

Protecting
the places
that make
Wisconsin
special.

GATHERING WATERS CONSERVANCY



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' goal is 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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Gathering Waters Conservancy (GWC) had an exciting and productive year in 2001 which was made possible by our members, donors, supporters and land trusts across Wisconsin. Thank you all for contributing to our statewide conservation success!

Gathering Waters Conservancy has made tremendous and measurable progress in achieving our primary goals of helping new land trusts get started and building the capacity, effectiveness and professionalism of existing land trusts across the state; educating, advising and assisting landowners and their families in their efforts to protect their land; and promoting public understanding and public policies that support private land conservation.

The numbers speak for themselves. There are now 45 local and regional land trusts operating in Wisconsin. By the end of 2000, these organizations have protected close to 30,000 acres in communities across the state. This is double the 15,000 acres they had protected as of December 1998. When combined with national organizations, such as The Nature Conservancy, American Farmland Trust, and Trout Unlimited, among others, private, non-profit conservation groups have protected well over 100,000 acres in Wisconsin.

Gathering Waters has played a critical role in helping our member land trusts achieve this level of success. Here are some highlights of Gathering Waters' recent accomplishments:

At the end of 2001, we are in reach of achieving our long-term goal of ensuring land trust coverage across the state. Our vision is that every landowner in Wisconsin will be able to turn to a land trust for assistance and help in protecting his or her land. This past year, Gathering Waters helped launch six new land trusts

from the Northwoods to the Milwaukee area to the Driftless Area in southwest Wisconsin. With our assistance, these groups are off to a great start and are well on their way toward protecting critical lands in their communities. A few gaps in the state remain, and Gathering Waters will focus its efforts next year on setting up new groups or helping existing land trusts expand to include these areas when possible.

Along with direct assistance to landowners and land trusts, Gathering Waters continues to offer dozens of training opportunities and educational workshops around the state. These events are targeted at a range of audiences from land trust staff and volunteers to private landowners, government officials, and professionals in the conservation field, such as attorneys, appraisers, and resources managers (see page four for a complete list of our training events).

Last April, we joined forces with the River Alliance of Wisconsin to host the largest statewide gathering of land trusts and river groups. Over 300 people attended our "Celebrating Community-Based Conservation" conference for three days of seminars, workshops, field trips and a moving keynote address by Senator Gaylord Nelson, founder of Earth Day. Hundreds more attended smaller conferences and workshops throughout 2001.

In addition to our regular training and educational programs, Gathering Waters has adopted innovative strategies for strengthening land trusts in several regions of the state.

GWC has served for several years as the coordinator of the Blufflands Alliance, a network of land trusts that has come together to protect the Mississippi River Bluffs. The Blufflands Alliance involves six land

trusts in four states (including Wisconsin) on both sides of the Mississippi. Together alliance members have protected 13,000 acres of land, all visible from the Mississippi River, and have leveraged millions of dollars for their operations and land protection work.

Based on this experience, Gathering Waters is working with land trusts along the northern shore of Lake Michigan to form the Lake Michigan Alliance. Alliance members will share information and resources, adopt a coordinated strategy for protecting the "best of what remains" within the Lake Michigan basin, and will join forces to build public awareness and raise money to support their work.

In addition, land trusts from Kenosha to Door County will receive one-on-one, intensive assistance from Gathering Waters next year thanks to a grant from the Cavaliere Foundation. Under the program, land trusts will identify their needs through a self-assessment process led by Gathering Waters. Gathering Waters will then help each group address their most urgent needs and achieve their top goals through tailored training, mentoring and assistance.

In the urbanizing area of southeastern Wisconsin, we are bringing together local officials, agency staffs, funders, land trusts, open space advocates and others to adopt coordinated strategies for protecting the region's remaining natural areas. In a 1997 report, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission identified over 600 sites that needed protection. Unfortunately, several of these sites have been irrevocably lost over the past five years. Gathering Waters' goal is stop this trend and see that these sites are permanently protected.

On the policy front, we are proud to report that we achieved our top leg-


islative priority for 2001. By joining forces with our partners in the conservation movement, Gathering Waters and our member land trusts played a critical role in increasing funding for the state Stewardship Fund for land acquisition from \$46 to \$60 million a year offsetting the dramatic escalation of land prices over the last decade.

