



Photograph courtesy of Margaret Smith and the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust

## gathering waters conservancy

### A Good Day for Land Trusts

Earlier this spring we triple booked ourselves. On March 12 we hosted a statewide meeting, sponsored a regional conference and offered a day-long professional seminar. Then, to toast Wisconsin's extraordinary land trust community (and the end of a very busy day), we threw a party that evening.

**The Annual Wisconsin Land Trust Retreat** shrunk this year from its usual two-day format to a single morning meeting. Attendance, however, boomed. We packed more than 60 people representing 23 land trusts into a room and into a similarly dense agenda.

We talk to Wisconsin land trusts every day, but this annual gathering is our favorite connection to the organizations we work to serve. As people shared news of their organizations, the great diversity of projects described spoke volumes about the value of strong local land trusts. Some are partnering with governments to protect emblematic local landscapes, some have expanded environmental education programs, some are focused on working lands, others on urban environmental corridors. There's a LOT of land conservation underway in Wisconsin reflecting local desire to keep our communities healthy and beautiful.

Before adjourning to LTA's conference, everyone settled into conversations over lunch—new board members with seasoned land trust staff, leaders from organizations across the state sharing notes and ideas. This newsletter cannot capture how inspired we were by the experience, wisdom and conservation momentum collected in the room.

**Continuing Education Credits for the "three A's."** The same morning, Gathering Waters greeted 40-some appraisers, assessors and attorneys who attended a day-long seminar on appraising conservation easements. In the last three years, professional appraisal associations and the Land Trust Alliance have defined a standard curriculum about the challenging project of appraising easements. To help educate Wisconsin professionals, we hired an appraiser who helped author that endorsed curriculum to instruct this seminar. Even after 7 hours in a conference room, participants offered entirely positive feedback.

**The Midwest Land Conservation Conference** returned to Madison this year and broke attendance records. Gathering Waters co-sponsored the event and our staff and board helped design the program. This conference featured in-depth discussions about how to fund the coffers for legal defense of lands permanently protected. A half-day panel of experts from around the globe spoke about how land trusts can engage measures to address climate change. Some of the longest-experienced land trust board members in the country facilitated a free board member summit. Our hats are off to the Land Trust Alliance Midwest Office: by many measures the '09 conference was the most successful regional land trust event to date.



Glacial Lakes Conservancy President Shirley Griffin, Executive Director Vickie Hall and Gathering Waters' Mike Strigel at the end of a very busy day.

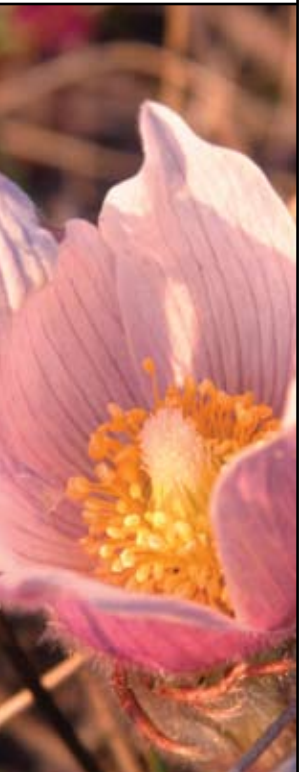
*"I found it to be more relevant to my job—duties and interests than expected. The speakers, seminars and workshops were very well done—inspiring and informative. I really enjoyed learning about what other land trusts are doing in their geographic areas. I appreciate the opportunities for networking."*

*— from a Conference participant's evaluation*

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Photo courtesy of Kathi Woods



Gathering Waters Conservancy's mission is to help communities, land trusts and landowners protect the places that make Wisconsin special. Our goal is to increase the amount of protected land in the state through private voluntary action.

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**On the Executive Director's Desk...**



*Eden Rose Strigel*

are a few new baby pictures. In lieu of Executive Director Mike Strigel's regular column, we're announcing the arrival of our newest member. Mike recently returned to the office after paternity leave: he and his wife, Molly, greeted their second baby girl on March 7.

