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Photo by Gil Gribb



gathering waters conservancy

LEAPing Ahead with our Services to Land Trusts

Our 2010 strategic planning process affirmed that our work helping land trusts achieve excellence is both timely and important. To fulfill this work, we set new goals for our services to land trusts and created the **Land Trust Excellence & Advancement Program (LEAP)**. We teamed up with the Land Trust Alliance, the national organization working to strengthen land trusts, and launched this coordinated, intensive three-year program at our Land Trust Retreat in February.

LEAP will provide land trust staff and board members with the knowledge and organizational capacity that perpetual conservation demands. We want to help Wisconsin land trusts become an even stronger network of high-performing, sustainable community institutions, and LEAP will help us get there.

What will LEAP bring to Wisconsin Land Trusts?

Gathering Waters and the Land Trust Alliance Midwest Program have worked in parallel to strengthen land trust work in Wisconsin for many years. With LEAP we're coordinating our complementary services, and by doing so, channeling more financial resources to Wisconsin land trusts.

We've designed LEAP with input and insight from Wisconsin land trusts. To support the program we have approached funders, asking for significant investments in our land trust community.

What's next for LEAP?

Our goal is land trust excellence and LEAP programming is not prescriptive. Program design is an ongoing task that will remain responsive to the evolving needs of the diverse group of land trusts operating in Wisconsin.

Specifically, through next year, we will be working with six land trusts who applied for a customized suite of services. This portion of the LEAP program requires dedication by board and staff and a demonstrated capacity to sustain a long-term improvement effort. These land trusts are:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Green Lake Conservancy Foundation | Natural Heritage Land Trust |
| Ice Age Trail Alliance | Northwoods Land Trust |
| Kettle Moraine Land Trust | Ozaukee Washington Land Trust |

We'll announce another round of customized services applications later this year and our universal trainings and workshops for all Wisconsin land trusts are ongoing.

For more information regarding LEAP services, including upcoming training opportunities, visit the LEAP page on our website. You may also contact Kate Zurlo-Cuva at kate@gatheringwaters.org or Mary Kay O'Donnell of the Land Trust Alliance at mkodonnell@lta.org.

LEAP Universal services in the coming year will include:

- Peer to Peer mentoring
- Facilitated regional collaboration among land trusts and partners
- Local and statewide trainings on advocacy, as well as, on tax benefits for land trust projects
- New online resources for land trust work on our website along with webinars from experts in the field
- Ongoing one-on-one support from Gathering Waters and Alliance staff, including preparation for applications to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission
- Comprehensive organizational assessments
- Capacity-building grants for land trusts

We are thankful to the following organizations for their support of LEAP:

- The C.S. Mott Foundation
- The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
- The Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation
- The Forest County Potawatomi Foundation
- The McKnight Foundation
- The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Wisconsin Energy Foundation

Gathering Waters Conservancy's mission is to help land trusts, landowners and communities 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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- Eric Schumann • *Caledonia Conservancy*

From the Executive Director's Desk...



I read a statistic recently that caught my eye. A survey of 4,000 U.S. journalists revealed that 71% of them have a list of blogs that they check on a regular basis. I don't think I was surprised as much as I was reminded how much the world has changed. The fact that the ways we communicate are changing is very old news...what has become clear, and I suppose news, is that we've now crossed an important threshold.

It's clear that to be most relevant in the public sphere you need to be active with the various tools that comprise "social media." Wikipedia defines social media as, "media for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable communication techniques. Social media is the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into interactive dialogue." I still believe "old media" is valuable. I'm of the generation that enjoys opening a real newspaper every morning. I don't think that newspapers, magazines, newsletters, or the handwritten card will ever disappear. In fact, here at GWC, we remain committed to the continued publication of *CrossCurrents* and our other printed communications. That said, we know they aren't enough.

It took some time to convince me (thanks to Pam

Foster-Felt, GWC's former outreach director, for keeping up the pressure) but Gathering Waters Conservancy recently invested significant time and resources in updating our communication tools, including our website and our e-mail communication methods.

