We’re being featured on an episode of Discover Wisconsin!
See page 6 for details!

Exploring the wonders of nature with children is the best way to nurture a life-long love of the land around them.

Photo by Mike Carlson
Gathering Waters reached a milestone – with your help!

Last year marked an exciting milestone for Gathering Waters – our 25th Anniversary! Since our founding in 1994, we have made major investments in strengthening Wisconsin’s land trusts and supporting conservation successes.

In the mid-1990s, there were 12 land trusts protecting Wisconsin’s special places. Today, we have more than 40 member land trusts across the state working with landowners and communities to protect and manage thousands of acres of forests, farmland, wetlands, and prairies.

We support our land trust members by advocating for public funding for conservation, through training and technical assistance, and by promoting the value of land and water protection.

During our 25th year, I reflected on all that you have helped us accomplish. Because of your generous support:

• Wisconsin’s elected officials pledged to fund land and water protection by supporting renewal of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program (see page 4);
• Land trusts are better positioned for strategic, collaborative conservation (meet Charlie Carlin on page 3);
• You and others who value Wisconsin land, water, and wildlife are armed with effective advocacy tools (see page 5); and
• More people went outside, connected with the land, and had good old-fashioned fun during Wisconsin Land Trust Days (see page 6).

Our 2020 plans build on the successes you’ve made possible. If you have questions about how your support makes a difference, please reach out at anytime.

Wishing you a warm and nature-filled transition into spring.

Mike Carlson, Executive Director

PS: I’m excited as I look forward to the rest of 2020. With your support, I know we’ll have some amazing things to share with you in the months ahead. Until then, take a look back at all you helped us do in 2019.
Join us as we welcome new team members and bid farewell to a long-time leader!

A warm welcome…

Charles Carlin, Director of Strategic Initiatives, began as our Conservation Communications Fellow during the last academic year. He finished his PhD in August and joined Gathering Waters full time. Charlie brings deep knowledge and passion for protecting Wisconsin’s land and water resources. He is focusing on our advocacy efforts, finding collaborative conservation opportunities for our land trusts, and developing our mapping and Geographic Information System (GIS) capacity. Congratulations, Charlie!

Creal Zearing, Associate Director of Development, started working with Gathering Waters this January, fulfilling her goal of returning to a career in environmental work. Creal oversees annual giving, membership, grants, major giving, and corporate sponsorships. Before joining our team, Creal worked at the Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association, the Aldo Leopold Nature Center, and taught outdoor environmental education in Minnesota. Creal brings valuable skills to our team. Welcome, Creal!

Kira Regner, Outreach and Development Intern, joined Gathering Waters in August 2019. Kira is a senior at UW–Madison pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Community and Nonprofit Leadership. Her experience as the president of UW–Madison's American Cancer Society's Relay for Life gives Kira valuable hands-on fundraising experience. Kira assists with fundraising, outreach, and provides support to the staff. We’re thankful for her assistance.

A Fond Farewell…

Mindy Petersen, our former Development & Outreach Director, recently joined the ranks of the Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association as the new UW–Law School Director of Development. During her 11 year career with Gathering Waters, she led our fundraising efforts and helped raise millions of dollars to support land protection in Wisconsin. Mindy began the latest chapter of her professional career in January, 2020. We will miss her very much—and wish her all the best as she embarks on her new fundraising adventure.

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Learn more about our Board Members at: gatheringwaters.org/board

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Cathy Hart, Office Manager
Patricia McMurtrie, Communications Specialist
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Lindsey Ketchel, Landmark Conservancy
Trisha Moore, Northwoods Land Trust
Linda Muschler, Cedar Lakes Conservancy Foundation
Tom Stolp, Ozaukee Washington Land Trust
Kevin Thuisius, Ice Age Trail Alliance
Jim Welsh, Groundswell Conservancy
Bur Zeratsky, Green Lake Conservancy

Learn more about the Council at: gatheringwaters.org/council
Where can you fit into advocacy discussions?

It depends on the role you play and the influence you have related to an issue. The important thing is to get involved and make your voice heard.

**GRASSROOTS ADVOCATES**

are people who care deeply about an issue, want to take action, but may not have direct connections or relationships with elected officials. Together, they represent a large, strong community voice.

**GRASSTOPS ADVOCATES**

have close relationships with elected officials or have positions of influence on an issue. Board members, community leaders, and experts often know policymakers directly. Grasstops advocates focus attention on the issues and act as messengers between the public and policymakers.

