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nature photos: Gil Gribb



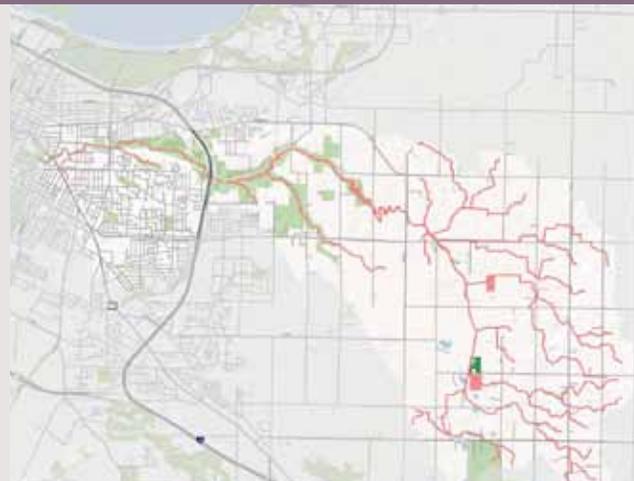
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gathering waters conservancy

Big Basin, Big Maps: a new tool for land trusts in the Lake Michigan basin

As we reported in the last issue of *Crosscurrents*, Gathering Waters and the Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance (LMSA) have teamed up with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) to create a set of detailed maps depicting conservation opportunities in targeted areas of Wisconsin's Lake Michigan basin. Just since August, we have logged more than 17 round trips to the points east of our office. We have collected data and input from many sources. We're more than half-way through this significant mapping project, and we're excited to unveil some of the images we have produced.



A map of the Baird Creek Preservation Foundation's service area

The maps were created using GIS technology: they incorporate scientific data—habitat ranges and watershed data, for example. Unlike many other GIS endeavors, these maps include some human input about conservation priorities in order to identify the best opportunities for future land protection. The maps, made for each land trust's service area as well as the entire Lake Michigan basin, will help them illustrate a specific land conservation priority or community issue, promote a project area or recruit new partners.[continued on p. 6]

20 Years of Stewardship's Successes



Gathering Waters Conservancy celebrated our 15th anniversary last year. This year, we're looking forward to celebrating 20 years of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund. The Stewardship Fund boasts an extraordinary record of land conserved for Wisconsin. Stewardship's increased funding in 2010 promises notable achievements in the decades to come.

Since 1989, the Stewardship Fund has been Wisconsin's funding source for buying conservation and recreation lands. Many of the "crown jewels" of Wisconsin's natural landscape—the Kettle Moraine State Forest, the Willow Flowage, and the Ice Age Trail, to name just a few—were purchased and protected with Stewardship funds.

But Stewardship's great strength is that it is more than the DNR's land acquisition account. For 20 years, the Stewardship Fund has been fueling citizen-driven conservation all over Wisconsin. Each year, a portion of the Stewardship Fund is awarded as grants to land trusts and municipalities and matched with private contributions to protect locally significant natural places. Through Stewardship, land trusts have more than doubled our public buying power for land conservation. The Stewardship Fund has been used by landowners and communities dedicated to protecting places that make Wisconsin home. It was born out of a land ethic that is truly unique to our state, and designed so that the places it helps to protect will nourish that land ethic among generations to come. There's a lot to celebrate.

In this year, you can anticipate special field trips and other occasions to fete the Stewardship Fund. Stay tuned to this newsletter, our website and facebook page for more information about how, when and where you can enjoy Stewardship's birthday.

Gathering Waters Conservancy's mission is to help communities, land trusts and landowners protect the places that make Wisconsin special. Our goal is to increase the amount of protected land in the state through private voluntary action.

Gathering Waters Conservancy

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From the Executive Director's Desk...

Typically, in this newsletter we share exciting updates. In these pages, you'll learn about Gathering Waters' effort to deliver federal money to land trusts in the Lake Michigan basin. We've shared an example of an extensive mapping project undertaken to give land trusts powerful communication and planning tools. You'll read that Gathering Waters has delivered organizational assessments to land trusts in Polk and Green Lake Counties

But if we're thorough in reporting *exactly* what we do to help protect special places, I have to reveal that we invest many hours that don't yield exciting headlines. There's an irony in our work: to help people protect special outdoor places, we spend a lot of time in meetings inside.