As a result of the increase, an estimated 50,000 acres more will be protected over the next eight years by the Department of Natural Resources, land trusts and local units of government.

2001 was the year of "partnerships" for Gathering Waters. Developing and strengthening partnerships will continue to be an important part of our efforts. With some 54,000 square miles, the collective efforts of individual citizens, land trusts and other non-profit organizations, working together with government institutions and our elected officials, will be required to protect and manage Wisconsin's great and beautiful landscapes. The challenge to be met is both a personal commitment to land stewardship and a willingness to support collective action to achieve that goal. We owe it to ourselves and especially to those who follow.

Thank you again for your support!

Sincerely,



Vick Elkin
Executive Director



Harold "Bud" Jordahl
President, Board of Directors

JOHN URBAN



BRENT NICASTRO



In March of 2000, the Gathering Waters Conservancy Board of Directors adopted a three-year strategic plan to guide our activities and focus our efforts. We are proud to report that we have made significant and measurable progress toward the five main goals of the plan:

1. **Increase the quality, professionalism and effectiveness of Wisconsin's land trusts.**
2. **Ensure geographic coverage of land trusts in critical parts of the state.**
3. **Promote public understanding and public policies that support private land conservation efforts.**
4. **Protect key properties in parts of the state where no land trusts currently exist.**
5. **Strengthen our organizational capacity to achieve our mission.**

The following is a list of accomplishments from 2001 that have helped us achieve our strategic goals:

Increasing the professionalism and effectiveness of Wisconsin's land trusts

- Partnered with the River Alliance of Wisconsin to host the largest statewide gathering of land trusts and river groups. Our "Celebrating Community-based Conservation" Conference brought together nearly 300 land and water conservationists from around the state for three days of networking, information sharing, workshops, seminars and an inspirational key-note address with Senator Gaylord Nelson, founder of Earth Day. Many participants called it "the best conference they had ever attended."
- Brought together 28 staff members of Wisconsin's land trusts for two days of intensive training, networking and discussions on time management and

how to run an effective land trust.

- Hosted a special free training event for 25 land trust volunteers at Kemp Station on Lake Tomahawk to build leadership skills and teach participants about protecting and managing wildlife habitat and woodlands.
 - Organized a series of regional workshops with nationally-known consultant, Ellis Robinson, on "Building Your Membership." Over 80 people from 45 land trusts and conservation organizations attended the two-day trainings.
 - Hosted "Selection and Protection: A Site Conservation Planning Workshop" to teach land trusts how to strategically identify, target, and manage important lands. Twenty-six land trust staff, volunteers and board members worked in teams over a three-day period to develop sample conservation plans for the Riverland Conservancy's 2000-acre Merrimac Preserve, our case study.
 - Provided accredited training to 20 Attorneys on land trusts, conservation easements and the tax advantages of preserving family lands. These attorneys are now available to assist both land trusts and conservation-minded landowners.
 - Coordinated and provided training to the Blufflands Alliance, an innovative network of land trusts in Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, and Iowa that has protected 13,000 acres of land along the Mississippi Bluffs and leveraged \$10,000,000 collectively for its work.
- #### **Ensuring land trust coverage and building organizational capacity**
- Helped launch six new land trusts operating in each quadrant of the state from the North Woods to the Milwaukee area to the driftless region of southwest Wisconsin.

- Provided six land trusts, 35 DNR staff members and students at the UW-Madison Law School with individualized, one-on-one training on drafting, monitoring and enforcing conservation easements.
- Helped several land trusts develop meaningful strategic plans and annual work plans to guide their work over the next few years.
- Provided low-cost, affordable legal assistance and advice to eight land trusts on conservation easements, land transactions and non-profit law
- Met individually and provided direct support and advice to almost every land trust in the state.
- Responded to hundreds of requests from land trusts, landowners and the general public for information and assistance.
- Maintained an email listserv to encourage and facilitate dialogue between Wisconsin's land trusts.
- Provided land trusts with timely and useful information through our quarterly technical bulletin, Currents.
- Shared model documents and maintained a lending library of books and other resources for land trusts.