You helped secure another $66 million in state funding to protect land and water in Wisconsin

With your support in 2019, Gathering Waters invested in a three-tiered advocacy campaign to renew funding for Wisconsin’s Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

With the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program on the line—and a Governor and Legislature that didn’t often see eye-to-eye—it was critical for our supporters to get involved and tell their lawmakers that 9 out of 10 Wisconsinites favor funding for land conservation.

Your support allowed us to create an effective “Grassroots” advocacy network. We provided our member land trusts with the tools and materials they needed to make it easy for people to communicate with policymakers with the click of a mouse. Because of your support, Wisconsin legislators received over 6,000 letters and 1,100 phone calls from Wisconsinites concerned about land protection.

Gathering Waters also focused on “Grasstops” advocacy. To make the most of personal relationships and other contacts with elected officials, we:

- retained professional lobbyists to act as our eyes and ears in the Capitol;
- connected influential community leaders directly with legislators; and
- sent our leadership around the state to meet with key decision-makers.

We helped organize over 40 meetings at local district offices and in the Capitol.

The third tier of our strategy brought together a coalition of over 50 organizations, including land trusts, conservation partners, businesses, and government agencies—representing hunting, fishing, forestry, conservation, local governments, recreation, and business interests. Together, the coalition partners signed onto a strong letter of support for the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program that we delivered directly to the Legislature.

Because of your support, lawmakers heard how important land and water protection is in our state.
Your support made these statewide efforts possible—and the impact is huge!

Because of your support of our advocacy efforts in the last state budget, Governor Evers and the Wisconsin Legislature agreed to renew the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program for another two years. That means the State of Wisconsin is committed to invest another $66 million in land and water protection.

THANK YOU!

Now, we must make sure that state funding for land and water protection doesn’t stop after two years. **Believe it or not, we need to start advocating again** as the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program will be on the line in the next state budget.

**Will you continue supporting the statewide efforts being made to protect Stewardship?**

Please visit TeamKnowlesNelson.org and request updates on this critical state funding program. **And please consider making an additional contribution, today.**

**Why Team Knowles Nelson?**

Team Knowles Nelson is our statewide network supporting the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

Thousands of people have joined the team to advocate for this vital source of funding, which has provided millions of dollars used by Wisconsin’s Department of Natural Resources, local governments, land trusts, and other non-profits to:

- Protect our water and air quality
- Provide wildlife habitat
- Support jobs and local economies
- Promote outdoor recreation and a healthy quality of life

**Discover Wisconsin** will feature Wisconsin Land Trust Days in its June 13, 2020 episode.

Mark your calendars and be sure to watch the highlights from four Wisconsin Land Trust Days events:

- **Ride to the Barns**
  - Tall Pines Conservancy
- **Yawkey Reserve Paddle Tour**
  - Northwoods Land Trust
- **Hiking, Growing, & Gazing**
  - Mississippi Valley Conservancy
- **The Fungus Among Us**
  - Door County Land Trust

The broadcast is sure to encourage more people to #HaveFunOutside.

You helped connect people to nature

Because of your support, nearly 2,000 people got outside in August and September, 2019 connected with the land, and had some good old-fashioned fun during Wisconsin Land Trust Days!

With over 30 events and activities to choose from throughout the state—including paddling, star-gazing, picnics, biking, celebrations, hikes, and even art-themed opportunities—there was something for everyone! We are looking forward to having fun outside in 2020. Won’t you join us?
Want a copy of the Wisconsin Land Trust Days Calendar mailed to you in 2020?
Visit gatheringwaters.org/WLTDCalendar and enter your email and/or mailing address. We’ll make sure you get the calendar of events for next year.

Have fun outside all year long!
Wisconsin land trusts host events and activities all year long—not just during Land Trust Days. Visit gatheringwaters.org/events to find opportunities that interest you.

Visit @WisconsinLandTrustDays Facebook page to see more photos. Follow the page for notifications about 2020 events.
Many people appreciated the opportunity to work in small, breakout sessions during the conference, sharing experiences, information, and ideas.

You helped strengthen Wisconsin land trusts

Your support helps provide training, education, and professional development opportunities to staff and board members of Wisconsin’s land trusts. This is important because land trusts are the nonprofit organizations acquiring, restoring, maintaining, and protecting land and waters throughout Wisconsin. Your support makes them stronger, more sustainable organizations, well-equipped to do their work.

Gathering Waters’ annual Wisconsin Land Trust Conference is an unparalleled opportunity for land trust leaders to learn from industry experts and to network with their peers.

During the 2019 Conference held at the Green Lake Conference Center, participants delved into succession planning and learned about tools and resources to meet many of today’s land conservation challenges, from grassroots advocacy, to story maps, and framing the conversation about climate change.
Attendees enjoyed interactive learning opportunities, storytelling sessions, and took time for a little fun during the 2019 Wisconsin Land Trust Conference.

