



nature photos by Gil Gribb



GATHERING WATERS CONSERVANCY 2005 THE YEAR BOOK

gathering waters
conservancy

211 S Paterson, Suite 206 • Madison, WI 53703

The land belongs to the future – that’s the way it seems to me. We come and go, but the land is always there. And the people who love it and understand it are the people who own it – for a little while.

– Willa Cather





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Wisconsin's land trusts rely on 45,000 members, thousands of dedicated volunteers, and a core group of hardworking staff to get their work done. They embody Wisconsin's spirit of volunteerism and reflect Wisconsin's widely-held conservation ethic.

Thanks to the generous support of many, Fiscal Year 2005 was Gathering Waters Conservancy's most successful and productive year yet.

Land Trusts are community-based organizations made up of private citizens working in partnership with private landowners to protect the places that make our communities special.

Collectively, land trusts are protecting substantial tracts of land. It's the hidden treasures where we hike, fish, and play that make Wisconsin's natural resources so rich and diverse. Land Trusts are working across the state to ensure that our children's children can discover Wisconsin's natural gems.

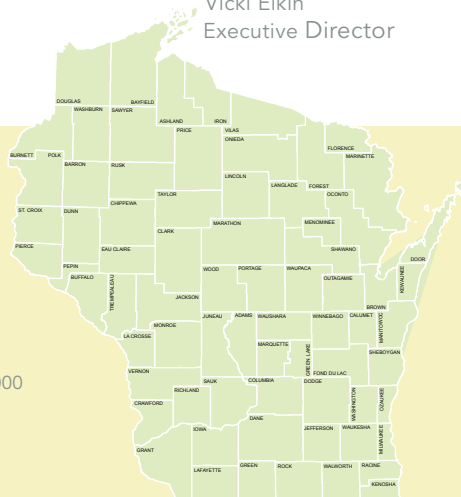
Wisconsin's land trusts rely on 45,000 members, thousands of dedicated volunteers, and a core group of hardworking staff to get their work done. They embody Wisconsin's spirit of volunteerism and widely-held conservation ethic.

Wisconsin's land trusts have protected more than 135,000 acres valued at more than \$140 million dollars in communities across the state. Much of this land has been donated outright to a land trust or protected through voluntary land preservation agreements called conservation easements.

In the past few years, land trusts have been able to raise more money to purchase high-priority sites and make them available to the public for outdoor recreation. The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund has been a critical source of grants for land trust purchases.



Vicki Elkin
Executive Director



State of the state

land trusts statewide	51
total acres protected	135,000
acres owned	43,000
acres under easement	41,000
acres transferred to government agencies	47,000
number of land trust members	45,000
combined operating budget	\$10,370,000
average operating budget	\$230,000
full-time staff statewide	116
part-time staff statewide	38

gathering waters conservancy

Our strategic plan

In early 2005, Gathering Waters Conservancy brought together partners and supporters to help us plan for the next three years. The conservation landscape is changing, and Gathering Waters and our member land trusts are well-poised to have a tremendous impact. Our ambitious strategic plan includes the following:

quality

Land conservation is a long-term commitment. It's vital that the organizations conducting land conservation transactions meet the highest operating standards and earn the trust of the public. Gathering Waters Conservancy is reframing our programs to help prepare land trusts for national accreditation.

knowledge

From trainings for attorneys, appraisers, and assessors, to television shows, and feature magazine articles, Gathering Waters Conservancy is spreading awareness about land conservation and the increasing role of land trusts.

collaboration

Gathering Waters Conservancy is working across the state to help land trusts strategically blend their local visions into broader regional conservation plans. This will ensure that land trusts are working to protect all of Wisconsin's special places—both large and small.

stewardship

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund, Wisconsin's premier land conservation program, will be up for reauthorization in a few short years. Gathering Waters Conservancy is working now to celebrate the Fund and to build a broad base of bipartisan support to ensure that the fund continues well into the future.

"Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably will themselves not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in home and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will not die."

Daniel Burnham

*“Super workshop! We will be able to apply so much to the needs of our organization!”
~ participant of our November Board Leadership Seminar*



gathering waters
conservancy

quality | accreditation
cultivating the professionalism of Wisconsin's Land Trusts

knowledge | spreading the word
about private land conservation in Wisconsin

Preparing for Accreditation

Gathering Waters Conservancy is cultivating the professionalism of Wisconsin's land trusts, nurturing them so they are prepared to meet the challenges of the future. Over the last year, Vicki Elkin served on the Land Trust Alliance's steering committee that developed a national land trust accreditation program. Voluntary accreditation will allow land trusts to formalize their commitment to responsible operating standards and practices, helping them thrive.

