

July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012

2012 annual report



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Gathering Waters Conservancy
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 Madison, WI 53703
 www.gatheringwaters.org
 608.251.9131

Working Together to Conserve Wisconsin

From the President & Executive Director

What is it that makes you smile when you think about Wisconsin?

Is it a memory of walking with your family on a Northwoods trail, biking through rolling farms and meadows on a rail-to-trail, or hunting or fishing on a crisp morning?

Is it listening to the joyful laughter of kids as they explore a Driftless prairie? Perhaps it is the sound of the wood thrush or loon, in a remote woodland area, as their calls echo through the trees and over the water?

Thanks to your support and passion for creative, private conservation, land trusts throughout Wisconsin are helping to transform their communities, enrich the daily lives of people, and provide new partnerships with other community groups.

Your support of Gathering Waters is helping lead the way—to demonstrate conservation’s relevance to more people; to conserve land and water for families and our local economies.

You are helping us provide land trusts with the tools required to strategically and effectively protect more land and build strong connections not only to the land, but to the people and institutions, the traditions and values, and the rhythms that define a community.

When these connections are made an acre becomes a preserve, a ritual space, a playground, a favorite hunting spot or fishing hole, a place to come together or get away. These connections are an important measure of success, and are critical to ensuring that our protection efforts are lasting.

Thank you for your passion for private, local conservation. It is because of your support that we can ensure that people of all ages, and all walks of life, can celebrate their unique connection to the land for generations.



Rita Hayen, President
 Michael Strigel, Executive Director

Rita Hayen
 President

Michael Strigel
 Executive Director



Sowing Seeds: The Impact of Your Support

When Gathering Waters Conservancy was established in 1994, there were only a handful of land trusts working in disparate parts of the state and countless Wisconsin communities were seeking support to help them protect the special places they love. In 18 short years, the seeds that you have sown through your support of Gathering Waters Conservancy have yielded significant results. These strides would not have been possible without each and every one of you. Thank you!

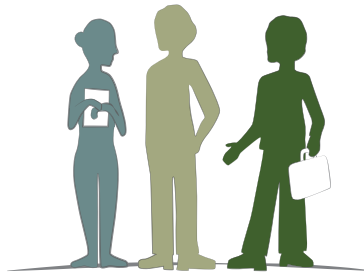
Nearly Every Community in Wisconsin Has Access to Private Land Protection Assistance:

When GWC was established there were 12 land trusts in Wisconsin.



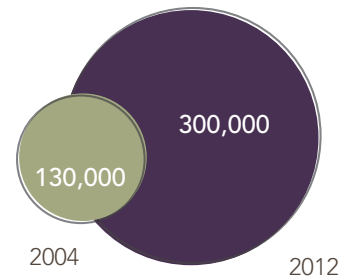
With your support we've grown that number to over 50.

The Quality of Wisconsin Land Protection is Growing:



In the last year and a half alone we've provided training, coaching, and mentoring to 750 land trust staff and board members, and reached many others through additional means.

The Quantity of Special Places Protected Across Wisconsin is Expanding:



Since GWC began tracking land trust protection data in 2004, the number of acres protected by Wisconsin land trusts has grown from 130,000 to nearly 300,000 – that's almost 5 times the aggregate area of Wisconsin state parks.

The Places You Love Are Being Protected Forever:

Some of Wisconsin's most beloved destinations have been protected through the work of Wisconsin land trusts.

- The orchards of Bayfield and Door County
- Northwoods shoreline and cross-country ski trails
- Bike trails and green space in urban Milwaukee
- Land adjacent to Wisconsin's favorite state parks: Devil's Lake State Park in the Baraboo Hills, Governor Dodge State Park in the Driftless area, and others.
- Island getaways: portions of Madeline Island in the Apostle Islands and Washington Island off the tip of Door County
- Wisconsin's own national scenic trail: the Ice Age Trail
- Valuable farmland throughout the state

We hope you'll continue to help us make a lasting impact in the lives of people across Wisconsin by continuing your support of Gathering Waters Conservancy.

We're Here to Help

Land trusts asked for our help, and we listened. Our Land Trust Excellence & Advancement Program (LEAP), launched in partnership with the Land Trust Alliance in 2011, builds on our tradition and assists land trusts in their efforts, more sustainable and effective conservation organizations. With your support, we're helping land trusts leap forward to better serve their communities; protect cherished farms, forests, and open spaces; and enrich the lives of people with parks, trails, and access to clean water.