“ Newtonsoft Moore
Northwoods Land Trust

“I wrote on the side of my notebook during a session, ‘I. Am. Happy. Here.’ I guess that says it all!”
– Cindy Becker
Driftless Area Land Conservancy

“My head (and heart) are overflowing. So much knowledge. Sharing. Good food. New ideas...real ways we can incorporate these ideas into our work! Relationship building...being around some pretty great people!”
– Trisha Moore
Northwoods Land Trust

What people are saying:

Thank you to the Sponsors of the 2020 Wisconsin Land Trust Conference

Visit gatheringwaters.org/conference to read about this year’s program.

If strengthening land trusts is something you value, please consider sponsoring the 2020 Wisconsin Land Trust Conference!

Send your gift in the enclosed envelope or visit gatheringwaters.org/conference
The 2019 Land Conservation Leadership Awards Celebration featured a beautiful evening attended by conservation leaders and supporters from all over Wisconsin. Attendees enjoyed refreshments, networking, door prizes, a raffle, and of course, an inspirational ceremony, which recognized and celebrated the very deserving honorees:

You helped celebrate and recognize conservation leaders

**Land Trust of the Year — Landmark Conservancy**, serves 20 counties in western and northwestern Wisconsin, and was born from a 2018 merger between two nationally-accredited land trusts—West Wisconsin Land Trust and Bayfield Regional Conservancy. Landmark Conservancy is a beautiful example of what teamwork and collaboration can achieve. Everything the organization does to protect and preserve clean water, healthy soils, wildlife habitat, sustainable food sources, and natural spaces, is worth honoring and celebrating.

**Conservationists of the Year — Chambers Island Nature Preserve Executive Committee**
is made up of four special individuals who care deeply about Door County’s Chambers Island: Barbara Frank, Suzanne Fletcher, Mary Jane Rintelman, and Mary Brevard. Together, they set out to create a thousand-acre preserve, protecting this truly unique ecological gem. With a clear vision, a plan, and unmatched resolve, they demonstrated their commitment and leadership. By the end of 2019, nearly 850 acres will have been permanently protected as a direct result of their extraordinary efforts.

Photos by Althea Dotzour Photography
Harold “Bud” Jordahl Lifetime Achievement Award — Ben Niemann of Sawyer County has been improving conservation practices and outcomes in Wisconsin for over 50 years. He was a true pioneer in using technology to guide our conservation decision-making. Using his background as a landscape architect and as Director of the Land Information and Computer Graphic Facility, Niemann harnessed the power of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to inform decisions about land use, planning, and conservation. The application of these technologies has preserved innumerable acres throughout the state, including most notably, the establishment of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway.

Land Legacy Award — The Yawkey Lumber Company of Onieda County made an incredible gift in 2018. Company shareholders, all great-grandchildren of the late Cyrus C. Yawkey, donated 431 acres to Northwoods Land Trust. The property includes woodlands, wetlands, islands, sensitive wildlife habitat, and 4.4 miles of shoreline on scenic Lake Katherine in the town of Hazelhurst. The total appraised value of the property was over $12 million at the time of the donation, resulting in one of the most valuable and sizable outright gifts of land to a land trust in Wisconsin history. This property’s natural shorelines and old-growth forests will now be protected and available for people to explore and enjoy for generations to come.

Harold “Bud” Jordahl Lifetime Achievement Award — Bryan Pierce of northern Wisconsin built a lasting conservation legacy throughout Vilas, Oneida, Forest, Florence, Iron, Price, and Langlade counties. He founded the Northwoods Land Trust in 2001 and went on to lead the organization for 18 years before retiring in 2019. His approach centered on sustainability, community cooperation, long-term thinking, and integrity—all resulting in the protection of over 13,000 acres of forestland and 70 miles of shoreline throughout the seven counties.

To learn more about the 2019 award winners, visit gatheringwaters.org/awards
every drop counts

Large or small, every donation to Gathering Waters in 2019 helped protect land and water in Wisconsin. Your dollars helped lay a strong foundation for the 2019 state budget battle; strengthen land trusts; connect people to nature; and celebrate the conservation work and dedication of volunteers, professionals, and philanthropists.