We are proud of the land trusts in Wisconsin, and are working with them to ensure that Wisconsin's land trusts are among the first in the country to go through the accreditation process. We have already begun to tailor our services to help land trusts prepare for accreditation. In 2005, Gathering Waters hired Julia Solomon to join Karen Bassler and Pam Foster Felt as our third land trust program staff member.

Identifying Opportunities

We worked with 15 land trusts around the state to define their specific needs. In response to these findings, we have begun to hold trainings including a Board Leadership seminar in November 2005. In 2006, we will continue to conduct trainings and one-on-one work with land trusts to prepare for accreditation.

Accreditation will help land trusts become community institutions as important as the local library, YMCA, or art museum in contributing to the overall health and vitality of our communities.

Gathering Waters Conservancy continues to raise awareness about private land conservation and the innovative work of land trusts. Our goal is that land trusts will be a part of every landowner's vocabulary. Just as landowners know that they can pick up the phone and call a realtor, they will also know that they can contact their local land trust.

Hosting the Land Trust Alliance Rally

Gathering Waters Conservancy hosted 2,000 land trust leaders from across the country for four days of field trips, seminars, workshops and inspirational speakers as part of the Land Trust Alliance's National Rally. As a kick-off to Rally, Gathering Waters Conservancy held our third annual Land Conservation Leadership Awards celebration to recognize our land trust heroes here in Wisconsin.

Training Professionals

We strive to ensure that all land owners and land trusts have access to knowledgeable professionals. Conservation tools like easements are complex, and it is crucial that attorneys and appraisers are well-versed in their function. Over the past year Gathering Waters Conservancy program coordinator Pam Foster Felt helped train dozens of professionals through a wide variety of accredited trainings across the state.

Sharing Stories

Gathering Waters Conservancy shares stories of land conservation with local governments, landowner associations, conservation professionals and citizen groups. Thanks to our efforts, land trusts have been featured in numerous publications from local papers to statewide magazines. On the airwaves, Wisconsin Public Television is featuring a series of shows on land trusts, and already we've seen a tremendous outpouring of public interest.

Providing Information Online

In the past year, Althea Dotzour and Liz Walsh redeveloped Gathering Waters Conservancy's website, www.gatheringwaters.org, to provide more accessible information on land conservation. Landowners can now find a host of material on land conservation options, download publications and informational packets, and search an interactive map to locate land trusts in their area.

collaboration | forming partnerships
that promote strategic conservation

stewardship | promoting conservation
through policy and outreach

5 *Land trusts are strong because they are rooted deeply in place. They are driven by local vision and grassroots action. Gathering Waters Conservancy helps land trusts translate their local focus into regional collaboration among a variety of public and private partners to encourage strategic conservation.*

Partners in Preservation

We launched a regional initiative called Partners in Preservation in the Lake Michigan Basin three years ago, and have formed a vibrant alliance of nine land trusts representing the entire coastline from the Illinois border to the tip of Door County. These groups meet together on a regular basis, share strategies and ideas, and are working jointly on several high-priority conservation projects. Recent successes include the protection of the Franklin Park Savanna in urban Milwaukee County and the inclusion of the Red Banks site conservation plan in the Town of Scott's comprehensive land use plan. When basin-wide issues emerge these land trusts are engaged, connected, and prepared for action.

Expanding Regional Collaboration

Building on this success, we have recently expanded Partners in Preservation to two new regions of the state—Northwest Wisconsin and South Central Wisconsin. Our staff has been meeting with land trusts in these regions and their partners at local, state, and federal agencies to lay the groundwork for partnership. We are helping these groups get to know each other better by providing joint training events and other forums for communication. For example, Karen Bassler is working with land trusts and other conservation groups in Northwest Wisconsin to prepare a comprehensive conservation plan for the St. Croix River Basin.

