunteer capacity to make the work itself possible. The majority of projects and events take place in the warmer months - between April and October.

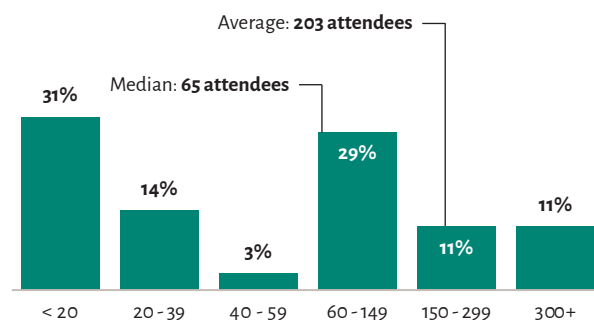
## Number of events and projects

% of Friends Group Partners that supported or organized \_\_\_\_\_ events or projects



## Attendance at friends groups events

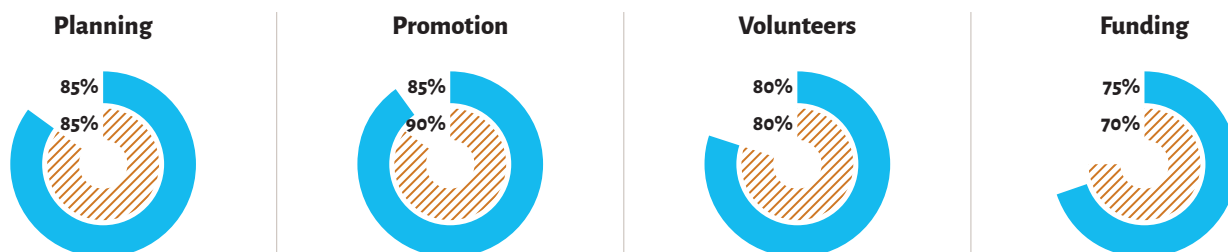
% of events with \_\_\_\_\_ attendees



## Roles in events and projects

Among Friends Group Partners that helped with a public event or project, % who provided \_\_\_\_\_

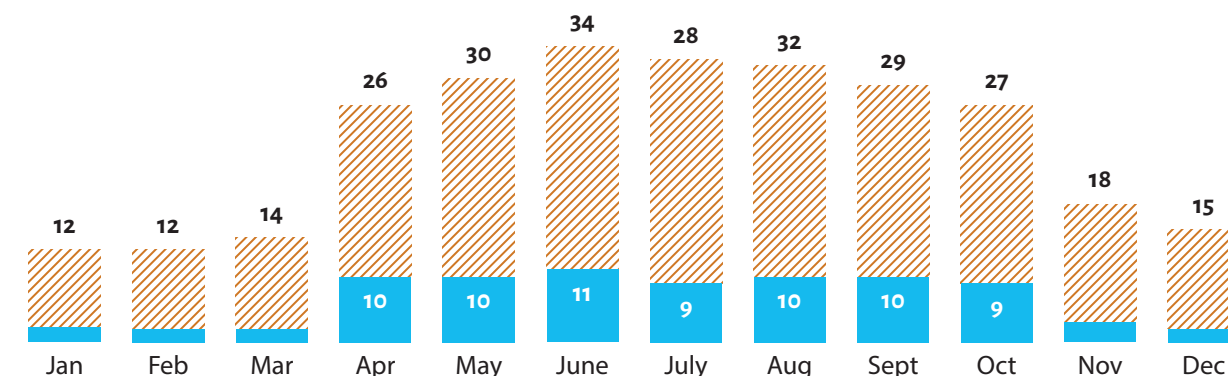
Public events Stewardship projects



## Events and projects by month

Number of events organized or supported by Friends Groups Partners

Public events Stewardship projects



# COVID-19

## The COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts

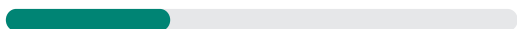
% of Friends Group Partners who were impacted by COVID-19



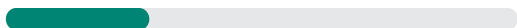
**68%**

of groups were impacted by COVID-19

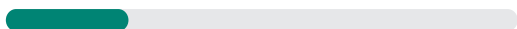
**32%** of groups had to cancel an event



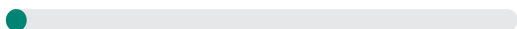
**28%** of groups reported other effects



**24%** of groups had to acquire additional permissions



**4%** of groups had to conduct safety trainings



The COVID-19 pandemic continued to make an impact in 2022, as cases fluctuated unpredictably, new variants arose, and state and local governments struggled with how best to protect their residents from a threat that seemed at times to be a moving target. Our Friends Group Partners reported a wide array of impacts from the continuing COVID-19 pandemic in 2022, including event cancellations, having to take steps to acquire additional permissions from their respective land management agencies, conducting safety trainings for volunteers, and reduced attendance at many Friends-led activities.