***Congratulations Strigels!***

**Speaking of additions...**

Tia Nelson has joined our board. She is currently Executive Secretary of the Wisconsin Board of Commissioners of Public Lands. Before her 2004 appointment to that post, Ms. Nelson worked for The Nature Conservancy for seventeen years. An expert on climate change, Tia recently served as Co-Chair of Governor Doyle's Global Warming Task Force. She is a respected leader in conservation policy and delightful company. We're honored to have her aboard.



**...and delightful company**



We sadly say goodbye to Liz Walsh. No healthy organization should let one staff member become indispensable, but in Liz's case we might be guilty of true dependence. For four years Liz has managed our office, overseen programs, run staff meetings, supervised our budget, kept our webpage and all things electronic up and running and in general, kept us all on task. Her organization and work ethic are as flawless as her good cheer. We'd do almost anything to keep her except break up an engagement—Liz is getting married and moving to New Mexico. Our best wishes and congratulations to Liz and Dave.

**Exciting Progress on the Working Lands Initiative**

As you may already have heard, Governor Doyle has acted decisively to protect Wisconsin's farm and forest lands by including the Working Lands Initiative in his budget. In recent years, Wisconsin has lost nearly 30,000 acres of farmland a year: the Governor's budget-neutral proposal will provide our communities tools to help slow future losses and protect the state's important agricultural landscapes.

For several months, Gathering Waters Conservancy has collaborated with the American Farmland Trust and many others to promote the Working Lands Initiative. The Initiative includes several programs, but one will be particularly valuable to land trusts—a statewide Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) program (also known as a Purchase of Development Rights or PDR program). This program would provide \$12 million in matching grants to local governments and land trusts to protect permanently some of the highest value agricultural land in Wisconsin.

Support for a statewide PACE program has been fueled by mounting interest in local PACE programs in communities across Wisconsin. We have heard from many local government officials and farmers, and we are confident that state matching dollars for farmland protection will be a catalyst for local programs to get up and running. We are also excited by the potential for these programs to spark new cooperation among land trusts, local governments and farmers.

We are optimistic about the Working Lands Initiative's future, but until the state budget is passed by the full legislature, we need many voices urging support from elected officials. For more information and to learn how you can help, visit **[www.wisconsinfarmland.org](http://www.wisconsinfarmland.org)**.

gathering waters  
conservancy

15<sup>th</sup>

Anniversary  
1994–2009

*“At Gathering Waters we invest in community-based conservation. We invest in the people and organizations preserving the places they love in Wisconsin today so that our children can enjoy it tomorrow. We invest in Wisconsin’s land trusts and are confident that our investments will pay off.”*

*— Bud Jordahl, Gathering Waters Conservancy founder*

## Greetings, and to all our supporters, Happy Anniversary

Gathering Waters Conservancy was founded in 1994 to expand and strengthen the network of land trusts in the state. In fifteen years, Wisconsin's land trusts, supported by a dedicated service center and advocate, have vastly expanded the array of options open to landowners, their neighbors and their communities.

Our success in the last 15 years reflects the vibrancy of Wisconsin's land trust movement and the achievements of the people we work to empower. Fifteen years ago the Wisconsin office of The Nature Conservancy and twelve local land trusts worked in scattered regions of the state. Today there are more than 50 land trusts – non-profits governed by volunteers, delivering lasting land protection to families and communities who choose conservation. Land trusts serve almost every community in the state. They have permanently conserved over 200,000 acres across Wisconsin.

So, we might pat ourselves on the back and say in 15 years we've done what Gathering Waters was created to do.

But our phones keep ringing. We speak every day to the men and women advancing land conservation in the state: land trust leaders, policy makers, landowners and contributors. The land trust landscape in Wisconsin has changed remarkably in 15 years, and what it means to be a "land trust service center" continues to evolve. Most weeks we still answer a few of the same questions we did 15 years ago about land trust operations or conservation options for family lands. Today we also strategize with land trust directors so that the powerful voice of the land trust movement continues to influence public policy. We convene regional coalitions of conservation supporters to deliver leadership and resources to local land trusts. We do our utmost to see that land trusts are sought-out participants in conversations about land use in Wisconsin.

We make outgoing calls every day, too, introducing business leaders, local officials, media and more to the land trusts working to make Wisconsin communities great places to live, work and play. We reach out to make our case: if you care about the health and beauty of Wisconsin communities, you must care about the strength of Wisconsin land trusts.