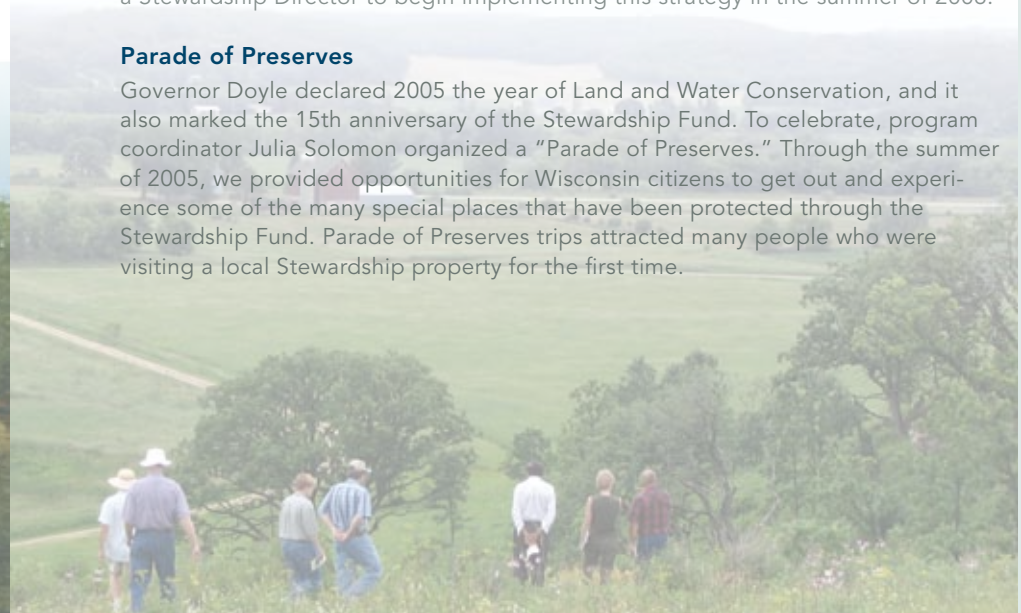
6 *The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund is Wisconsin's premier land conservation program. At \$60 million per year, Stewardship has helped protect over 340,000 acres across the state. Most recently, land trusts have received matching grants through Stewardship to protect such treasures as the Mequon Nature Preserve in a rapidly urbanizing area near Milwaukee, Patrick Marsh near an elementary school in Sun Prairie, and the phenomenal Tenderfoot Forest Reserve in northern Wisconsin.*

Reauthorizing the Stewardship Fund

The current Stewardship program is set to expire in a few short years and needs the support of the Governor and Legislature to continue beyond 2010. Gathering Waters Conservancy is working to build broad, bipartisan support for the reauthorization of Stewardship. In February 2005, Gathering Waters Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, and the Johnson Foundation brought together a diverse group of opinion leaders to develop a strategy for reauthorization. We plan to hire a Stewardship Director to begin implementing this strategy in the summer of 2006.

Parade of Preserves

Governor Doyle declared 2005 the year of Land and Water Conservation, and it also marked the 15th anniversary of the Stewardship Fund. To celebrate, program coordinator Julia Solomon organized a "Parade of Preserves." Through the summer of 2005, we provided opportunities for Wisconsin citizens to get out and experience some of the many special places that have been protected through the Stewardship Fund. Parade of Preserves trips attracted many people who were visiting a local Stewardship property for the first time.





Our growth is only possible through your support. Thank you.

Special thanks to our in-kind contributors, volunteers, and supporters

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2005 Staff Retreat

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- Walnut Hollow
- Wisconsin Wetlands Association

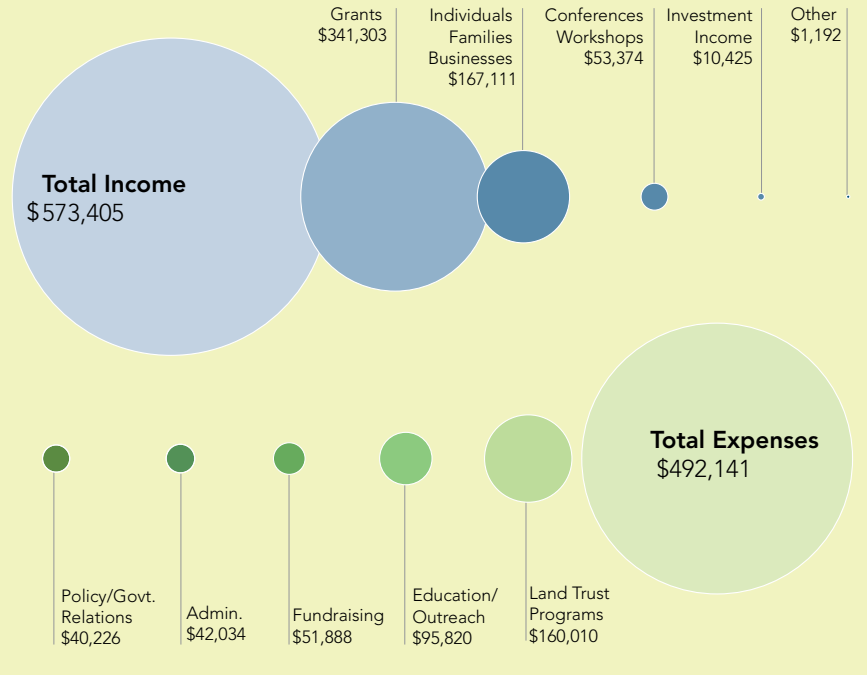
Financial Overview

Increasing the quality and effectiveness of Wisconsin's land trust movement takes vision. Ideas and drive are a great start, but it's the support of generous donors and foundations that provide the fuel. We at Gathering Waters Conservancy owe a debt of gratitude to the individuals, foundations, businesses and organizations who provide us with a solid foundation for projecting...and attaining our conservation goals. Your dollars make a tremendous difference.