## Legislative Advocacy

Many Friends Groups also reported participating in legislative advocacy activities in 2022. Pursuing goals via the democratic process can be a complex and sometimes frustrating task, but many of our respondents listed their civic engagement efforts among their greatest successes of 2022.

### Advocacy Project Examples

*New Trail Center · Trail Connections · LCCMR Funding  
· Legacy Grant · P&TC Legislative Agenda · Capital  
Infrastructure*

## Legislative Advocacy

% of Friends Group Partners who engaged in legislative advocacy in 2022



**36%**

of groups engaged in legislative advocacy

*Among Friends Group Partners who engaged in legislative advocacy, % who...*

**89%** supported P&TC's legislative agenda



**67%** contacted a legislator



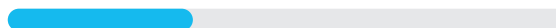
**56%** met with a legislator in person



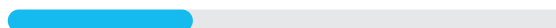
**56%** worked with a legislator to author a bill



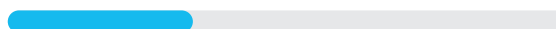
**33%** hosted a legislator for an event or project tour



**33%** worked with a professional lobbyist



**33%** sent out an action alert

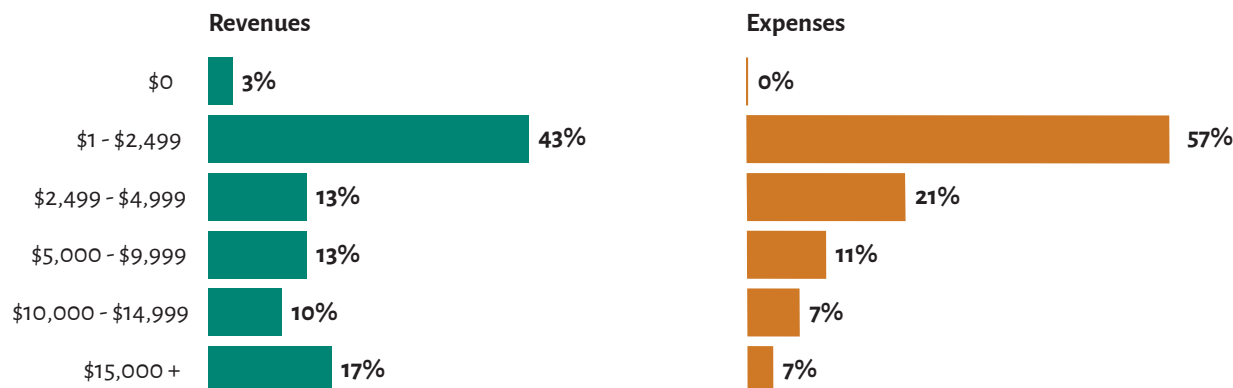


## Financials

Friends Groups can also play an important role in fundraising to support their park or trail. The figures below break down the 2022 financials across the board, and, as you can see, income and expenses vary widely depending on geography, membership base, and special projects undertaken in a given year. The majority of our respondents reported incomes and expenses of between \$1-\$2,499, but some reported much larger numbers.

### 2020 financial brackets

% of Friends Group Partners with revenues/expenses of \_\_\_\_\_



## A Force for Good

As this report illustrates, Friends Groups serve a critical role in their communities and in the stewardship of our state's parks and trails. Whether advocating for a trail extension, organizing trash cleanups, or introducing the next generation to the wonders of Minnesota's wild places, these groups serve as a vital connection between public lands and the communities that live and work nearby. The benefits of our state's extensive parks and trails system would be greatly diminished without the efforts of these remarkable volunteers.

A big thank you to all the groups that shared their successes and challenges from 2022! If you have questions, comments, or clarifications about any of the data contained in this report, you can contact Parks & Trails Council at [friends@parksandtrails.org](mailto:friends@parksandtrails.org) or via phone at 651-370-7907. We welcome your feedback!