Since launching this program we've:

- Coached 750 land trust staff and board members through trainings, workshops, one-on-one assistance, and virtual learning opportunities.
- Helped increase the number of nationally accredited land trusts in Wisconsin from one to six (while also helping several more in process); a remarkable achievement and a tribute to those land trusts who tackled the task with good humor and determination.
- Launched a peer mentoring program that matches land trust staff and board members with similar experience from Wisconsin and Michigan to learn from one another.
- Provided a variety of customized, intensive, one-on-one capacity building services to 32% of Wisconsin land trusts.
- Provided direct grants to land trusts to help them hire their first staff, improve outreach techniques to the community, or apply for accreditation.
- Provided direct assistance to nearly every land trust in Wisconsin – that's 50+ organizations working in communities across the state.

To all of the land trust staff, board members, volunteers and supporters who work to conserve the special places in your communities for future generations – thank you! We're honored to help strengthen your work, to listen to the needs of your community, to provide the tools and the roadmap, and to connect you to new friends and supporters along the way.

Sources

¹ Martha Irvine, "Young People Not So 'Green' After All," Seattle Times, 15 March 2012 (http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2017752919_apusnotsogreen.html). To download the full study <http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/psp-ofp-twenge.pdf>

² N. Well and K. Liekis. 2006. Cornell University study; The Cornell researchers used a sample of more than 2,000 adults, ages 18 to 90, who were living in urban areas throughout the country and answered telephone questions about their early childhood nature experiences and their current adult attitudes and behaviors relating to the environment. See <http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/March06/wild.nature.play.ssl.html>

Building a Love of the Land, Organizational Strength, and a Future

Caring for the land and Wisconsin's kids

Things may not be what they seem.

After 40 years of environmental education in many of our country's schools, kids are loving nature as never before, right? Sadly, today's youth are actually less interested in the environment and conserving resources than previous generations¹.

In fact, for adults to care about the land, they need regular contact with nature before the age of twelve².

With support from Gathering Waters Conservancy, land trusts throughout the state are mobilizing to ensure that there will be generations of kids that continue to share a deep passion for the land as adults. One inspiring example of these efforts comes from the Caledonia Conservancy.

Dirty sneakers, bright futures

Started in 2009, the Caledonia Conservancy's School to Nature program works with students to explore the natural world through field trips to the Conservancy's preserved lands located throughout the Village of Caledonia in southeastern Wisconsin – a corner of the state known for its dense population and development pressures.

In its short existence, the program has welcomed over 2,400 children from area schools, and utilizes the Wisconsin DNR's Project Learning Tree curriculum. Many of the kids had not been in the "wilds" of nature before.

"Land trusts have a short and long-term role to play in combating the national trend of childhood apathy toward the environment and conservation," says Sandy DeWalt, vice president of Caledonia Conservancy and current chairperson of the School to Nature Program committee.

Starting small, and growing

To accommodate a program like this, as well as maintain an active land protection program, you might expect Caledonia Conservancy to be a multi-staff operation.

But what you'll discover is that this land-trust-that-could has been all-volunteer led for most of its existence, hiring its first part-time staff person this year.

"The services that we received from Gathering Waters Conservancy have been invaluable to our growth and capacity," says Suzi Zierten, Caledonia Conservancy's new executive director. "We discovered that we could accomplish more conservation work once our "house was in order," and programs like our School to Nature program wouldn't be what they are today without that assistance."

For one young, recent program participant, it's less of a technical issue. In his enthusiastic words, "Thank you for the awesome time. I learned so many things like what a Jack in the Pulpit was. I had a lot of fun because I don't go out in the woods often. Thank you for helping us."

This coming year, with your support, Gathering Waters Conservancy will be able to assist additional land trusts to build their capacity. In addition to the support they receive from GWC, Caledonia Conservancy's School to Nature Program is made possible through the support of the Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network, the Racine Community Foundation, and Racine Junior League.





"Thank you for showing us the habitats. I liked the bugs and the critters. The water and the woods were my favorite. I would love to go there again." – School to Nature program participant



Thanks to the assistance from Gathering Waters Conservancy, Caledonia Conservancy has increased its capacity to introduce more local kids to the magic of the outdoors and strengthen connections to nature through its School to Nature program.

Thank you for supporting our work to strengthen Wisconsin's land trusts through direct assistance, trainings, and outreach.

