

## in this issue:

Executive Director transition – p2

Vicki Elkin's legacy – p3

Board updates – p3

Land trust programs – p4

Online resources – p5

Federal policy update – p5

Award winners – p6

Fundraising news – p7

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## gathering waters conservancy

### Saving Stewardship—Gathering Waters Launches Campaign to Protect the Future of the Fund

You know that Wisconsin is a great place to live—it boasts glorious wild places, and some fantastic land trusts working to protect them. But did you also know that Wisconsin is recognized as a national leader in land conservation because of our **Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund**? The Stewardship Fund, which celebrated its 15th anniversary last year, is one of the nation's most innovative funding sources for land conservation.



The Stewardship Fund has long been a popular program, with strong support on both sides of the legislative aisle and throughout the state. Unfortunately, in recent years, the Fund has become caught in the crossfire of partisan politics. Gathering Waters Conservancy has taken a lead role in defending the Stewardship Fund from legislative attacks, and we are committed to ensuring that the Fund remains a flagship conservation program.

The Stewardship Fund is not a permanent program—it must be reauthorized every ten years and the current program is due to expire in June 2010. For Stewardship to continue into the future, reauthorizing legislation must be passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor before then. In the current political climate, this will not be an easy task, but Gathering Waters has long been a standard-bearer for the Stewardship Fund, and we are ready to take on this new challenge.

This fall we are launching an unprecedented **Stewardship Reauthorization Campaign** to rebuild statewide, bipartisan support for the Fund, both at the grassroots level and among powerful constituencies. This campaign will be a major organizational focus for us over the next several years.

Working with a coalition of allies we will:

- Raise the profile of the Stewardship Fund through a statewide media campaign
- Develop policy recommendations for a stronger, better Stewardship Fund
- Convince influential decision-makers that Stewardship is a program they cannot afford to oppose

To accomplish all of this, we need an experienced, knowledgeable, and politically-savvy director at the helm of our campaign. We are delighted to report that Gathering Waters Conservancy's own Vicki Elkin has agreed to take on the important role of Stewardship Reauthorization Campaign Director, stepping down from her role as Executive Director. (See related story on Page 2).

We are confident that we can restore the Stewardship Fund to its rightful place as a broadly popular program that will help protect Wisconsin's landscapes for years to come, but we will need your help. To learn more about how you can support our Stewardship Campaign, contact Vicki Elkin at 608-441-8819 or [stewardship@gatheringwaters.org](mailto:stewardship@gatheringwaters.org). You can also learn more on our website at [www.gatheringwaters.org/stewardship](http://www.gatheringwaters.org/stewardship).

### Stewardship Spotlight

*"I have learned that one person can indeed make a difference, but rarely by working alone. By reaching out, cooperating, collaborating with individuals and organizations, by building relationships, great and enduring accomplishments can result. But without the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund, both Big Timber Island and Moonshine Island would very likely be multi-unit developments today."*

~ **Doug Kurtzweil**, chair of the Chippewa Flowage Area Property Owners Association and board member of Couderay Waters Regional Land Trust

Gathering Waters Conservancy's mission is to help the people and communities of Wisconsin protect their land and water resources by strengthening the state's land trust movement. As a statewide coalition and service center for Wisconsin's growing land trust community, Gathering Waters' goals are to increase the professionalism and build the capacity of the state's private, non-profit conservation organizations through technical assistance, training and continuing education.

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## **From the Executive Director's Desk...**

### **A New Challenge**

After more than eight years as Executive Director of Gathering Waters Conservancy, I have decided to step down from my position to devote my energies entirely to rebuilding broad, bipartisan support for the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship Fund.

By the time you receive this newsletter, I will be Gathering Waters Conservancy's new Stewardship Campaign Director, charged with spearheading the land trust community's efforts to ensure that this critically important program continues well beyond its current expiration date of June 2010 (see related story on front page).

As you can imagine, this was a tough decision for me. I have loved my job as Executive Director and continue to find the work challenging and rewarding. It's clear to me, however, that supporting the Stewardship Fund is a top priority for conservation in Wisconsin, and I am excited to make it my primary focus.