Spreading the word about land trusts

- Gave presentations across the state to over 1500 landowners, elected officials, professionals and others on land trusts and opportunities and options for permanently protecting Wisconsin's privately-owned lands and remaining open spaces.
- Authored numerous articles for statewide and local publications, including magazines, organizational newsletters and weekly papers, reaching over 100,000 new readers.
- Received extensive media coverage for Gathering Waters' events and programs, ranging from appearances on Wisconsin Public Radio and local

news shows to articles in almost every major newspaper in the state.

- Provided general education and outreach through appearances and displays at dozens of events, our website (www.gatheringwaters.org), and our popular newsletter, *Crosscurrents*.

Promoting policies to encourage private land conservation and support the critical work of land trusts

- Joined with our partners to achieve our top legislative priority—boosting the state Stewardship Fund for land acquisition from \$46 million to \$60 million per year—resulting in the protection of an additional 50,000 acres of land over the next eight years for the public to enjoy.

- Helped secure over \$7 million in matching grants to non-profit organizations under the Stewardship program (up from \$2.5 million two years ago) enabling land trusts to purchase high-quality lands and conservation easements in their communities.

- Joined with The Nature Conservancy to promote two new tax incentives for conservation—a state capital gains tax exclusion for landowners who sell their land for conservation and a state tax credit of up to \$100,000 (over a total of 10 years) for landowners who donate land or a conservation easement to a land trust or government agency.

- Completed a survey of landowners to determine the impact of conservation easements on property tax assessments in Wisconsin. Based on survey outcomes, Gathering Waters will work to ensure that landowners who protect their land through conservation easements, thereby permanently limiting development of their property, receive appropriate property tax savings.

Protecting Wisconsin's special places and natural treasures

- Entered into an innovative partnership with the Bayfield Regional Conservancy (BRC) to protect over 300 acres of the Northwoods and a beautiful wild lake just outside of Hayward. Under the partnership, Gathering Waters will serve as the back-up holder of an easement held by the BRC and retains the right to enforce the terms of the easement at any time.

- Maintained conservation easements on six properties permanently protecting close to 900 acres and several thousand feet of undeveloped shoreline.

- Advised hundreds of private landowners and their families on opportunities and options for permanently protecting their land, totaling tens of thousands of acres and many miles of shoreline.

- Referred dozens of landowners to local land trusts resulting in the protection of thousands of acres of land.

Site Conservation Planning Workshop participants touring the Riverland Conservancy's Merrimac Preserve.



WISCONSIN'S LOCAL LAND TRUSTS AT A GLANCE

- Number of land trusts: 45
- Total acres protected: 30,000
- Acres owned: 15,325
- Acres under easement: 12,675
- Acres transferred to local government or government agency: 2,000
- Number of dues-paying members: 17,000
- Number of active volunteers: 7,000
- Combined operating budget: \$3,000,000
- Average annual operating budget: \$66,000
- Number of full time staff: 46
- Number of part time staff: 18

“Wisconsin's local land trusts have become a force for conservation in the state, protecting twice as many acres in 2000 as they did in 1998. When combined with older, national groups like The Nature Conservancy and the American Farmland Trust, private, non-profit conservation organizations have protected well over 100,000 acres in Wisconsin.”

—Vicki Elkin, *Gathering Waters Conservancy Executive Director*



The Aldo Leopold Foundation

Working to promote an ethical relationship between people and land, the Aldo Leopold Foundation practices ecological restoration, management, and research on the grasslands, forests, and woodlands of the original Leopold farm. Recognizing, however, the critical role that private property plays in conservation, the Foundation also works to widen circle of stewardship by providing workshops and other training opportunities to landowners, along with programs, which offer technical assistance and manpower. Leadership training and other professional opportunities provided by Gathering Waters have helped our small staff develop skills and strategies to meet the challenges facing the Leopold legacy.