Our mission is as vital today as it was in 1994. In fact, our current strategic plan was crafted in context of a vision that, in the next 15 years, Wisconsin will boast a million acres of ecologically, economically and culturally important lands permanently protected. We commend Gathering Waters' founders for their enduring vision. We thank our contributors for supporting it. Most of all, we applaud the staff and volunteers of Wisconsin's land trusts. We come to work inspired to assist them: they are the people protecting the places that make Wisconsin special.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MS'.

**Michael Strigel**, Executive Director

## What does it mean to be a land trust service center?

In 15 years our mission has not changed, but the ways we have pursued it have evolved as the land trust movement has.

### Before many Wisconsin land trusts were founded

Gathering Waters seeded interest in lasting land protection by presenting to woodland landowners, elected officials, lake associations, county conservation professionals and many, many others.

### As new land trusts emerged

Gathering Waters granted start-up costs, consulted and offered legal assistance to new land trusts. We gave scholarships to national conferences. We hosted workshops on all aspects of land trust operations, began a quarterly technical bulletin, *Currents*, and started an annual Wisconsin land trust meeting to forge a statewide network of land conservation advocates.

### As land trust applications for grants from the state's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund increased

Gathering Waters rallied that network of land trusts to advocate for Stewardship. In 2003 we led a successful charge against proposed cuts to the Stewardship Fund. In 2007 Gathering Waters and Wisconsin's land trusts carried Stewardship through the most contested state budget in recent history for an increase of 40%. Among agency administrators and lawmakers we have earned our reputation as a non-partisan, solution-oriented and effective voice for land trusts and land conservation.

### As Wisconsin land trusts sought to make themselves known to conservation supporters

Gathering Waters amplified their efforts through our own outreach. In 2003 we published *In Their Own Words*, a collection of stories from landowners who chose to donate conservation easements. We've lauded land trusts and the Stewardship Fund on Wisconsin Public Radio and Wisconsin Public Television. We have authored numerous magazine articles. Our webpage is a virtual library of resources. We share conservation information with interested landowners every week.



## As the land trust movement has grown and conservation transactions have become increasingly sophisticated

Gathering Waters has tapped the wisdom of experienced land trust practitioners in Wisconsin and nationwide. We have hosted and co-hosted statewide, regional and national land trust conferences. We have also offered credentialed seminars for attorneys, appraisers, assessors and financial advisors. We have advised national efforts to raise the quality and ensure the permanence of land trusts' work.

## To encourage land trusts' influence in Wisconsin conservation

Gathering Waters has convened and participated in regional coalitions. A single all-volunteer land trust may not make the radar of large funders or regional planners but an alliance of active land trusts will. We have supported regional conservation planning through the Blufflands Alliance, the Milwaukee County Conservation Coalition, the St. Croix Conservation Collaborative and the Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance.

## To capture the potential of the land trust movement

Gathering Waters strives to create opportunities for Wisconsin land trusts. We are campaigning to make state funds available to land trusts protecting working farms; we are tracking potential roles for land trusts in the movement to address climate change. We are watching land trust trends nationally and promoting land trust accreditation. We are introducing land trusts to regional economic development leaders.

Wisconsin land trusts' accomplishments are extraordinary. The potential of the land trust movement is even more so. We may not yet imagine what will best serve Wisconsin land trusts 15 years from now, but we're confident that our mission will remain vital for many years to come.

## A Wisconsin Land Conservation Chronology

There is no legal definition of "land trust"—we consider a land trust any non-governmental organization permanently protecting land for public benefit by acquisition and stewardship, by holding conservation easements or both.