This update has required our staff to think differently about the type and timing of communication that is valuable to our individual members, our land trust members, the general public, and the media. I think we've made great strides but I know we still have much room for improvement as we learn the potential in these new tools. As always, we'd appreciate your feedback.

We're hopeful that these new tools, used in concert with our tried and true outreach methods, will help us to most efficiently execute our mission to help people protect the places that make Wisconsin special by making land trusts stronger. Clearly, the three program legs of our strategic plan—direct services to land trusts, public policy advocacy, and outreach—are all best accomplished when we use the most effective communication tools.

If you're like me, I hope that you continue to enjoy finding our newsletter in your mailbox and that it remains on your coffee table for a few days. But I also hope that you visit our website for up-to-the-minute conservation news, and while you're there, sign up for our email list for periodic event notices and public policy alerts. And if you're among the growing population of blog enthusiasts, or even new to the blogosphere like me, check us out at www.wisconsinlandtrusts.org. Thank you for all you do to help protect the places that make Wisconsin special.



Michael Strigel, Executive Director

Board Member Profile

Shawn Graff has served on GWC's Board since 2005 and is the Executive Director of the Ozaukee Washington Land Trust. He previously served as Executive Director of the Pabst Mansion and Wisconsin Heritage in Milwaukee and Curator of Education for the Paine Art Center and Arboretum in Oshkosh, acquiring over 30 years of experience in areas of historic preservation, fundraising, and non-profit management. Shawn is involved in several Wisconsin organizations, including serving as Chairperson of the Slinger Preservation Committee and Past President of the Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation. When asked about what work with Gathering Waters drives him he responded, "I'm most proud of my work as Chair of the GWC Policy Committee and the great success we've had. GWC has developed a wonderful and effective policy team lead by a talented staff." When not working statewide to protect the historic and beautiful places that make Wisconsin special, he can be found tending his own garden or leading a volunteer workday at one of Ozaukee Washington Land Trust's sites.



Advocating for Strong Conservation Policies: An Update on Stewardship and PACE

Our government relations program has been extremely active in recent months. We have been meeting with legislators, engaging and informing the land trust community, and working with a coalition of organizations to advocate for our top public policy priorities—the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program and the statewide Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) Program.

Prior to the November elections, we worked hard to inform all of the major candidates for governor and many legislative candidates about the importance of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program and the statewide PACE Program. Since the election, we have reached out to the new agency and legislative leadership to ensure that Gathering Waters Conservancy and the land trust community are part of any discussion regarding the future of Stewardship and PACE. Through all of these meetings, we reiterated the message that the Stewardship Program and the PACE Program provide significant benefits to Wisconsin, and that the programs enjoy broad public support.

Our legislative strategy has involved meetings with nearly every member of the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee, as well as, many other key legislators. We have done several of these meetings "in-district" with land trust leaders. For example, we attended a meeting with Senator Sheila Harsdorf and Dale Jorgenson from the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust, and a meeting with Representative Robin Vos and Eric Schumann from the Caledonia Conservancy. We also attended a meeting with the President of the Green Lake Conservancy, Bur Zeratsky, and Senator Randy Hopper.

The Tall Pines Conservancy and Gathering Waters Conservancy co-hosted an event for Senator Neal Kedzie. Our ability to facilitate this linkage between legislators and our land trust leaders has been one of our most effective strategies.

We have also been working with broader coalitions of organizations on both Stewardship and PACE. In terms of Stewardship, we have met with organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, Trout Unlimited, the Wisconsin Towns Association, Waukesha County Parks, and the Wisconsin County Forest Association, among others. For PACE, we have continued our partnership with the American Farmland Trust (AFT) to coordinate advocacy efforts and engage a coalition of agricultural and conservation organizations. One of the most important components of this strategy has been the coordination of a Friends of PACE group that includes land trust representatives, individual farmers, representatives from agricultural advocacy organizations, conservation groups, and others. In addition, we have been able to keep over 2,000 people who have shown interest in PACE informed over email.

By the time that you are reading this issue of *CrossCurrents*, we will know more about the outcome of the state budget process and the status of the Stewardship Program and the PACE Program. For the latest news and information on our efforts and the outcome of the state budget, please visit our blog at www.wisconsinlandtrusts.org or the Conservation Policy section of our website. You can also contact Government Relations Director Mike Carlson at carlson@gatheringwaters.org or 608-251-9131 x13.