Bayfield Regional Conservancy (BRC)

In mid-December, 305 acres of Northwoods and a beautiful wild lake near Hayward, WI were permanently protected through a conservation easement donated to the Bayfield Regional Conservancy. This easement includes language that

allows for Gathering Waters to step in as a successor holder of the easement in case something prevents the BRC from doing its job. This arrangement allows for an additional layer of oversight by the successor (or back-up) holder to insure the benefits of the easement last forever.



Caledonia Conservancy Ltd.

Founded in 1994, the Caledonia Conservancy is one of the few land trusts in the United States that concentrates on preserving land within a township. To date, we have preserved more than 66 acres in the Town of Caledonia, Racine County. Managed by a volunteer board, the Conservancy focuses on protecting recreational trails for horseback riding and hiking. Our work includes maintaining a trail system that covers more than 20 miles of Conservancy held and privately owned land and advocating with local government for environmentally sound land-use policies. Gathering Waters assists our work by offering training opportunities and technical expertise.



Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation

Beginning January 1, 2002 the Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation will be known as the Natural Heritage Land Trust



During our 2000-2001 fiscal period, the Dane County Natural Heritage

Foundation completed our \$3.1 million dollar Fish Lake project, which will soon be a new 140-acre Dane County park. We also placed 1,024-acres of land into conservation easements in our partnership with the Town of Dunn, facilitated the creation of a 25-acre mixed natural area and recreational park, and protected 80 acres of springs and wetlands located on two vital cold water streams. We rely on Gathering Waters for information and educational opportunities and benefit from their land protection advocacy on the state level.

Door County Land Trust (DCLT)

In 2000 and 2001, the Door County Land Trust preserved more land, 850 acres, and more properties, 18, than at any other time in its 15-year history; bringing the total number of acres protected to nearly 2000. This year DCLT purchased the \$1.3 million Hutter Estate, a 180-acre property along the Niagara Escarpment. In addition, DCLT entered into 16 conservation easement agreements protecting over 600 acres of blufflands, forests, wetlands and open space in Door County. Thanks to Gathering Waters, staff and board of the DCLT have received excellent training in Strategic Planning, Organizational Development, Grant Writing and Stewardship along with opportunities to network and share resources with other land trusts.



Driftless Area Land Conservancy (DALC)

The goal of the Driftless Area Land Conservancy (DALC) is to protect the rural landscape and quality of life in Iowa, Lafayette, Richland, and Sauk Counties. In June of last year, DALC

received its nonprofit status from the IRS. In addition to working with Gathering Waters on organization building, DALC in 2001 was involved in negotiations for three different conservation easements. If negotiations prove successful, one easement will buffer a relic pine forest in a State Natural Area, another will protect open space and preserve a trout stream, and a third will protect open space along the shores of the Pecatonica River.

Geneva Lake Conservancy (GLC)

Supported by over 800 individual members, Geneva Lake Conservancy assists private landowners in Walworth County seeking permanent safeguards for their properties, primarily through conservation easements (over 500 acres are currently protected; easements to protect another 700 acres are under negotiation). GLC also provides advocacy to municipal, township and county governments on land use planning, zoning and development, emphasizing the protection of natural areas. Gathering Waters Conservancy provides GLC with technical assistance and training; serves as a voice for Wisconsin land trusts on statutory and regulatory land stewardship issues at the state government level; and provides regular peer interaction and information exchanges that strengthen our effectiveness.



erty with a tamarack swamp forming part of the western boundary; and a small lake, where osprey and bald eagle were recently observed, along the north boundary. IAPTF has benefited from Gathering Waters' efforts to start new land trusts in areas previously unrepresented. We work with these groups on land protection projects that provide a corridor for the Ice Age Trail and protect a larger area of open space than we could working alone.

Lakeland Conservancy, Inc.

In 2001, Lakeland Conservancy, Inc. obtained the title to a 40-acre property, on which they held an easement, and completed a receiving of logging roads created as a result of storm damage due to high wind storms on conservancy protected property. The Conservancy also received additional grants and donations to enhance the easement preservation trust fund held by the conservancy. Lakeland Conservancy Secretary, Donald Janssen, spoke at a seminar put on by Gathering Waters at the Kemp Natural Resources Station. The conservancy continues to welcome and appreciate information provided by Gathering Waters Conservancy.



recently established the Faville Grove Sanctuary in northwest Jefferson County. MAS has protected 282 acres at Faville Grove including two easement donations of 92 acres from David Musolf and Roger Packard. With over 90 acres of prairie and wetlands already restored in and near the project area, MAS plans to restore an additional 140 acres adjacent to the Faville Prairie State Natural Area, a floodplain prairie that Aldo Leopold worked to preserve. Gathering Waters provides easement information to the landowners and MAS.