1930-1959

- 1936 • Madison Audubon Society
- 1937 • The Ridges Sanctuary
- 1958 • Ice Age Park & Trail Foundation
- 1959 • The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin

1960-1989

- 1974 • Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation
- 1977 • Geneva Lake Conservancy
- 1982 • Aldo Leopold Foundation
- 1983 • Natural Heritage Land Trust
- 1985 • Lakeland Conservancy
- 1986 • Door County Land Trust
- 1987 • Madeline Island Wilderness Preserve  
The Prairie Enthusiasts
- 1988 • West Wisconsin Land Trust

1990-1999

- 1992 • Ozaukee Washington Land Trust  
Waukesha County Land Conservancy
- 1993 • Kinnickinnic River Land Trust
- 1994 • **Gathering Waters Conservancy**  
Baraboo Range Preservation Association  
Caledonia Conservancy  
Last Wilderness Conservation Association  
Muskego Lakes Conservancy  
River Revitalization Foundation  
Standing Cedars Community Land Conservancy
- 1995 • Bayfield Regional Conservancy  
Friends of Pheasant Branch  
Glacial Lakes Conservancy  
Green Lake Conservancy Foundation  
Urban Open Space Foundation, Inc.
- 1996 • Kenosha/Racine Land Trust  
North Central Conservancy Trust  
Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust  
Town of Dunn's PDR program
- 1997 • Deer Lake Conservancy  
Mississippi Valley Conservancy  
Riverland Conservancy  
Baird Creek Preservation Foundation  
Drumlin Area Land Trust

2000's

- 2000 • Driftless Area Land Conservancy  
Kettle Moraine Land Trust  
Milwaukee Area Land Conservancy  
Tall Pines Conservancy
- 2001 • Chippewa County Land Conservancy  
Northwoods Land Trust  
Twin Lakes Conservancy
- 2002 • Couderay Waters Regional Land Trust  
Walworth County Land Trust  
Star Prairie Land Preservation Trust



Photograph courtesy of the Glacial Lakes Conservancy



*Gathering Waters Founders on our 10th Anniversary.  
left to right: Jean Meanwell, Bill O'Connor, Executive Director Vicki Elkin,  
Geoff Maclay and Bud Jordahl*



## People Protect Wisconsin

Visionary landowners, dedicated board members and passionate land trust staff have been the true engine of land protection in Wisconsin. At Gathering Waters our accomplishments are also those of a talented and dedicated team. We acknowledge especially our founders and past executive directors.

### Gathering Waters' Founders

**Rob Chambers** was a founder and president of the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust and a board member of the National Land Trust Council when Gathering Waters was founded. In his day job, he is a globally renowned log home builder who follows summer, splitting his year between the Kinnickinnic Valley and New Zealand.

**Harold C. "Bud" Jordahl** is an Emeritus Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Wisconsin. He was the Chair of Wisconsin's Natural Resources Board and has worked for the Wisconsin Conservation Department, the Wisconsin Department of Resource Development, and in the office of the Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior. His contributions to land conservation are so numerous that he was inducted into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame in 2007. As often as possible, Bud roams the woods of his restored Coulee Ridge farm. He lives in Madison.

**Geoff Maclay** remains the President of the Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation, a land trust he helped found in 1974 to protect the natural assets of Big Cedar Lake and its surroundings in Washington County.

**Jean Meanwell** has been dedicated for decades to the natural treasures literally in her backyard. A Madison resident, Jean joined the Board of the Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation in 1984, and served three terms including one as its President. She's an active advocate for UW Campus Natural Areas.

**William O'Connor** is still a fixture in land and water conservation law in Wisconsin. He continues to serve as counsel for many Wisconsin land trusts. From a law office overlooking the Capitol, he is actively involved in land and water resources law and public policy. Bill also served on the board of the Land Trust Alliance.

### Our Former Executive Directors

**Brian Hotz**, our Executive Director from 1995 to 1998, rented a desk at The Nature Conservancy but spent many weeks in his car, driving to meet new land trusts, camping on protected land and moving to a new group the next day. From those humble beginnings he now has his own office: Hotz is Director of Land Protection for one of the oldest land trusts in the nation. At The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests he oversees the stewardship of over 160,000 acres.

**Vicki Elkin**, pictured below with the next generation of Wisconsin conservationists, grew Gathering Waters from a single to a 7-staff organization. Hired in 1998, she stepped down as Executive Director and took up the mantle of Gathering Waters' Policy Director in 2006 to run our successful campaign to see the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund reauthorized. Today she spearheads the Campaign for Wisconsin's Farm and Forest Lands. Vicki is a peerless champion of conservation in Wisconsin.