I am proud to leave Gathering Waters Conservancy well-poised for a new director to step in and guide the organization through its second decade. I have great expectations for Gathering Waters' future, and am confident that under new leadership the organization will build on its successes while evolving in new and innovative ways.

I initially came to Gathering Waters because it affirmed one of my fundamental beliefs: that people, acting collectively, can shape the future of their communities.

And this has been at the core of Gathering Waters Conservancy's mission. Over the past decade, we have grown into an organization that both leads and is led by Wisconsin's land trust community. It has been an honor to watch this grass roots movement grow and mature, knowing that we have played a role in its achievements.

At Gathering Waters we work as a team, and our success would not be possible without the support of our land trusts, the generosity of our members, the encouragement of our board and the contributions of each staff person.

Looking back at the accomplishments of our first decade, I take credit for just one thing: hiring an incredibly talented, energetic and dedicated staff whose vision never ceases to amaze me. I am especially proud of how the entire staff has taken on additional roles and responsibilities as our Board searches for a new Executive Director. Althea Dotzour is serving as our Interim Director, and I encourage you to contact her if you have any questions during the transition.

I am also proud of the board we've put together. A strong board is the envy of all non-profits, and Gathering Waters has one of the best. I am very fortunate to have worked with such a distinguished and committed group of leaders and am thankful for their willingness to serve as mentors to me.

I am thrilled about my new role as the Director of Gathering Waters' Stewardship Campaign and cannot imagine a more important cause to champion. We will have our work cut out for us, but this is a challenge I relish—perhaps because, at its core, our Stewardship Campaign speaks to my belief in the power of people working together to shape our future for the better.

Vicki Elkin

**gathering waters**  
conservancy



*A trail runner at Pheasant Branch Conservancy in Dane County, which was protected with the help of the Stewardship Fund.*



## A Legacy of Leadership

After eight years as Gathering Waters Conservancy's Executive Director, Vicki Elkin now moves on to a formidable new challenge as Gathering Waters' Stewardship Campaign Director. When we look back on the history of the land trust movement in Wisconsin, Vicki's name will be recognized as a prominent leader. When she started in 1998 there were vast areas of the state where no land trust existed. Since then, the number of land trusts has almost doubled, to more than fifty, and landowners who desire to permanently protect their land can now turn to a local land trust for advice.

Vicki's many achievements during her tenure as Executive Director include growing Gathering Waters from a one-person office with a \$100,000 budget to a staff of seven and a budget of over \$500,000, in response to the increasing need for land conservation. The staff is dedicated, hard-working, and enthusiastic; successful programs are the result. Vicki has also recruited part-time student interns, who often go on to professional environmental careers and, more importantly, develop a lifetime commitment to land stewardship.

Since 1998, our membership has increased tenfold, and is now over 1000. Even more telling is the growth in membership of Wisconsin's land trusts, who collectively represent over 50,000 members—a tribute to the increasing role that they play in their communities.

Under Vicki's leadership, Gathering Waters has created programs—workshops, retreats, and professional consultation—that strengthen land trusts throughout the state, assuring landowners that their conserved properties will be protected in perpetuity. She has worked with partners in the public and private sectors to protect landscapes throughout Wisconsin—wild lakes, rivers, and forests in the north, prairies and farmlands in agricultural regions, bluffs and valleys in the coulee region, and green spaces in rapidly urbanizing areas. To date, Wisconsin's land trusts, including The Nature Conservancy, have protected over 200,000 acres of land—an area significantly larger than Lake Winnebago.

One of Vicki's most important accomplishments was her role, working in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy, 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, and others, in achieving support for the annual \$60 million appropriation for the Stewardship Fund, the financial backbone for land conservation in the state. With a growing population needing places to visit for recreation, solitude, and refreshment, continuation of the Stewardship Fund is more important than ever.