\$15,000 +

John C. Bock Foundation
Forest County Potawatomi Foundation
The McKnight Foundation
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

\$5,000 - \$14,999

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**These gifts represent a portion of a larger, multi-year pledge.*




Many of these kids' love of learning and enthusiasm for being outside dramatically increases with field trips to these land trust properties. It's a special program that is reaching a community of kids who may not have other opportunities to explore nature."

– Jill Baranowski, retired teacher and School to Nature Program volunteer



Photos by Roy Bohn



“Gathering Waters’ work in leading our collective efforts to secure funding for our state’s farmers through the Working Lands Initiative—the source of the PACE funding—were vital. Without their capacity to be the voice of the land trust community, this program may never have passed.”

—Jim Welsh, executive director of Natural Heritage Land Trust.

Advocating for Clean Water, Special Community Places, and Local Foods

Conserving local farms and our heritage

“We wanted to be proactive and take responsibility for this land.”

That was the sentiment expressed by John and Dorothy Priske, farmers who have lived on, and farmed, their land¹ in Columbia County for nearly 30 years. To accomplish their goals of conservation, the Priskes worked with their local land trust, the Natural Heritage Land Trust, which provides conservation assistance in Dane County and the surrounding region.

But even just a few years ago, the Priskes, as well as 15 other farmers in Wisconsin would not have been able to conserve their farm like this because there wasn’t a state farmland protection program.

Working lands working for their communities

As with other farmland protection programs across the country, Wisconsin’s Purchase of Conservation Easements (PACE) program allows farmers to receive funding for conserving their land while still retaining ownership and management decisions. The land continues to stay on the tax rolls as well, and farmers are free to sell, bequeath, lease, and transfer the land, subject to the conservation agreement.

In addition to the PACE program, funding for this project was also provided by the USDA Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, The Conservation Fund, and the members of Natural Heritage Land Trust. PACE-funded land protection projects are intended to be anchors in areas that have been designated locally for farmland protection.

The Priskes are one such anchor, known throughout the community for their commitment to farming and sustainability.

Community anchors preserving local foods

According to Caleb Pourchot, Natural Heritage Land Trust’s conservation specialist, “Continuous improvement in the health of their land is a passion for the Priskes. Each new conservation practice they incorporate on the farm led them to another.

“After restoring wetlands, controlling runoff from the farm, leaving some pastures ungrazed to benefit nesting grassland birds, and installing a 50-kilowatt wind turbine that powers the entire farm, deciding to work with the local land trust to place a conservation easement on the farm to protect it in perpetuity was a logical next step.”

Farmland and our farming economy are central to many Wisconsin communities. Gathering Waters Conservancy, working with land trusts, the business community, agricultural organizations and farmers, and countless individuals, continues to work to enhance and grow the state’s farmland protection program.

During a challenging State budget cycle, your financial support of and participation in trainings, advocacy work, and educational programs will be very important in the coming year as we work to breathe new life into this farm-friendly program that serves Wisconsin’s agricultural heritage and economy. Together, one farm at a time, we’re bringing local food and our farm economy closer to long-term sustainability.

¹ John and Dorothy Priske own and operate Fountain Prairie Farms, a 277-acre grass-based farm in Columbia County where they raise Scottish Highland cattle. Known throughout the region for their quality meat, the Priskes are fixtures at the Dane County Farmers’ Market and also sell their meats to local restaurants. For a complete listing of restaurants where their beef is served, please visit www.fountainprairie.com.

“Farmland protection is about taking care of Wisconsin’s most valuable resource—the soil. Farm families realize that protecting the soil insures future jobs, food, and security—things that make Wisconsin strong now and in the future. Gathering Waters, land trusts, and others fighting for farmland protection are true leaders in the field!”

—John Koepke, farmer from Waukesha County, DATCP Board Member, and Town of Oconomowoc Town Board member



Moving Wisconsin Conservation Forward

Our natural and working lands and fresh water resources are at the heart of Wisconsin’s economic, environmental, and cultural health. A priority of Gathering Waters Conservancy is to promote public policies that benefit and encourage the protection of these resources that make Wisconsin such a wonderful place to live, work, and play.

Our work is paying off. With your support, in the past year we:

- Connected land trust leaders with their state and federal elected officials for face-to-face opportunities to communicate your local conservation priorities.
- Helped increase the number of accredited land trusts in Wisconsin from one to five; a remarkable achievement and a tribute to those land trusts who tackled the task with good humor and determination.
- Advocated for a strong Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program – a landmark Wisconsin program that has funded the protection of many of the places most beloved by Wisconsinites.
- Partnered closely with groups like The Nature Conservancy and the Land Trust Alliance to advocate for national legislation that makes it easier for Wisconsin landowners and farmers to conserve the lands that benefit their communities while keeping them on the tax rolls.
- Worked with land trusts throughout the Great Lakes region to advocate for clean water and Great Lakes restoration legislation.