Hiking the Table Bluff Segment of the Ice Age Trail. Photo by Althea Dotzour.

Greenseams: Innovating and Investing in Wisconsin's Landscapes

In 2001, growing concern over wetlands loss and dramatic property damage prompted the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) to change the way they looked at structural and natural water management issues. MMSD, in partnership with The Conservation Fund (TCF), created an innovative new program called Greenseams.

Greenseams functions by targeting undeveloped privately-owned land along lakes and rivers, as well as in areas that are projected to experience expansive growth in the near future. The preserved lands contain important water absorbing soils that hold and slowly release rainwater and snowmelt, slowing the flow downstream.

David R. Grusznski is the Program Manager at the Milwaukee Field Office of The Conservation Fund. He sees Greenseams as the "perfect example of using nature as a tool for stormwater management and how wastewater utilities partnering with land trusts are able to assemble a successful regionally based green infrastructure program."

Over the past 10 years, Greenseams has protected more than 2,250 acres across 5 Wisconsin watersheds. Greenseams has been an essential tool, along with the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, for projects like the River Revitalization Foundation's Beer Line Trail in Milwaukee. Congratulations to MMSD on the success of this unique and vital program.

Photo by Kevin Thusius

Save the Date!

Rally 2011: The National Land Conservation Conference

October 13–16 • Milwaukee, WI
Register online: www.lta.org/rally

Land Trust Alliance Rally: A Not-to-Miss Learning Opportunity

We're proud that the Land Trust Alliance, our partner in LEAP (details on page 1), has brought their national conference to our backyard on October 13-16, 2011 at the Frontier Airlines Center in Milwaukee.

Gathering Waters is a member of this year's host committee and a conference sponsor. Rally is an opportunity to take advantage of the more than 300 seasoned land conservation professionals serving as Rally faculty. Packed with workshops, in-depth seminars, field trips, and special events, Rally is the place to get the answers land trusts and their partners need to accomplish the best possible land protection ensured in perpetuity.

This annual conference is the signature event for the Land Trust Alliance, a national conservation organization that works to save the places people love by increasing the pace, enhancing the quality, and ensuring the permanence of conservation. Registration is open online at www.lta.org/rally.



Jerry Goth and Lee Swanson describe Swamplovers' work protecting the trail. Photo by Althea Dotzour.

Landowner Profile: The Swamplovers Foundation

This spring we co-hosted our Land Legacy Gathering (details on page 7) with the Ice Age Trail Alliance and hiked the Table Bluff Segment. This segment interprets the edge of the Driftless Area, where limestone bluffs loom above valleys and glacial meltwaters deposited sand and gravel. This segment runs through the 433-acre tract owned by Swamplovers, Inc. and traverses wetlands, prairies, agricultural fields, oak savannas, and oak woodlands.

The Swamplovers property is a project started nearly 30 years ago by Joe Kuehn and Lee Swanson to preserve hunting lands. Swamplovers was a name that the late Joe Kuehn came up with to capture the eccentricities of the owners. Since then, large-scale management has been implemented on the property to restore and enhance forested, prairie remnant, and wetland areas using prescribed fire, among other intensive methods of restoration.

After many years of working to improve the preserve for hunting and recreational opportunities as well as countless hours and nearly \$1 million of investments, the partners entered into a conservation easement agreement with the Ice Age Trail Alliance. The Swamplovers Foundation was initiated to support the ongoing maintenance of the preserve by current members Tom Kuehn, Jerry Goth, and Lee Swanson.

Some of the Swamplovers themselves were on hand at our event to attest to the tremendous legacy they have created. Their dedication to the preservation of the land as well as the ongoing investment to stewardship ensure the permanent protection of the preserve for current and future generations, and make the Swamplovers truly unique and innovative conservation leaders in the state.



July Cuva Kraft

The Next Generation of Conservation Leaders

We are very happy to announce the latest addition to the Gathering Waters family. On November 16th, Kate Zurlo-Cuva and her husband, Jeremy, welcomed their first child, July Cuva Kraft. He's an incredibly happy boy and spends most of his time sleeping and growing. After some well-deserved time away, we're very glad to have Kate back in the office!