Our indoor efforts include representing land trusts on important statewide advisory bodies. I'll share a few examples:

I serve on the Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) council, a new body advising the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection on Wisconsin's program to fund conservation easements on working farms. The PACE program needs land trusts to succeed. Their voice on that council is essential: we're proud to represent it.

Likewise, we're proud to advocate for land trust partners of the DNR. Our Government Relations Director Mike Carlson sits on the Stewardship Advisory Council, a citizen's body advising administration of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund. On SAC we champion the concerns of the non-profit partners that make Stewardship so successful.

Among Stewardship's success are several of the state's 602 dedicated State Natural Areas. Last year I was appointed to the Natural Areas Preservation Council.

By statute, NAPC advises the DNR on the acquisition, development, use and management of State Natural Areas. Just as they are for Stewardship and working lands protection, land trusts are agents of Natural Area protection, and their voice must influence the direction of the Natural Areas Program's future.

Statewide, land trusts negotiate land deals governments cannot. They attract funding that landowners and the DNR can't access. They inspire and equip hundreds of volunteers. There are 50 land trusts in the state, the leaders of whom cannot all be in every place land trusts ought to be represented.

While land trusts are principal agents of private land conservation, we at Gathering Waters are land trusts' agent, working to make sure public conservation dollars are well matched to the power and momentum of Wisconsin's land trust movement. So we invest our time, on PACE, Stewardship, NAPC and other bodies convened to help Wisconsinites protect our most important places. And when land trusts announce new farmland easements, acres protected with Stewardship or dedicated as State Natural Area, we're satisfied that it's time well spent indoors.




Michael Strigel, Executive Director

Board Member Profile—Art Harrington

Our Past President Art Harrington is an attorney at Godfrey and Kahn where he specializes in environmental law and says that he "all too often sees environmental preservation become mired in disputes between combative, competing interest groups." He's drawn to the land trust movement because, in his words, "the land trust community accomplishes preservation through consensual methods, designed to avoid ugly disputes."

Art joined our board because he feels "the education and support provided by Gathering Waters are critical to the Land Trust community's preservation efforts in Wisconsin. I am proud to be a part of this important mission." We are likewise proud to have him. Art is the inaugural past chair of the Environmental Law Section of the Wisconsin Bar of and a past president of the Milwaukee Bar Association. He has served on the board of the Ozaukee Washington Land Trust and as president of the Milwaukee Public Library Foundation. He manages to save seven days each year for a week-long bike trip with friends in different parts of North America.



Public Policy Updates

from **Mike Carlson**,
Government Relations Director

At work on a farm protected last year through a conservation easement donated to the Star Prairie Land Preservation Trust. Wisconsin's new PACE program will make conservation easements a viable option for many more family farms

Working Lands Protection Programs Under Construction

Last summer we shared exciting news about the protection of Wisconsin's working lands—in June, Governor Doyle signed the Working Lands Initiative into law. The passage of this legacy legislation marked a major victory for conservation in Wisconsin, but it also meant that the hard work of implementing the new program had just begun.

In the intervening months, Gathering Waters has been focused on ensuring that certain portions of the Working Lands Initiative—especially the Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) and Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) programs—take into account the needs and interests of land trusts throughout state. Our Executive Director, Mike Strigel, has been appointed to the newly-formed PACE Council, and we have been working closely with staff at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and American Farmland Trust to help shape these new programs.

We also have a fantastic government relations intern, Alison Volk, working with us part time. A NYU alum, former AmeriCorps volunteer and recent UW-Law School graduate, Alison is now employed at DATCP, and has been kind enough to continue spending a few hours a week volunteering at Gathering Waters and helping us keep the land trusts up to speed on all things related to working lands.

For more information, please visit: wisconsinfarmland.org, a website Gathering Waters is maintaining to share information about the PACE and AEA programs. This website will house a variety of information, such as status reports on the progress of the new PACE program, frequently asked questions—and answers—about PACE and AEAs and more. We continue to add new information to this website as it becomes available, so please check back regularly.

The Status of Stewardship Rules

In late January, the administrative rule governing public access on Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund lands came up for a vote at the Natural Resources Board's (NRB) monthly meeting. After hearing testimony from over thirty individuals and organizations, including Gathering Waters Conservancy and several land trusts, the NRB voted to approve the rule, also known as NR 52.