You are the engine behind these successes. Elected officials in Madison and Washington, D.C. only take notice of our conservation priorities when they know their constituents care. Thank you.

But our work is never done. As communities evolve and new leaders take office, we’ll continue to need your help as we work to communicate our community and conservation values to policy makers.

A special thank you to the organizations and foundations that have gone above and beyond to support our mission.

- Bayfield Regional Conservancy
- Brico Fund
- The Conservation Fund
- Door County Land Trust
- The Joyce Foundation
- Kettle Moraine Land Trust
- The Nature Conservancy
- Northwoods Land Trust
- Ozaukee Washington Land Trust
- Partnering for Progress



Farms like the Priske’s have been protected across Wisconsin with support from their local land trust and Wisconsin’s farmland protection program – a program fought for by Gathering Waters Conservancy and our partners.

Pictured top left: Jim Welsh and Caleb Pourchot of Natural Heritage Land Trust with Dorothy and John Priske.

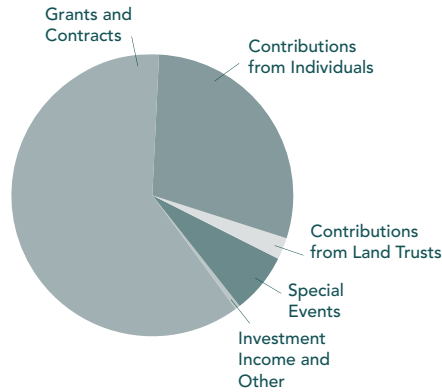
Photos by Sharon Vanorny

Land Trust and Conservation Organization Members

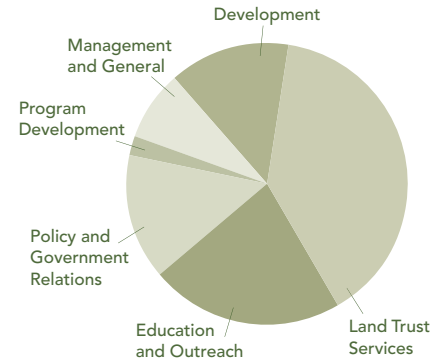
They make it happen – the on-the-ground professionals, volunteers, and impassioned conservationists working to protect the best of Wisconsin. Because of your support of Gathering Waters Conservancy, they're work is accelerated, enhanced, and sustainable.

Baird Creek Preservation Foundation
 Baraboo Range Preservation Association
 Bayfield Regional Conservancy
 Caledonia Conservancy
 Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation
 Chippewa County Land Conservancy
 Couderay Waters Regional Land Trust
 The Conservation Fund
 Deer Lake Conservancy
 Driftless Area Land Conservancy
 Friends of Pheasant Branch
 Geneva Lake Conservancy
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 Green-Rock Audubon Society
 Half Moon Lake Conservancy
 Ice Age Trail Alliance
 Kenosha/Racine Land Trust
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 Lakeland Conservancy
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 Madeline Island Wilderness Preserve
 Madison Audubon Society
 Milwaukee Area Land Conservancy
 Mississippi Valley Conservancy
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 Natural Heritage Land Trust
 North Central Conservancy Trust
 Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust
 Northwoods Land Trust
 Ozaukee Washington Land Trust
 The Prairie Enthusiasts
 The Ridges Sanctuary
 River Revitalization Foundation
 Riverland Conservancy
 Standing Cedars Community Land Conservancy
 Star Prairie Land Preservation Trust
 Tall Pines Conservancy
 Town of Dunn
 Waukesha County Land Conservancy
 West Wisconsin Land Trust

FY 2012 Income \$633,449



FY 2012 Expenses \$606,204



Balance Sheet

FY 2012

Assets

Cash	\$474,185
Unconditional promises to give	117,011
Prepaid expenses and other	11,320
Investments	81,712
Total Assets	684,228

Less

Liabilities	33,230
Restricted net assets	236,486

Unrestricted Net Assets	\$414,512
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Revenue and Expenses

Unrestricted Revenue

Grants and contracts	\$387,005
Contributions from individuals	184,062
Contributions from land trusts	15,950
Special events	44,510
Investment income and other	1,922
Total Unrestricted Revenue	\$633,449

Expenses

Land trust services	\$237,683
Education and outreach	135,176
Policy and government relations	87,534
Program development	13,567
Management and general	48,892
Development	83,352
Total Expenses	\$606,204



Photo by Paul McMahon

Gathering Waters Conservancy extends our deepest thanks to everyone that made a contribution in our 2012 fiscal year. You are our inspiration and the driving force that makes our work possible. Together, we're protecting Wisconsin's special places for future generations.