This is the task to which Vicki now turns as Gathering Waters Conservancy's Stewardship Campaign Director. Land prices have escalated enormously during the past decade and continue to go up, reducing Stewardship purchasing power by one-half. In Vicki's new role, she will be working not only to ensure that the Stewardship Fund is reauthorized, but that it has sufficient funding to meet the conservation challenges of a new decade. I have every confidence that Vicki can help to build a powerful bipartisan force to achieve this goal. But she will need the support of land trusts, the environmental community, and Wisconsin citizens who value this wonderful state in which we live.

Thanks, Vicki, for what you have accomplished as Executive Director of Gathering Waters Conservancy. We have been richly blessed with your accomplishments and we pledge to you our support in this new challenge.

~**Bud Jordahl**,

Founding Member and Past President of Gathering Waters Conservancy



**"Most importantly, Vicki has elevated Gathering Waters to one of the premier conservation groups in the state with a solid reputation for getting things done."**

— Bud Jordahl

## Board Updates— Goodbye Julie, Hello Alice and Congratulations to our new officers!

Gathering Waters Conservancy wishes board member **Julie Gallagher** a fond farewell, after 10 years of dedicated service. Julie joined the Board in 1996, and shepherded Gathering Waters through its first Executive Director transition in 1998. She has blazed new trails for land conservation as a Board member of the Waukesha Land Conservancy and as a founding member of Gathering Waters' Land Legacy Society.

**Alice Godfrey** joins Gathering Waters' Board bringing experience she gained while serving on the Board of the Driftless Area Land Conservancy. She developed her passion for conservation early in life—growing up in Massachusetts, she and her family were actively involved with their local land trust. Alice lives in Oak Park, Illinois, but her heart is in Avoca, Wisconsin, where she owns property and spends part of her time.

### Gathering Waters Conservancy's newly elected Board officers are:

President **Art Harrington** is an attorney at Godfrey & Kahn in Milwaukee. **Darrell Bazzell**, Vice President, is a former Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources, and is now Vice Chancellor at UW-Madison. **Joy Stieglitz Gottschalk**, Secretary, is an urban planner with Vandewalle and Associates. **Chuck Haubrich**, formerly of SC Johnson, continues his irreplaceable service as Treasurer.



## Gathering Waters Land Trust Programs

Land trusts do one thing – permanently protect land – and they are successful because they focus on this one thing. Gathering Waters’ Land Trust Program works with land trusts to increase their capacity for strategic land protection. A key ingredient for land trust success is collaboration. Over the past few years, Gathering Waters has been fostering a number of creative collaborations between land trusts and a diverse array of like-minded organizations. We work regionally throughout Wisconsin, with staff members focused on helping land trusts in different areas of the state. Our three land trust program staff are here to report on recent collaborative happenings in their regions.

**“I like the on-the-ground achievements of land trusts, and I like the way Gathering Waters is helping land trusts focus their efforts.”**

– GWC Member Survey Respondent

### Northern Wisconsin



Along the border between Minnesota and Wisconsin flows the beautiful and diverse St. Croix River, one of only five designated National Scenic Riverways. If there were “Great Rivers” as there are Great Lakes, the St. Croix would certainly be one! There are many organizations working to protect the St. Croix, but no single entity coordinating their efforts. This lack of coordination raised concerns among groups working on conservation issues in the river’s watershed, and brought them together to figure out ways to work in partnership.

Gathering Waters is facilitating this group of stakeholders, which has become the St. Croix Conservation Collaborative, to identify a watershed-wide set of conservation priorities, and develop tools to secure the permanent protection of those priority places. The WI Department of Natural Resources has been providing staff time to develop natural resource maps of the watershed for these efforts, and the UW-Extension Basin Partnership program will be hosting information about the Collaborative and its conservation activities on its St. Croix Basin webpage. Together, this diverse group will coordinate land conservation actions that will complement each other in preserving and restoring the many habitats, scenic views and outdoor recreation opportunities this river provides.

To learn more about our work in Northern Wisconsin, contact Karen Bassler at 608-251-9131 x 12 or karen@gatheringwaters.org.