NR 52 stipulates how a wide range of public uses of Stewardship-purchased land can be allowed while still protecting sensitive ecosystems and public safety and accommodating "usership patterns." In Wisconsin there are diverse and often passionate opinions about why we conserve land, and they have all surfaced in this lengthy rule-making process. While there are some aspects of this law that we wish were different, we believe that the rule approved by the NRB represented a reasonable compromise, and we supported it.

From the beginning of this rulemaking process, Gathering Waters recognized that NR 52 would have to strike a balance among many various interests. We have advocated that the rules provide adequate flexibility and predictability for land trusts and local governments protecting the places important to their communities. The rules passed last month will create some new administrative and management challenges for land trusts,

but we're confident that the rules won't hobble their ability to protect Wisconsin's most special places.

While the NRB approval was a major hurdle for NR 52, the review process isn't finished yet. The rule now heads to legislature where it will be reviewed by committees in the Assembly and the Senate. There will be several key legislators who will need to hear from everyone who is interested in the Stewardship Fund! Please stay tuned to our website for updates in the next several weeks www.gatheringwaters.org.

Thank You!

Our days in office and on the road were aided recently by:

Tim Felt's woodworking & office moving muscle • The Norton Family's generous hosting of the GLCF's organizational assessment • The Brico Fund's hospitality for our Costa Rica Trip Reception • Godfrey & Kahn and Stafford Rosenbaum's meeting spaces • The Klessig Family's extraordinary barn dance fundraiser • Tom Ehram's hosting a lunch for Gathering Waters • Neil Soltis's provisions for a day-long meeting • Patty Zurlo and Debbie & John Murphy's gracious bed-and-breakfast services for GWC staff traveling overnight

Our Salute to Land Trust Volunteers

We're proud advocates of the land trust movement, and can always share land trust news. (In fact, we do! Track current land trust news from our home page www.gatheringwaters.org), but many land trust achievements never make the paper. Of the 50 land trusts in the state, just under half have no paid staff. That means that there are dedicated people *volunteering* the time and talent necessary to protect and steward conservation lands forever. We encourage you to pause to appreciate the volunteer investment of men and women negotiating real estate purchases, applying for grant funds, managing conservation easements, coordinating work days, and fundraising to ensure that their organization will be there to protect land forever.

In conversations with board members for the land trusts featured below, our staff have discussed some of the tough questions volunteer land trusts face: Does it make sense to pursue accreditation? Should they fundraise to hire part-time staff or protect more land? As our salute to the countless hours they spend addressing those questions and conserving Wisconsin's special places, here are short profiles of just a few all-volunteer land trusts.



The incoming and outgoing Presidents of Caledonia Conservancy, Eric Schumann and Sandy DeWalt

Caledonia Conservancy

In 1994 a group of Racine-area equestrians joined forces to protect Caledonia's network of riding trails. "We realized fairly quickly, though, that there wasn't much point in protecting the trails if we couldn't also conserve the properties around them," says past president Sandy DeWalt. Now the Caledonia Conservancy with 270 members, they have protected 167 acres, including 25 acres of old growth forest in their Tabor Woods Natural Area. All properties contain hiking and horse trails and are open for public enjoyment year-round.

The Conservancy is a member of the Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance, through which they are pursuing federal funds to support some of their on-going land management and trail maintenance. They can do a lot with a little: Caledonia Conservancy boasts a committed core of volunteers. Local riders and business leaders alike pitch in to bush-whack, clear trails, host events and fundraise.

Caledonia's leadership recognizes opportunities on their horizon. "From the sky," says DeWalt, "Caledonia is all green!" which few people expect in the corridor between Milwaukee and Chicago. "We still have the chance to protect whole intact corridors of natural area and trail." Toward that goal, the Conservancy has invested in their own capacity and growth: three years ago they underwent a thorough organizational assessment and plan to work with Gathering Waters this year to assess their progress and prioritize projects for the coming year.



Green Lake Conservancy Foundation

Green Lake is the deepest Lake in Wisconsin, and conservation traditions in this lakefront community run deep, as well. The Green Lake Conservancy Foundation has been run by volunteers since 1994 to protect and enhance the aesthetic, ecological and recreational qualities of Green Lake. The board includes biology teachers, avid birders, marina proprietors and lakefront homeowners, all of whom are devoted to the health and beauty of the Lake.