Terrence McCormick, Chair of the Baraboo Range Preservation Foundation, shares a thought at the Land Trust Retreat while Wendy McCalvy of Caledonia Conservancy and Erin Heskett of the Land Trust Alliance look on.

A Banner Year for the Land Trust Community

Last summer when we selected northeast Wisconsin for our land trust retreat, we didn't dream it would be the largest draw and most enthusiastically attended event we've ever held for land trusts. Indeed, we're proud that this year brought land trust leaders from all corners of the state to learn from each other and experts in the field.

More than 75 participants bundled up and journeyed to Titledown Brewery in Green Bay. The docket was full of sessions that made it worth the trip for the 24 land trusts represented. Gathering Waters staff, along with speakers from the Land Trust Alliance, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Land Trust, the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, and the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point presented programs on:

- Calculating the costs for ongoing stewardship of protected lands
- Using GIS to initiate and grow partnerships in land conservation
- Keeping records in perpetuity
- Setting up conservation endowments for land trusts
- The latest from the DNR staffers on the Stewardship Program
- A few examples of some land management programs from around the state

And, since it's not a GWC event without some fun, we took advantage of the weather and went snow tubing, made a few brewery visits, and gave out awards in the spirit of the great Vince Lombardi. We're excited to harness the momentum of a banner year at the next statewide get-together this fall for the Land Trust Alliance's national Rally in Milwaukee (see page 4)!



Representatives from Natural Heritage Land Trust, Ice Age Trail Alliance, Mississippi Valley Conservancy, Green Lake Conservancy Foundation, Door County Land Trust, and others participate in a session at the Land Trust Retreat in February.

Thanks to all of the sponsors who made our 2011 Land Trust Retreat possible!

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Planning Our Way Forward

As part of our direct services to land trusts, Gathering Waters Conservancy has led many organizations through strategic organizational planning. For those of us who love the on-the-ground conservation aspect of land trust work, the prospect of strategic planning might not be why we got involved in the land trust community. However, we believe that revisiting an organization's purpose, direction, and the way in which it works is an invaluable practice that all organizations should undertake every few years.

Last year GWC committed to walking the walk and underwent our own strategic planning process—culminating in a new plan approved by our Board of Directors in January. The process was both affirming and challenging, and produced a plan that we believe will elevate the value of our services to Wisconsin's land trusts—and ultimately result in more strategically-chosen, permanently-protected land in Wisconsin. Highlights from the plan that will guide our work over the next three years include:

The development of Wisconsin's Land Trust Excellence and Advancement Program (LEAP), a program that offers land trusts enhanced, direct services that promote organizational sustainability and strategic land protection (see program details on page 1).

A commitment to continue to promote public policies that benefit private land conservation, including the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program and the Working Lands Initiative.



Gathering Waters Conservancy's Board of Directors met last July for a strategic planning retreat and toured property protected by Green Lake Conservancy.

The utilization of our expanded outreach toolbox (e.g. a new website, blog, e-communication resources, etc.) to more efficiently and effectively communicate the value of, and increase support for, land trust work statewide.

To read GWC's new strategic plan in its entirety, visit our website www.gatheringwaters.org/about-us/strategic-plan/

A special thank you to all of the board members, advisors, and friends of GWC who participated in the planning process!

Learning From Our Supporters

Thank you to everyone who filled out our 2011 Member Survey. With the recent approval of our new strategic plan, we have been investing in the development of new and enhanced forms of communications in order to more effectively (and economically) communicate with you, our members and supporters. By answering a few questions about our programming and communications, we have been able to improve our strategies to strengthen Wisconsin's land trust community.