### Southern Wisconsin



As private land conservation in South Central and Southwestern Wisconsin gathers momentum, we at Gathering Waters are keeping our ear to the tracks. A handful of land trusts in the region have grown markedly in the last decade—closing major deals, hiring staff, and engaging in fruitful partnerships. We are working closely with individual organizations in this region, facilitating strategic planning, providing fundraising advice, and assisting organizations as they prepare to meet the Land Trust Alliance’s accreditation standards. But we are also looking for opportunities to foster collaboration.

Early this summer, we hosted a networking field trip on the Kickapoo River for eight conservation organizations working in South Central Wisconsin and the Driftless Region. Our goal for this event was to familiarize key stakeholders with the scope of conservation activity in the region and give them a chance to get to know each other outside their offices. Participants enjoyed a sunlit day on the river, and spent a picnic lunch sharing news, challenges, and ideas about increasing conservation activity in the region.

Land trusts in the area share a particular concern about the limited number of professional advisors available to work with conservation-minded landowners. In response to this need, our professional training efforts this fall will target estate planning professionals—attorneys, CPAs, and other tax-planning advisors—in rural areas of southern Wisconsin.

To learn more about our work in Southern Wisconsin, contact Pam Felt at 608-251-9131 x 11 or pam@gatheringwaters.org.



*Conservationists enjoy a day of canoeing and networking on the Kickapoo River*



## Policy Victory— Expanded Federal Tax Incentives

Great news for conservation! In August, President Bush signed a new federal law including a substantial expansion of the federal tax incentives for conservation easement donations. These incentives survived several rounds of review and revision while the bill made its way through Congress—thanks to all who took action in support of the expanded incentives.

The new law:

- Raises the deduction a landowner can take for donating a conservation easement from 30% of their income in any year to 50%
- Allows qualifying farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100% of their income
- Increases the number of years over which a donor can carry over those deductions from 6 to 16

Currently, this law only applies to easements donated in 2006 and 2007. The national Land Trust Alliance is spearheading a campaign to make the new incentives permanent.

The bill also includes sensible reforms that affect the appraisal process for all donated property and tighten the rules for easements on historic buildings.

All land trusts, easement donors, and conservation professionals should make sure that they understand the new rules. If you have questions about how this law will affect you, contact Pam Felt at 608-251-9131 x 11 or visit the Land Trust Alliance website, [www.lta.org/publicpolicy/](http://www.lta.org/publicpolicy/).

## Lake Michigan Basin



Julia Solomon

Our ultimate goal in this part of the state is to ensure that the ecological treasures of Wisconsin's Lake Michigan Basin are permanently protected. To accomplish this, we facilitate the Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance—a group of nine land trusts working together to protect these special places. Through this alliance we build the capacity of individual organizations while helping them collaborate efficiently. With our alliance partners, we are working to conserve high-priority places throughout the watershed.

Members of the Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance meet quarterly to share information, discuss common goals, and identify opportunities for partnership. In addition to facilitating informal networking, the Alliance provides an ideal venue for training. At our most recent meeting, representatives of the Stewardship grant program attended to answer questions and discuss program goals with land trusts interested in seeking funds.

Led by Gathering Waters Conservancy, the land trusts in this region have identified eighteen sites that are in critical need of land protection, and have undertaken detailed conservation planning processes at six of these sites. Each land trust in the region is working to prioritize these important areas in their own work. In the past three years, land trusts have protected over 800 acres within the boundaries of these sites. We applaud their efforts and are helping them keep up the good work!

To learn more about our work in the Lake Michigan Basin, contact Julia Solomon at 608-251-9131 x 17 or [julia@gatheringwaters.org](mailto:julia@gatheringwaters.org).



Protected Lake Michigan coastline at Newport State Park in Door County

## Online Resources for Land Trusts



Whether you are a Board member, staff member or volunteer of your local land trust, Gathering Waters Conservancy's website has helpful resources for you! Our **Wisconsin Land Trusts web page** has information on protecting land, organizing a land trust, preparing for accreditation, and careers in the land trust movement. You can also sign up for Currents, our quarterly technical bulletin for land trusts, or use the Land Trust Directory to find the land trust working in the next county. Check out these great resources at [www.gatheringwaters.org](http://www.gatheringwaters.org)!