The Foundation has a remarkable record of using Wisconsin Lake Protection grants to safeguard Green Lake water quality. They have purchased lands including vital spawning grounds, prairies that act as filters absorbing surface water runoff, and Sugar Island, where the Ho-Chunk people made maple sugar. They have transferred ownership of those properties to the Green Lake Sanitary District to be held as conservation lands forever. "It's a true public/private partnership," explains board president Bur Zeratsky. "The Sanitary District generally matches the funds we raise and is critical to the success of our grants." This year, they closed their first conservation easement and committed to the new and significant responsibilities of an easement-holding organization.



Members of Green Lake Conservancy Foundation's board of directors met with Gathering Waters staff in October for a guided organizational assessment

Standing Cedars Community Land Conservancy

Standing Cedars was founded in 1994 by neighbors with a vision to protect the St. Croix River corridor in their township—more than 7 miles of river-front on one of only two Wild and Scenic Rivers in the state. They've made impressive progress. Today, the Conservancy owns and holds conservation easements on more than 1,400 acres in Farmington Township in Polk County.

Those acres keep them busy. This land trust secures grant funds to pay a property manager, but they spend many, many unpaid hours with a core of about 100 weed pulling, prairie planting, fence-repairing and trash-collecting volunteers. The Conservancy offers hunting privileges on its properties and, in exchange, hunters aid the Conservancy's efforts to



A pothole pond brought to you by the Standing Cedars Community Land Conservancy

remove invasive plants and restore prairie and oak savanna. Standing Cedars has also developed a full-day outdoor natural history curriculum that has been used by the local sixth grade class for the past three years.

The Board of Directors, which includes local teachers, river-front landowners, a Village Administrator and CSA farmers, see opportunities on their horizon for more environmental education programs and potential for additional farmland protection supported by growing interest in local food. "We're a board of well-intentioned, passionate people," says Past President Neil Soltis. Gathering Waters staff met with Standing Cedars board last fall to conduct an organizational assessment, and we certainly agree.

Couderay Waters Regional Land Trust

Couderay Waters Regional Land Trust was formed in 2002 by landowners in Sawyer and Washburn counties who recognized that lake-home development will forever alter the unique diversity and extensive beauty of the natural resources in the region. Since then, the Land Trust has focused their efforts on protection of key sites in the Chippewa Flowage. The Flowage, dotted with nearly 200 undeveloped islands and surrounded by 233 miles of mostly undeveloped shoreline, is Wisconsin's third-largest lake.

One of the Land Trust's great accomplishments is their role in protecting Big Timber and Moonshine Islands. When the islands' owner filed a re-zoning application, the Land Trust, the Property Owners Association and the Lac Courte Oreilles Band rallied to raise \$50,000 to match Knowles-Nelson Stewardship dollars. The state purchased the Islands as permanently protected conservation lands in 2004.

Correction: In our last Annual Report, we neglected to list Couderay Waters Regional Land Trust as a member. CWRLT has been a member of Gathering Waters Conservancy since 2003.



Welcome!

Please help us welcome three new members of the Gathering Waters Board:



Ben Niemann An Emeritus Professor in UW-Madison's Urban and Regional Planning Department, Niemann has a long-standing interest in applying the power of GIS to natural resource conservation. Ben serves on the Board of Couderay Waters Regional Land Trust. He is also former president of the National

Consortium for Rural Geospatial Innovations, and former chairman for the Wisconsin Land Information Board.



Rita Hayen Rita is the Environmental Department Manager for American Transmission Company, headquartered in Waukesha. Rita oversees ATC's environmental function and works closely with stakeholders and regulatory agencies to identify conservation opportunities related to ATC's work. Prior to

ATC, Rita worked for We Energies for 19 years. Rita has degrees in Mechanical Engineering and MBA from UW- Milwaukee.



Terry Hatch Mr. Hatch is a recently retired pediatrician who worked in private practice and in academic medicine at University of Illinois and Southern Illinois Medical Schools.

A life-long Illinois resident, Terry, his wife DiAnne and their family have grown attached to their forest and cottage in Iron County. They donated conservation easements on over 100 acres of lake front and working forest to the

Northwoods Land Trust. They enjoy fishing, hunting and various outdoor activities throughout the year, and strongly support land conservation here and in Costa Rica.

Big Basin, Big Maps (continued from page 1)

In November, Trust for Public Land mapping experts interviewed land trust and community leaders to inform production of the maps and to learn what has changed for the LMSA members since our first basin-wide mapping endeavor in 2003.