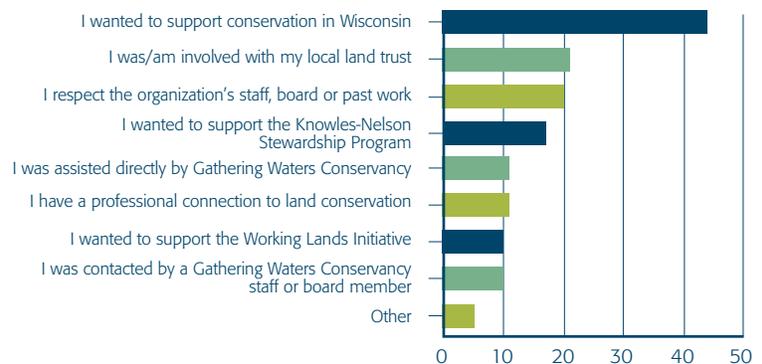
Overwhelmingly, our members told us they belonged to their local land trust and were motivated to support Gathering Waters and other environmental groups by a desire to preserve the land and natural resources for future generations. We heard from people across the state about the need to protect areas like the Mead Wildlife Area and Interstate State Park. You told us that these special places are essential as much for their sheer beauty as for their accessibility and the quality of life they provide.

Throughout the responses, there was a consistent message that the challenges you identified align very well with some of our strongest qualities. It was clear that changing political attitudes toward conservation and the ever-present budget concerns were on people's minds. We heard that Gathering Waters would need to make use of its statewide reach and role as a strong advocate for policies affecting land trusts. You made it known that the changes in land trust funding and incentives will make our job harder, but also more important. Because of this, our ability to bring together many diverse interests to support common goals is needed now more than ever.

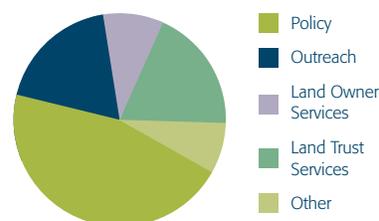
We appreciate your survey feedback and welcome your comments at any time. To provide input on our programming and communications, please contact our office.

A Sampling of Results From Our Latest Member Survey

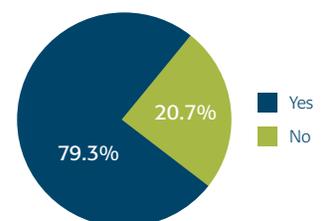
What motivated you to make your first contribution to Gathering Waters Conservancy?



Which of the following Gathering Waters Conservancy program areas is the most important to you?



Are you a member of your local land trust?



Gathering to Grow

On April 30th, we hosted our 4th annual Land Legacy Gathering in partnership with the Ice Age Trail Alliance (IATA). Every year we jointly host the Land Legacy Gathering with a land trust to provide our members with an opportunity to see the ultimate results of their support of Gathering Waters. This Land Legacy Gathering contained a special element. During a reception at the Ice Age Trail Alliance's headquarters we announced that IATA will receive a Land Trust Excellence and Advancement Program (LEAP) grant. Thank you to everyone who made the Land Legacy Gathering a success, including our generous sponsors and the hard-working folks at IATA and Swamplovers.



Mike Wollmer, Executive Director of IATA, happily welcomed the news from our own, Mike Strigel.

Sustainers Circle Leaving a Conservation Legacy

At GWC we feel fortunate to have a strong and diverse cadre of supporters who make our work possible. Whether it's through one-time gifts to support a particular initiative, annual membership dues, or simply volunteer time, we recognize that every little bit makes a difference and it's the power of the collective that drives our success.

In 2010, GWC and the greater conservation community were saddened to lose one of its long-time champions, Harold "Bud" Jordahl. Bud was a founder of Gathering Waters and one of Wisconsin's greatest environmental stewards. Among his many legacies, Bud encouraged GWC to establish a planned giving program – the Sustainers Circle – to allow committed conservationists to make lasting contributions to the organization through their estate plans.

We were honored to receive such a gift from Bud and continue to be touched when we learn of others who have made similar commitments.

GWC board member Tia Nelson also joined our Sustainers Circle this year when she committed to leaving half of the equity in her home to GWC.

About this decision, Tia said, "I felt it was important to make Gathering Waters a part of my estate planning, because, in doing so, I solidify my connection to Wisconsin's environmental future. In this way, I can ensure the longevity of the conservation legacy of my father, Earth Day founder Gaylord Nelson, who dedicated his life to protecting special natural places for this and future generations. Papa instilled in me a strong sense that individual action matters and that we each have the opportunity and obligation to do our part to protect the lands and waters that make Wisconsin such a beautiful place to live. This is my way of honoring him, and the great work of Gathering Waters."