Mississippi Valley Conservancy (MVC)

In an unprecedented partnership, Mississippi Valley Conservancy and the City of La Crosse launched the Bluffland Protection Program, in which the City allocated \$200,000 to MVC to purchase lands and easements for conservation, scenic value, and recreation in 2002. MVC also began working with the DNR to acquire a 244-acre bluffland in Grant County. MVC added 526 acres to its Landowner Registry and welcomed Catherine Kolkmeier to the staff as Director of Development and Communications. MVC worked with



Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation (IAPTF)

McKenzie Creek

and the Straight River, in northern Polk County, are two of the jewels along the Ice Age Trail. The Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation (IAPTF) has protected one-third of the three-mile gap between these two awesome places by purchasing a 130-acre prop-



Madison Audubon Society (MAS)

In addition to 473 acres at its Goose Pond Sanctuary and other protected lands in Columbia County, Madison Audubon Society (MAS)



Gathering Waters Conservancy on important legislative efforts to support the DNR Stewardship Program and a proposed state tax incentive program for landowners.



ships in land conservancy and resource management. Working with private property owners, local businesses, other conservation organizations and individuals concerned with the preservation of the Niagara Escarpment and wild shorelines, NEWLT is taking on a more proactive approach to saving land. With nearly 1000 acres and 5 years of experience under our belt, NEWLT is poised to save another thousand acres in 2002! NEWLT is developing local "community-based conservation initiatives" as discussed during the Gathering Waters/River Alliance conference held in Oshkosh in April 2001.

property owners to provide long-term protection to natural areas around their lakes. Gathering Waters Conservancy staff provides technical assistance and materials to help to get the organization up and running and also provides training for the board of directors.



The North Central Conservancy Trust (NCCT)

North Central Conservancy Trust is a relatively new member of the land trust community. This past year most of our board efforts were spent working on a strategic plan with the help of the UW Extension in Portage County. But that didn't slow down our Properties Committee! They checked out several likely properties as easement candidates, finishing the year with two new easements—one in Portage County and the other in Waushara County. Gathering Waters continues to help our group with fundraising ideas, slides, scholarships to a training class at Kemp Station in Tomahawk, and help with research on an executive director.



The Ozaukee Washington Land Trust (OWLTL)

The Ozaukee Washington Land Trust has permanently more than 1,300 acres. Recent projects include a gift of 45 acres of upland and wetland in the Town of Wayne; a donation of a conservation



Northwoods Land Trust (NWLTL)

The Northwoods Land Trust was incorporated in 2001 to promote conservation by private landowners of natural shorelands, woodlands, wetlands and other natural resources. It will target the lake-rich areas of Vilas, Oneida and Forest Counties—which have one of the highest concentrations of inland lakes in the world. The land trust is now beginning to work cooperatively with local lake associations, lake districts and individual lake



The Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust (NEWLT)

Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust's mission is to preserve and restore the natural heritage of northeast Wisconsin's lands and waters through partner-

easement on 36 acres in Hartford; and an acquisition of 88 acres in Trenton. The land purchase, known as Riverbend Farm, protected more than one-mile of shoreline along the Milwaukee River, and we are now working on the preservation of an additional 600 acres. Gathering Waters provided great assistance to us in 2001. Staff attended training workshops and seminars on site conservation planning and on forest and wildlife management. Gathering Waters also facilitated meetings with other land trusts in the region.

restore native communities and improve watershed health. In October 2001, the Merrimac Preserve served as a case study for Gathering Waters' workshop on site conservation planning.