## Celebrating Conservation Success

What do urban rivers, northern forests, Mississippi bluffslands, and glacial landscapes have in common? They represent the diversity of Wisconsin's natural landscapes, and also the scope of the lands protected by this year's Land Conservation Leadership Award winners. As always, this event spotlighted the impressive achievements of the individuals and groups who are leading the way toward innovative, successful land conservation in Wisconsin.

**Kristen Wilhelm** was honored with the 2006 **Conservationist of the Year Award** for her passion, hard work, and dedication to protect and preserve the Fitzsimmons Woods area in the City of Franklin. A founding member of the Milwaukee Area Land Conservancy, Vice-Chair of the City of Franklin Environmental Commission, and staff member with the River Revitalization Foundation, Kristen continues to contribute significant time and energy toward protecting land in Milwaukee County. Fitzsimmons Woods is made up of more than 20 acres of high quality maple-beech forest, containing woodlands, wetlands, and rare flora and fauna. This past February, the Milwaukee Area Land Conservancy completed the purchase of Fitzsimmons Woods with the help of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund.

The 2006 **Policy Maker of the Year Award** went to the **City of La Crosse** for its innovative contributions to the preservation of over 700 acres of bluffslands along the Mississippi River. Since 2001, the City has partnered with the Mississippi Valley Conservancy to implement the Bluffsland Protection Program. This conservation collaboration works to protect the region's signature landscape feature – the Mississippi River Bluffslands. Through this partnership, over \$1 million dollars have been raised for land acquisition, protecting almost half of their 3,000 acre goal. Mayor Mark Johnsrud and Director of Planning Larry Kirch accepted the award on behalf of the City.

The **Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin (TNC)** was presented with the 2006 **Land Trust of the Year Award** for its instrumental role in the protection of the Wild Rivers Legacy Forest project. By partnering with the WI DNR, Conservation Forestry LLC and Forest Investment Associates, TNC helped protect over 64,000 acres of forest land in northeastern Wisconsin. The Wild Rivers Project, the largest land conservation transaction in state history, preserves a vital block of hardwood forest in Northeastern Wisconsin through conservation easements and public ownership. State Director Mary Jean Juston accepted the award.

Finally, the 2006 **Harold "Bud" Jordahl Lifetime Achievement Award** was presented to **Geoffrey Maclay**, founder and president of the Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation (CLCF), for his lifelong devotion to Wisconsin's land trust movement. Twelve years ago, Geoff was one of Gathering Waters' original founders. For more than thirty years, Geoff has led efforts to protect over 2,000 areas of natural areas, wetland, woodland and other valued land resources within the Cedar Lakes Watershed. Recently, Geoff has worked closely with the DNR, the National Park Service and the Ice Age Park & Trail Foundation to protect some of the last remaining Kettle Moraine topography in Washington County.



*Award Recipients (from left) Larry Kirch, Mary Jean Juston, Mark Johnsrud, Geoffrey Maclay, and Kristen Wilhelm*

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## Thank You

**Cricket Design Works** for donating the design of the Parade of Preserves poster and postcard

**Kate Hanson** at the National Park Service for hosting the St. Croix Conservation Collaborative meeting and providing Karen a bedroom

**Mike Ivey** for editing and media advice

**Greg Landretti** and **John Vigen** for advising our professional training efforts

**John Lhost** and **Sally Merrell** for serving as presenters at our October CLE seminar

**Daniel Mortensen** for designing and building awards display stands.

**Trish Stocking** for loaning her house and garden for our staff planning retreat

**West Bend Mutual Insurance Company** for hosting our October CLE seminar

## Thanks to our 2006 Auction Donors!

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## Contribute to Gathering Waters through your Workplace with Community Shares



In 2004, Gathering Waters Conservancy became a member of Community Shares of Wisconsin, the oldest social action fund in the country. Community Shares supports nearly 60 organizations that advocate, educate and seek progressive solutions to problems and issues both locally and statewide. Through workplace giving campaigns and cooperative fundraising, Community Shares connects

donors with the causes that they care about, giving individuals the power to affect change in their own communities.