A special thank you to all of our Land Legacy Gathering sponsors

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Michael & Molly Strigel

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*Left: Tia Nelson
Right: Harold "Bud" Jordahl*

A special thank you to our generous Sustainers Circle members who have pledged or made planned gifts to Gathering Waters Conservancy:

Jim Bennett

Dana & Pat Chabot

Dale Druckrey*

Harold "Bud" Jordahl*

Harold Kreitz

Tia Nelson

Michele Parker

**planned gifts made*

If you're considering a planned gift to GWC and would like more information, please contact Sara DeKok at sara@gatheringwaters.org or 608-251-9131 x10. Please let us know if you have already made plans to provide for Gathering Waters Conservancy in your estate! We would love the opportunity to extend our sincerest thanks and welcome you to the Sustainers Circle.

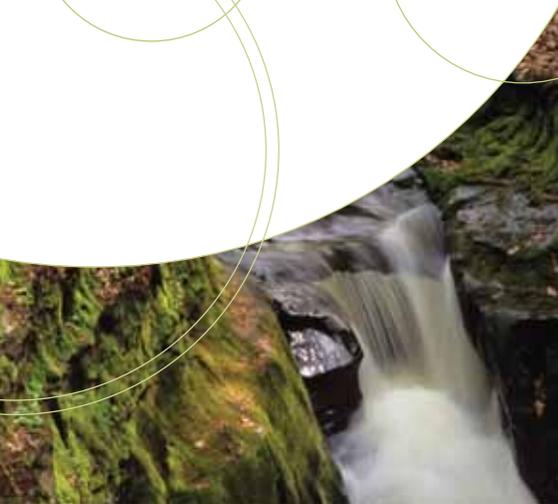


Photo by Eric Sherman

Thank You

As always, we have a long list of people we'd like to thank for their volunteer and in-kind contributions to Gathering Waters:

The **River Revitalization Foundation**, the **Milwaukee Environmental Consortium**, and **Glacial Lakes Conservancy** for hosting the winter and spring Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance meetings

Baird Creek Preservation Foundation and the **Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust** for co-hosting our annual Land Trust Retreat

Dane County Department of Land & Water for co-sponsoring LEAP Tax Benefits & Appraisals Training in Madison

Natural Heritage Land Trust for loaning their conference phone

Stafford Rosenbaum for their standing meeting space invitation

Nelson French and **Debbie & John Murphy** for hosting traveling staff

Frank Cuva and **Flad Affiliated Corp.** for saving the day when our printer failed by allowing us to make time-sensitive copies at his office!

Althea Dotzour for photographing our Land Legacy Gathering

Find a Fieldtrip

Warmer weather is finally here and there's so much to do! It's time to plant the garden, join expert guides for some spectacular birding, hike the Ice Age Trail, or canoe pristine rivers. Wisconsin's land trusts work hard to protect our state's special places. This summer and fall they will also host field trips and tours, work days and educational events for everyone who loves Wisconsin. There's something afoot almost every day, all season. So, want to take that hike this weekend? Gathering Waters Conservancy has a constantly-updated list of land trust excursions and events on our website. We call it our **Parade of Preserves!** Visit www.gatheringwaters.org/parade and enjoy some of Wisconsin's most special places.

Join us for a Land Trust Excellence & Advancement Program (LEAP) seminar

On June 21st, we will be hosting a Tax Benefits & Appraisals Training in Madison. This all day training follows the Land Trust Alliance standards and practices curriculum and is co-sponsored by Dane County Land & Water Resources. Registration information can be found by linking from the LEAP page on our website. And be sure to check the LEAP pages of our website for information about our public policy advocacy for land trusts training on August 1st in La Crosse.

And Save the Date...

For our 9th Annual Land Conservation Leadership Awards Celebration, recognizing the outstanding accomplishments of individuals, policy makers, and land trusts who are working to protect the places that make Wisconsin special. This celebration has become a can't-miss event for land conservation supporters.