Income and Expenses for Fiscal Year 2005

July 1, 2004 through June 30, 2005

Net Income: \$81,264



Our independently audited financial statement and IRS Form 990 are available on our website at www.gatheringwaters.org.

The following foundations have given generously in Fiscal Year 2005

- Alliant Energy Foundation
- Bradshaw-Knight Foundation
- Brico Fund
- Environmental Protection Agency—Great Lakes National Program Office
- Greater Milwaukee Foundation
- Land Trust Alliance
- Lux Foundation
- Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District
- Plum Creek Foundation
- Quixote Foundation
- Steve J. Miller Foundation
- West Bend Community Foundation's Ziegler Family Foundation Fund
- Wisconsin Coastal Management Program
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Help preserve the legacy of Wisconsin's wild heritage

Members of Gathering Waters Conservancy's Land Legacy Society give an annual gift of \$1,000 or more. Thanks to the support of our charter Land Legacy Society members, we have seen significant results in one short year. Not only did we achieve greater media coverage of land conservation issues and broader support of the Stewardship Fund than ever before, but our efforts have translated into more critical and noteworthy acres of land protected in perpetuity across the state. Members of the Land Legacy Society make our goal – to increase the amount of protected land in Wisconsin – a reality.



2005 Land Legacy Society Members

July 04 through June 05

\$10,000 and above

Julie Gallagher & Ted Rolfs
Alice Godfrey
Terry F. & DiAnne Hatch
Rudy & Joy Rasin
John Taylor
Joan & Peter Ziegler

\$5,000 - \$9,999

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\$2,000 - \$4,999

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\$1,000 - \$1,999

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\$1000 and above

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Straight Lake State Park

Residents and visitors of Wisconsin now have a second State Park to enjoy in Polk County, thanks to two years of negotiations led by the West Wisconsin Land Trust. Straight Lake State Park and Wildlife Area was dedicated on April 19, 2005. The 2,780-acre property is located three miles northeast of Luck and includes a 107-acre wild lake, with no lakeshore development. Other natural features include nearly 800 acres of old growth forest and rare geologic formations. This purchase was made possible by the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund.

“Brunkow Hardwoods Corporation cared for the property for more than 10 years. The owners had higher offers from bigger loggers and developers, but they chose to stick this out with us,” said Rick Gauger, WWLT Executive Director.

Thanks to the efforts of everyone involved, thousands of Wisconsin residents and visitors will now enjoy the unique natural beauty of Straight Lake State Park and Wilderness Area for years to come.

Straight Lake State Park and Wilderness Area,
photo by West Wisconsin Land Trust



The Thomas Barn

In a rural corner of southwestern Wisconsin, the Driftless Area Land Conservancy obtained a conservation and historic preservation easement for a magnificent, historic stone barn and 180 acres of quality farmland.

The Thomas family farm dates back to the mid-1860s. The large stone barn was built to hold enough hay to feed a herd of cattle over the winter. The most impressive aspect of this barn is the variety of arches used in the construction of the doors, louvers, and windows.

As in many rural areas, increasing development pressure from neighboring communities threatened the farm. The Thomas family worried that their farm would be subdivided and lost in the wave of urban sprawl. After much discussion, they signed an agreement with the Driftless Area Land Conservancy to save the barn and surrounding land. The Thomas family land and



Harold Thomas' farm was protected with the help of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund
photo by Harlen Persinger

Gathering Waters Conservancy is governed by an active and committed Board of Directors from across the state:

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

barn is a unique place where both our natural and cultural heritage will be preserved in perpetuity. They will forever be protected and preserved to remind us of our rural beginnings and our cultural heritage.

City of Mequon promotes smart growth

The City of Mequon has an ambitious plan to preserve about 2,000 acres of its remaining agricultural land and open space that lies outside its sewer service area. To help reach their goal, the City teamed up with the Ozaukee Washington Land Trust to create a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program. A TDR program is designed to allow rural landowners to sell their development rights to their property to a developer, who then would be able to transfer those development rights to an area more suitable for development. Under Mequon’s TDR ordinance, property owners who sell their development rights are required to keep their land as open space forever.

Shawn Graff, Executive Director of the Ozaukee Washington Land Trust says, “TDR can tie farmland and open space conservation to growth management, downtown revitalization and infrastructure efficiency by directing growth to appropriate locations within a municipality.”

Mequon Mayor Christine Nuernberg agrees. She says, “The beauty of the TDR program is that it is a tool that will save the land in perpetuity, and the cost of this whole process is borne by development, not by the taxpayers. We have working farms and we have beautiful woods and streams and we want to keep them”. 

Gathering Waters Conservancy Land Trust & Conservation Organization Members

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Baraboo Range Preservation Association
Bayfield Regional Conservancy
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Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation
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