Standing Cedars Community Land Conservancy

Standing Cedars Community Land Conservancy manages 1405 acres of fields and woods along the bluffs abutting the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway corridor. Our property is open to the public, and hunting is permitted, which requires extensive management in order to avoid overcrowding and over harvesting. We also work on restoring the prairie and oak savannas, through controlled burns, seed collecting, seed planting, and weeding. We use no chemicals, so we accomplish our goals through hard work! Gathering Waters has provided us with technical assistance and keeps us up-to-date and in the loop with the land trust community through newsletters and the listserv.

We conserve open lands because we need them in our lives. But we also know that those who come after us will have at least as great a need—for the peace, the discovery, and, yes, sometimes the solace that open places provide.

—Land Trust Alliance President, Jean Hocker from Land Trust Rally 2001



Wisconsin Farmland Conservancy

Wisconsin Farmland Conservancy (WFC)

The Wisconsin Farmland Conservancy,

located in Menomonie, serves fourteen counties in west central Wisconsin. WFC holds conservation easements on 30 properties totaling over 3,500 acres. When a group of landowners along Pine Creek (just south of Maiden Rock, WI) wanted to preserve their high-quality stream and its rare, native population of brook trout, they turned to the WFC for advice and support. Wisconsin Farmland Conservancy's executive director Rick Gauger notes, "Most of the landowners we meet have a 'vision' for their land's future. They use our expertise as a land trust to meet that vision. In turn, we draw upon the knowledge and resources at Gathering Waters Conservancy."



Sponsored by Alliant Energy

Riverland Conservancy

Riverland Conservancy is unique because it was created and is sponsored by a corporation, Alliant Energy, as a commitment to protect and preserve the environment. Its largest holding, the 1,800-acre Merrimac Preserve, is located in south central Wisconsin and includes cold-water streams, wetlands, prairie and oak savanna uplands. Partnerships with conservation organizations and public agencies like Operation Fresh Start, a youth work-and-learn program, and the Wisconsin Conservation Corps have helped provide the expertise, financial support and labor needed to



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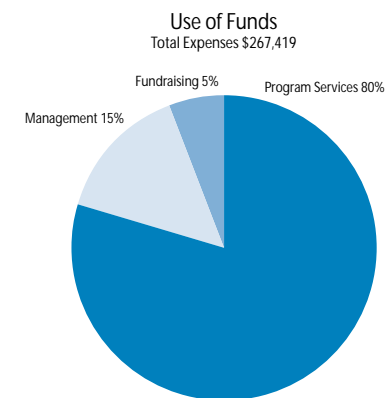
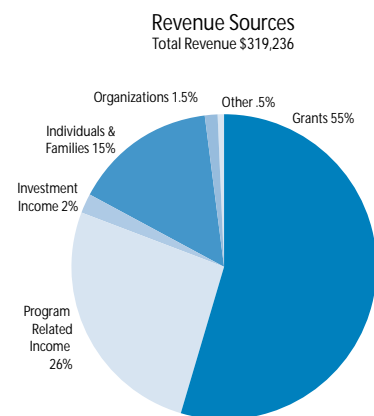
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* Includes donations made
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**YOUR DOLLARS AT WORK
 FINANCIAL SUMMARY
 FY 2001**



We would like to extend a special thank you to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for its leadership and vision in providing critical support to Gathering Waters Conservancy and the land trusts we serve.



Your membership with Gathering Waters Conservancy helps land trusts across Wisconsin. Here, land trusts receive the “Aldo Leopold Award” at GWC’s Site Conservation Planning Workshop.

Become a Member The timing is critical for conserving our remaining open spaces and for protecting the places that make Wisconsin special. People are looking to Wisconsin’s land trust community to save the landscapes we love. And Wisconsin’s land trusts rely on Gathering Waters Conservancy for the support and resources they need to do this critical work. As a member of Gathering Waters Conservancy, you partner in our effort to help land trusts and landowners protect thousands of acres before our remaining natural places disappear.

Double the Impact of Your Donation with an Employer Match If your employer has a matching contribution program, be sure and take advantage to double the impact of your donation.

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Make an In-kind Donation Gathering Waters has a “wish list” of items to help us accomplish our goals. Do you have an older, but functional computer to donate? Office furniture? Contact Gathering Waters Conservancy for more information.

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