

## **For Immediate Release**

CONTACT: Openlands, [press@openlands.org](mailto:press@openlands.org), 312-863-6260  
(Media inquiries only)

### **SUMMER PADDLING EVENTS ENCOURAGE RESIDENTS, FAMILIES TO EXPLORE THE LAKE MICHIGAN WATER TRAIL**

(Chicago – June 8, 2018) **Openlands** and **Illinois Department of Natural Resources’ Coastal Management Program** announce three family focused paddling events, organized along the Lake Michigan coast in northern Illinois. These events will provide opportunities for kids and adults to explore and enjoy Lake Michigan this summer, and introduce them to the greater Lake Michigan Water Trail. Events will include beginner-friendly paddling experiences and water safety training. In addition, there will also be guided tours of natural areas and other family friendly activities such as fishing, provided by local partners. These events and all activities are free and no registration is required.

“Illinois’ northern coastal region is rich with opportunities for outdoor recreation,” said **Catherine Buchalski-Smith**, an Outreach & Engagement Specialist with IDNR’s Coastal Management Program. “In speaking with our many partners, we identified the need to develop free public programming to enhance opportunities for Illinois residents to connect with Lake Michigan in new and exciting ways. We hope that visitors to these events will enjoy their experience and return to the area to continue recreating along the shores of Lake Michigan.”

“The Lake County Nature Network (LCNN) is excited about the upcoming water trail events that will show many more members of our communities how much Lake Michigan has to offer,” said **Susie Hoffmann**, Lake Forest Open Lands’ Director of Education and LCNN representative. “The water trail not only provides recreation, but also allows us to introduce new groups to this ecosystem’s rich natural history and environmental significance.”

“We hope these events will help grow the already popular paddling culture in Lake County and expose new paddlers to the access points on Lake Michigan,” said Openlands’ Aquatic Ecologist **Laura Barghusen**. “The more access you can provide to the water, the more people will end up using water trails, and we know that greater use and appreciation leads to more advocates and stewards of our region’s water resources.”

The paddling events will take place:

- Saturday, June 30, 11am – 4pm, North Point Marina, 701 North Point Drive, Winthrop Harbor, IL 60096
- Sunday, July 1, 11am – 4pm, Illinois Beach State Park, enter on Wadsworth Road, 1/5 mile east of Sheridan Road, Zion, IL 60099
- Friday, August 3, 1 – 7pm, Waukegan Harbor, 55 S. Harbor Place, Waukegan, IL 60085

Additional information (also in Spanish) on the paddling events is available at **[PaddleIllinoisWaterTrails.org](http://PaddleIllinoisWaterTrails.org)**.

Following the paddling events, Openlands and the IDNR Coastal Management Program intend to host a series of public meetings to gather community input for the design and implementation of an approximately 10-mile stretch of the Lake Michigan water trail from North Chicago to the Wisconsin border. Water trails are designated routes along navigable waterways for paddling and recreation. Information about the planning meetings will be made public when it is available.

Support for the paddling events is provided by Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Coastal Management Program through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Openlands.

### **About Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Coastal Management Program**

The IDNR Coastal Management Program is dedicated to protecting and enhancing the environmental, economic, and social value of Illinois' Great Lakes coast. Our program fosters healthy ecosystems and resilient communities by providing expertise, funding, and other resources that:

- Engage and connect communities with the Lake Michigan coastal region;
- Enhance coastal stewardship;
- Promote balanced use; and,
- Improve interagency coordination.

From local projects to regional initiatives, we support coastal-specific planning, education, conservation, and economic development efforts that are forward-thinking and responsive to community needs.

### **About Lake County Nature Network**

The Lake County Nature Network is a collaborative effort led by several conservation and environmental organizations in Lake County, Illinois that serve to better connect our area's Latino and African American communities to nature-based learning, science, recreation, and stewardship activities within Lake County.

### **About Openlands**

Founded in 1963, Openlands is one of the nation's oldest and most successful metropolitan conservation organizations, having helped secure, protect, and provide public access to more than 55,000 acres of land for parks, forest preserves, wildlife refuges, land and water greenway corridors, and urban gardens. For more information, please visit [www.openlands.org](http://www.openlands.org).