*Please know that every gift you send is valued and directly benefits our work, so we've worked hard to ensure the accuracy of this list of FY2012 donors (July 1, 2011– June 30, 2012).**

Members

\$500+

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The Land Legacy Society is a special group of benefactors who contribute an annual gift of \$1,000 or more to Gathering Waters Conservancy. We are grateful for the leadership of the following contributors:

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* If your name has been omitted or misspelled, please call us at 608.251.9131.



Sustainers Circle

Thank you to the members of the Sustainers Circle who have pledged a planned gift to Gathering Waters Conservancy.

- Jim Bennett
 - Dana & Pat Chabot
 - Dale Druckery*
 - Eric Forward
 - Tim Jacobson
 - Harold "Bud" Jordahl*
 - Harold Kreitz
 - Tia Nelson
 - Michele Parker
- * gifts received



Tia Nelson

"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. This is my way of honoring him, and the great work of Gathering Waters"

–Tia Nelson

In memory of Robert Gottschalk

We're deeply honored to receive gifts in memory of people who believed in our mission. Thank you to the friends and family of Robert Gottschalk who chose to recognize his longtime commitment to Gathering Waters Conservancy and the preservation of Wisconsin's special places with a contribution.

- | | |
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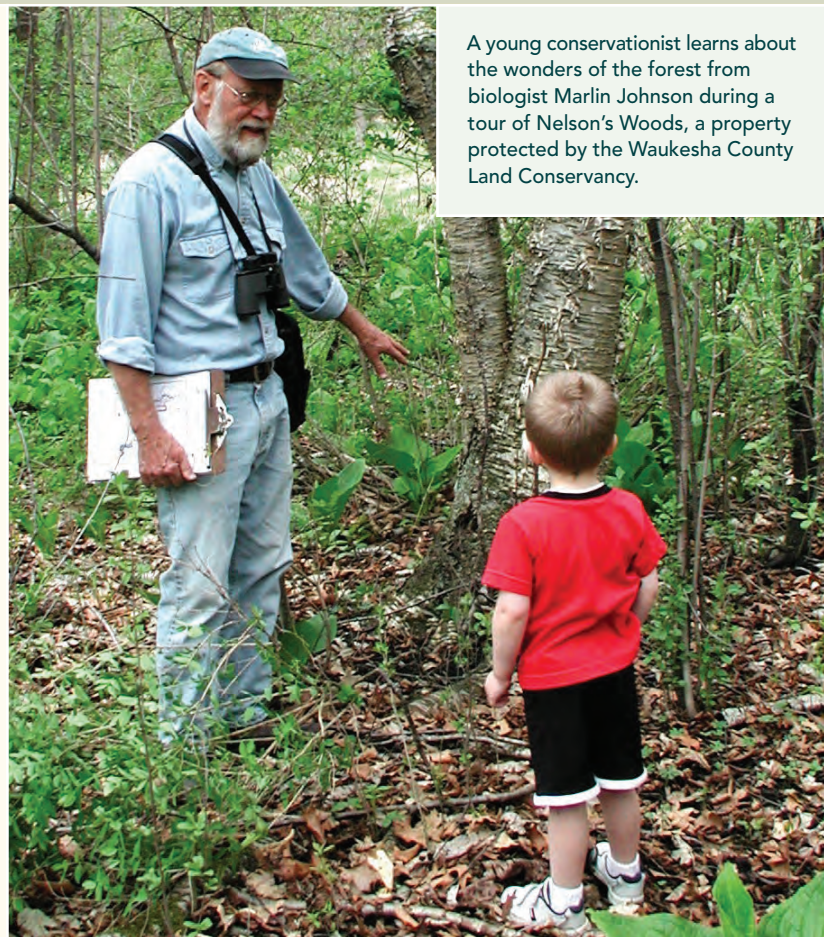
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A young conservationist learns about the wonders of the forest from biologist Marlin Johnson during a tour of Nelson's Woods, a property protected by the Waukesha County Land Conservancy.