## Board Member Profile: Trish Stocking

Trish Stocking has been following Gathering Waters since its inception and has been intrigued by the parallel growth of Gathering Waters and Wisconsin's land trust community. When she was asked to join the Board in 2003, she jumped at the chance. She believes that local land trusts "fill an important niche in the conservation of Wisconsin's landscape" and loves being part of an organization that works to create "a favorable climate within which they can operate." Trish works in land protection for The Nature Conservancy's Wisconsin Field Office. She studied botany as an undergraduate and received a law degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1975. Trish has always worked for conservation organizations, except for a 10-year break, which she and her husband, Jonathan Ela, spent traveling and exploring, first in a sailboat and then in a pickup camper. Trish and Jonathan visit their property in Door County as often as they can and enjoy traveling, bird watching and sharing the outdoors with their grandchildren.



## Land Legacy Gathering

On April 25th, Gathering Waters Conservancy's friends and supporters raised glasses at our 2nd annual Land Legacy Gathering. The Gathering is our way of recognizing people who make our work possible, advancing Wisconsin's land legacy. This year's event was also a birthday party of sorts to celebrate Gathering Waters' 15th year.

Sturdy guests enjoyed a shortened and soggy tour of the Mequon Nature Preserve—a ground-breaking example of a restored natural area in an urban/suburban community. A reception followed at the Preserve's Education Center—Mequon's first "green" structure working toward LEED certification.

Mequon Mayor Christine Nuernberg, Tony Warren, chairman of the board of West Bend Mutual Insurance Company and Shawn Graff, executive director of the Ozaukee Washington Land Trust were all on hand to help us celebrate and speak of the value of local conservation initiatives like the Mequon Preserve and the important role Gathering Waters plays in making these projects possible.

The Land Legacy Gathering was a perfect way to welcome the spring and to acknowledge the people without whom our work strengthening Wisconsin land trusts would not be possible.

## Thank You!

**Karl and Liz Klessig** for hosting Vicki Elkin and Bob Wagner for the Working Lands Workshop, **David Dickinson** for sharing outreach opportunities at the Land Trust Retreat and **Godfrey and Kahn** for meeting space.

## We're grateful to the Sponsors of the 2009 Land Legacy Gathering

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#### Hosts

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Anthony & Linda Warren

## There Might be a Rainforest in your Future...

Gathering Waters Conservancy is excited to announce a partnership with an educational and ecotourism organization. Together we will offer our members opportunities to put Wisconsin land conservation in a global context. Starting next year we will offer expert-led tours to places where private land conservation is helping protect unique cultural and natural resources

Our inaugural trip will be to Costa Rica, February 19–28, 2010. Itinerary highlights include rainforest bird-watching, evening lectures by local and expert naturalists and a tour of the Tirimbina Rainforest Center—a biological reserve and science education facility founded by the Milwaukee Public Museum. Information and a registration form are on-line: [www.holbrooktravel.com/GatheringWatersCostaRica2010](http://www.holbrooktravel.com/GatheringWatersCostaRica2010).

*Note: Funding for this program is wholly afforded by participant fees. No Gathering Waters operational funds are expended to offer this opportunity.*

# crosscurrents

a newsletter to serve the land conservation  
community of Wisconsin



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## THE PARADE OF PRESERVES

### 2009 Parade of Preserves

With summer just around the corner, it's time to head outside and enjoy the places that make Wisconsin special! Land trusts have been working hard all year...take the opportunity to enjoy their accomplishments by spending some quality time on protected land. Field trips, work days, tree-planting parties and more fill the warm weather calendar.

To find a list of land trust events, visit [www.gatheringwaters.org/parade](http://www.gatheringwaters.org/parade).

Registration is required for some trips and space may be limited, so plan ahead. Get the promise of a great outdoor day on your calendar now!



Photo courtesy of Jessica Bolwahn



### Save the Date

If you've been to our Awards Celebration in the past, you know that it is a don't-miss event for conservation supporters statewide. If not, it's high time you joined us! **The 2009 Land Conservation Leadership Awards Celebration will be October 1st in Madison.** This year we'll be celebrating our honorees and Gathering Waters' 15th anniversary.