THANK YOU!
Fiscal Year 2019 Overview

Net Assets

<table>
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<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net assets available for future operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Endowment fund (to support internships)</td>
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<td><strong>Total Net Assets</strong></td>
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Unrestricted Revenue

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grants and contracts</td>
<td>$ 428,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions from individuals &amp; businesses</td>
<td>337,094</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contributions from land trusts</td>
<td>67,241</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conference &amp; event registrations</td>
<td>14,550</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investment income</td>
<td>35,314</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Unrestricted Revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>$882,524</strong></td>
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Total Expenses $786,153

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<th>Category</th>
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<td>Education and outreach</td>
<td>$ 198,805</td>
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<tr>
<td>Land trust services</td>
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<td>Policy &amp; government relations</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
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<td>Management &amp; general</td>
<td>59,610</td>
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<td>Program development</td>
<td>15,540</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

You help make sure Wisconsin is a healthier place for people to live, work, and play.
The love of beautiful, natural places brought joy to Dr. G. Stanley Custer and his wife, Violet. Together, they passed on this love to their children and have created a lasting legacy of land conservation here in Wisconsin.

Dr. G. Stanley Custer (Stan) was born and raised in Madison. Early in life, the outdoors captivated him—the area lakes luring him with the promise of sailing, ice boating, and swimming.

Stan graduated from Madison Central High School, and later received a medical degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His medical career then took him to Marshfield, where he joined Marshfield Clinic to practice internal medicine. While there, he met and married the love of his life—and lifelong fishing partner—Violet (Vi), who grew up on a farm in central Wisconsin.

Together, they raised three children and taught them to love the outdoors. As a family, they fished in Northwoods lakes, hiked scenic trails, and went on camping trips too numerous to count. When Stan brought home pheasant and grouse from a day in the field, Vi would prepare a feast for her family. Along the way, their children learned how to appreciate the wildlife and the wild places Wisconsin had to offer. Stan and Vi loved nature. They loved Wisconsin. And their love of the outdoors was contagious.

Sadly, Vi passed in 1999, and Stan died 6 months later, but their legacy lived on. At that time, the family started a charitable remainder trust in Stan’s name. Two decades later, in December 2019, Steve Custer, Stan and Vi’s son and trustee, called Gathering Waters. The family wanted to honor their mom and dad by donating the remaining funds to an organization that stands for the things their parents loved most—conserving nature and sustaining Wisconsin’s way of life.

“I chose Gathering Waters because your mission reflects their love of natural places in Wisconsin; the place where they grew up, married, raised a family, traveled, and recreated,” said Steve Custer.

We are honored and grateful that Steve chose Gathering Waters. We are committed to protecting the places that make Wisconsin special and to ensuring that Wisconsin’s land trust community remains strong and vibrant so families today and, in the future, can grow up loving nature and enjoying Wisconsin’s great outdoors.
LOOKING FORWARD IN 2020

What kind of a legacy will you leave?
For many, their legacy is introducing the next generation to all the wonders of wildlife and plants while sharing a love and appreciation of nature.
For some, legacy includes making a regular monthly gift to support conservation. Others define legacy as a distribution from an IRA.
And, for still others, it means planning to leave a gift through their estate to live on in their name or the name of a loved one.
No matter your legacy, your love of Wisconsin’s land, water, and wildlife makes an important difference!
We can only protect land and water in Wisconsin because of the gifts of our faithful supporters, like you.

If you want to learn more about leaving a legacy of land protection in Wisconsin, call Creal Zearing, Associate Director of Development at 608-251-9131 x18.

You helped raise a strong, unified voice and made an impact
Not only did the legislature fund the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program for two more years, but you also made an impact on our legislators.
Two legislative champions introduced a stand-alone bill to extend the Stewardship Program until 2030. This bill is helping build momentum as we head into the next state budget, which is less than a year away.
We need your voice as we fight for the Stewardship Program again in 2021.

Sign up & Join Today
TeamKnowlesNelson.org
Stay up-to-date on public policies and funding for land and water protection in Wisconsin. You’ll receive alerts when you need to take action.

Key dates to remember

Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day
April 22, 2020

Nominate a Land Conservation Leader by May 1, 2020
This year’s awards will be presented to honorees at local events around the state.
Learn more at gatheringwaters.org/nominate

Watch Discover Wisconsin’s Land Trust Days Episode
June 13, 2020

Attend Wisconsin Land Trust Days events in August and September
We’ll post the 2020 Calendar of events online in June at HaveFunOutside.org
If you’ve ever wished you could do more...

...to help protect the land, water, wildlife, and way of life that make Wisconsin so special, this is your chance.

Your donation today will help:

Secure government funding, providing millions of dollars to land trusts;

Provide tools, resources, and educational opportunities for land trust staff and board members; and

Increase statewide awareness of the opportunities and benefits land trusts bring to the communities they serve.

PLEASE USE THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN WISCONSIN TODAY, OR, VISIT GATHERINGWATERS.ORG/DONATE