In a November interview in Green Bay, Paul Linzmeyer, an economic development leader, spoke about what a powerful communication tool maps can be. "People are looking for hope, so if we can put a *picture* out there of the opportunities for health benefits, preservation of natural lands, and strong economic vitality of communities then that's where we should be realistically optimistic. . . energy is there for improvement."

At Gathering Waters Conservancy, we're likewise convinced that thanks to these maps and the process of producing them, land trusts are equipped to justify the direct connections between their work, regional economic growth, quality of life and Great Lakes restoration.

Last November, the Environmental Protection Agency announced a request for proposals for \$120 million directed toward the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Agencies and organizations throughout the Great Lakes basin have since been maneuvering to position themselves at that trough, and LMSA is among them. Three years ago, few would expect an all-volunteer land trust to be among the applicants for that kind of federal money. But, LMSA's successes and this mapping effort that paints a picture of land trust work in context of the health of the whole basin, have encouraged municipalities, agencies and business leaders to understand private land conservation as essential to their future and the land trusts as essential partners.

Furthermore, regardless of where the current federal grants are invested, we are convinced that this set of maps is a first step. National, even international attention to the Great Lakes and the Mississippi basins is attracting resources to restoration of the watersheds that every drop in Wisconsin drains into. Pending resources, the current project will become a component of an in-depth, basin wide "Greenprint"—TPL's branded assessment and mapping of detailed community conservation priorities. It may serve as a pilot for similar endeavors in other parts of the state. LMSA has been gaining momentum: whether it's spending federal money, embarking on new partnerships with local governments, or creating a comprehensive "Greenprint" for the whole basin, we at Gathering Waters are looking forward to what's next.

LMSA projects are currently being carried out thanks to grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Joyce Foundation.

Kate Zurlo-Cuva, Land Trust Program Director

Kate Zurlo-Cuva, Kelly Hart from Trust for Public Land, and Kenosha/Racine Land Trust executive director Therese Probst refine a map of the land trust's service area



Honoring Conservation Achievement

On October 1st, Gathering Waters Conservancy held our 7th annual Land Conservation Leadership Awards Celebration. Since our first event in 2003, we have celebrated with over 1,500 attendees.

The Awards Celebration is our opportunity to recognize individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to land conservation in Wisconsin. Each year nominations are submitted to a committee of conservation professionals, and at the event we recognize the deserving winners. This year we were thrilled to honor the achievements of:

Land Trust of the Year – Kinnickinnic River Land Trust

Policymaker of the Year –
Richard Stadelman, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Towns Association

Conservationist of the Year – Lynde B. Uihlein

Harold "Bud" Jordahl Achievement Award –
Paul & Kathy Fairchild, Peter Annin and Ben Logan for their roles in the protection of Seldom Seen Farm



Board and staff of the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust happy to accept the 2009 Land Trust of the Year Award

Since 2003, through this event we have raised over \$25,000 to help people protect Wisconsin's special places. In 2009 we were honored to acknowledge the generosity of our 15th Anniversary Campaign contributors, as well. Thank you to everyone who has helped us continue this celebratory tradition. We hope you make plans to join us for this year's event on September 30, 2010!

Sara DeKok, Member Relations Director

Awards Celebration Host & Lead 15th Anniversary Campaign Contributor

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Our Award Celebration could not happen without generous volunteers.

*Many thanks to:
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An aerial view of lands forever protected thanks to the Door County Land Trust and the Stewardship Fund. Photo by Jeff Davis

Can't Wait for Great Conservation News?

We check the news every day for land conservation headlines, and the biggest news often comes in December as land trusts bring deals to close before the year's end. Last year, the Door County Land Trust completed a deal 6 years in the making: with Stewardship Fund dollars they purchased 332 wild acres in Sturgeon Bay for a public nature preserve. The Mississippi Valley Conservancy accepted their biggest donation to date, 1,129 acres on the Kickapoo River adjacent to State Natural Area. The Glacial Lakes Conservancy emailed us on December 28th to report closing their largest easement yet. Including their 2009 projects, the Northwoods Land Trust topped 5,000 acres including more than 27 miles of protected waterfront...and there's more!

If you'd like to capture all this great news as it comes, you can! We post land trust news on our web page hot off the presses. Conservation headlines are linked to our facebook page (become a fan!) And starting this spring, look for Gathering Waters Conservancy's blog.

We'll keep sending this newsletter, of course, but if you don't want to wait three months for good news about Wisconsin's special places, it's just a click away.



Visit us online. www.gatheringwaters.org