Last year alone, Community Shares of Wisconsin raised over \$506,000 for their member organizations, the majority of which was donated through workplace giving campaigns. Workplace giving is a simple process that allows you to make tax-deductible donations to local charities through payroll deductions. These campaigns not only allow you to designate donations to specific member organizations like Gathering Waters Conservancy, but they also enable you to give more over the course of a year than you could with a one-time gift. If you designate a specific organization to receive your gift, one hundred percent of the money you give goes directly to that organization...Community Shares takes no percentage.

Whether your company does its payroll in-house or sends it to an outside payroll processor, implementing automatic payroll deduction for charity is a simple process. If you are unsure if your employer is a participant in a Community Shares of Wisconsin giving campaign or if you would like to know how to start a campaign at your workplace, contact Gathering Waters Conservancy. Workplace giving is easy and efficient and enables companies and their employees to work together to benefit our community.

~Sara DeKok, Membership Coordinator



**Did you know** you can name Gathering Waters Conservancy, Inc. in your estate?

For more information call 608.251.9131 x 10.

## Ways of Giving: Silent Auction Donations

Gathering Waters Conservancy passed a milestone this year: We now have over 1,000 members! While most of these members are traditional, dues-paying supporters, there are many who choose to support Gathering Waters by additional means. Each fall we are especially grateful to some of our members who donate items to the silent auction that is part of our annual Land Conservation Leadership Awards Celebration. Each year we receive various items—from Green Bay Packer tickets to hot air balloon rides, vacation packages, and fine art—raising up to \$7,000 toward Gathering Waters' mission of empowering Wisconsin's land trust community.

One long-time supporter of Gathering Waters Conservancy and frequent auction donor is Darren Bush, co-owner of Rutabaga, Madison's favorite paddlesport shop. In past years Rutabaga has donated a kayak, a canoe, and paddlesport lessons to our auction. This year, Darren, an artisan blacksmith, has personally donated a custom-made, hand-forged candelabra.

On his decision to support Gathering Waters Conservancy, Darren says, "Supporting Gathering Waters Conservancy is a very positive way for me to be involved in conservation efforts." Darren moved from California to Wisconsin 22 years ago and says he "liked the fact that Wisconsin had a great conservation ethic"—a conservation ethic that Darren, along with Rutabaga, and our other 999 members are strengthening through their support of Wisconsin's land trust community. Thanks, Darren!



*If you are looking for an additional way to support Gathering Waters Conservancy, consider donating an item for our annual silent auction or another in-kind gift.*





# crosscurrents

a newsletter to serve the land conservation  
community of Wisconsin



Gathering Waters Conservancy  
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## Poems for the season

When the forest is in harmony  
The sky is clear and spacious  
The earth is solid and full  
All things flourish together  
Endlessly repeating themselves,  
Endlessly renewed.  
~Lao Tse

### Splinter

The voice of the last cricket  
across the first frost  
is one kind of good-by.  
It is so thin a splinter of singing.  
~Carl Sandburg, Good Morning, America

## Going once, going twice...going for double value!

Our members support Gathering Waters Conservancy in many generous and innovative ways. This year we are thrilled to announce an unprecedented gift from one of our long-time contributors. **Dale Druckrey**, a member of our Land Legacy Society, agreed to match a portion of the proceeds from our 2006 Silent Auction, held at our Land Conservation Leadership Awards Celebration in September. This challenge added a new level of excitement to the auction bidding. Thank you, Dale, for your thoughtful gift!

### Correction

In the summer issue of Crosscurrents, our "Land Trust Leaders Win Votes" story misidentified Wendy McCalvy as the president of Caledonia Conservancy. She is a founder and past president of the organization, but Sandy DeWalt is the current president. Our apologies for the mistake.

