



gathering waters conservancy

And the Winners Are...

On our favorite day in Gathering Waters' calendar, conservationists from across the state gathered in Madison last month to honor some outstanding accomplishments. Gathering Waters Conservancy's Annual Land Conservation Leadership Awards recognize individuals and organizations whose achievements are making a notable impact on the future of Wisconsin's natural resources. Here are the **2007 Honorees...**

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Land Trust of the Year

In just six short years, the **Northwoods Land Trust** has established an impressive conservation track record in an area of Wisconsin experiencing higher-than-ever development pressure. Executive Director Bryan Pierce and the Northwoods Land Trust's board of directors have tapped into the dedication of landowners intent on preserving the natural character of Wisconsin's northern lakes and forests. Their efforts have resulted in more than 2,000 permanently protected acres, including over eight miles of lake and river shoreline. Thanks to the generosity of event sponsors, (for a list, see p. 7) Gathering Waters Conservancy presented the Northwoods Land Trust with a check for \$3,000.



Left to right; Dan Wisniewski, Bob Martini, Willa Schmidt, Meta Reigel, Executive Director Bryan Pierce, Mitch Olson and Jim Holperin

Policy Maker of the Year



Wisconsin Secretary of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection **Rod Nilsestuen** has led the charge to preserve Wisconsin's working agricultural and forest lands. In 2005, Nilsestuen convened the Working Lands Initiative Steering Committee, a diverse group of leaders who share an interest in keeping Wisconsin's working lands in production and healthy. That committee proposed a statewide Purchase of Development Rights program which, if instated, would be an invaluable tool for communities, farmers, and land trusts working to preserve Wisconsin's farmland. "Rod has been a visionary leader of the Department of Agriculture and a champion of the idea that protecting Wisconsin's working lands is vital to the state's future," said Jim Welsh, Executive Director of the Natural Heritage Land Trust.

Conservationist Lifetime Achievement Award

We presented our 2007 Lifetime Achievement Award to **David Ladd** for his dedication to environmental sustainability in business as well as decades of untiring land stewardship in his native Iowa County and across the state. As CEO of Walnut Hollow, Inc. David has instilled his woodcraft production business with an ethic of environmental stewardship, committing to no-waste "lean manufacturing" practices. He has served on countless conservation boards, including both Blue Ribbon Task Forces on the Stewardship Program and 20 years on the board of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. Actively involved in local conservation projects in and around Dodgeville, "Mr. Ladd has permeated his community with a notable environmental ethic," said Charlie Luthin, Natural Resources Foundation Executive Director.



These three awards were presented before a crowd of over 200 who enjoyed great company, a tempting silent auction, and left inspired by the energy and success of our award winners.

nature photos: Gil Gibb

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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From the Executive Director's Desk...

It's fall, and seed collectors' and trail builders' field seasons are winding down; hunters are anticipating brisk mornings in the woods. It's harvest season. Here in the Gathering Waters Conservancy office, we are looking to next year's activities in earnest and beginning to talk to you, our members, about the opportunities you have to support the work we do.



You probably recently received our annual report, which described briefly how much we accomplish with the support of people who care about land in Wisconsin. We aim to send you an even more impressive report next year.

As you read on in this newsletter, you'll learn how we raised awareness and bi-partisan support for the Stewardship Fund this year. I suspect you received a few pieces of mail about the Stewardship Fund, yourself. In the pages that follow, you'll see that our annual Land Trust Staff Retreat continues to grow to meet the expanding community of Wisconsin land trust staff and board members. We're making federal funding sources work for Wisconsin land trusts. We continue to introduce new audiences to Wisconsin land trusts and their great work.

We're moving this fall into focused strategic planning conversations about how we continue to strengthen Wisconsin land trusts. As we have in the past, we will be setting ambitious goals for pushing public policy to support land conservation, for making land trusts community institutions as well-known and valued as libraries, and for connecting Wisconsin land trusts to new knowledge and innovative ideas.

We're proud of the work we do; we are confident that we do it well. No other organization works to advance private land conservation as we do. That work demands investment. I hope you're equally confident that we will use your investment – your contributions – in ways that matter to you and your family and to our beautiful state.



Michael Strigel, Executive Director

Board Member Profile, Peter Dohr



Peter Dohr is an attorney with DeWitt, Ross, & Stevens in Madison, where he specializes in estate planning, real estate development, and land use. After a career focused on the legal aspects of land use, Peter came to our board interested in how his expertise can forward land conservation. He is an avid hiker, skier, canoeist, and mountain-climber, and has completed several treks in the Himalayas. These activities complement his conservation ethic that is rooted here at home. He and his wife are part owners of 40 glacially formed acres in Waushara County, where they are restoring a prairie and on which they have recently donated a conservation easement to the Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust. They are working on another easement on adjacent property of about 18 acres which his parents purchased in the 1950s and the Dohr children want to preserve.

Peter is particularly interested in fostering Gathering Waters continued support of Wisconsin land trusts. We're lucky to have Peter's experience in the non-profit realm. He is past president of the Kiwanis club of Downtown Madison and is a trustee of its Foundation. Additionally, he serves as counsel and board member of Madison Opera Inc., which he helped form.

Help us Welcome

Gathering Waters Conservancy welcomed two new members to our Board this summer:

Tim Jacobson, La Crosse

In 2005, Tim left his position as president of the law firm O'Flaherty Heim Egan, Ltd. to become Executive Director of Mississippi Valley Conservancy. Tim has been a resident of the Coulee Region of southwestern Wisconsin since childhood. He grew up working on area farms, practiced law in the region for 14 years, and has served on several boards of directors of local organizations. Tim loves hiking, camping, rock climbing and scuba diving.



Bill Berry, Stevens Point

Bill is a writer and editor committed to the conservation of America's working lands. He writes for the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters' Future of Farming and Rural Life in Wisconsin project. He also pens a regular column for Madison's *Capital Times* and contributes regularly to other national and state publications.



Our indomitable intern

Since early this summer, our pool of talented interns has included **Mike Carlson**. A recent graduate of the UW Law School, Mike is finishing a master's degree in Land Resources. Between studies and training for the Ironman triathlon (and, apparently, trout fishing), Mike worked several hours this summer for our Stewardship Fund reauthorization campaign, communicating to legislators, the press and citizens urging them to support Stewardship. We are also awed to report that Mike finished the Ironman in 11 hours – 221st out of over 2000 competitors.



The Future of the Stewardship Fund

Gathering Waters Conservancy has spent much of the last year fighting for the state's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund, and we encourage you to join our efforts. As we go to press, the Legislature has yet to pass a state budget. Many issues are hanging in the balance, including the fate of the Stewardship Fund.

For a current update on the status of Stewardship, visit www.gatheringwaters.org/stewardship. If the budget impasse has not yet ended, urge your Senator and Assembly Representative to increase the Stewardship Fund to \$105 million. If budget debates have resolved, please thank the legislators who have supported the Stewardship Fund.

Despite the stalled budget negotiations at the State Capitol, we are pleased that our Stewardship message is getting through. Republican Representative Gary Bies from Sister Bay said, "during this Conference Committee process, the single issue that has generated the most contacts in my office is the Stewardship Program...I received more contacts on Stewardship in one week than I have received all summer on Healthy Wisconsin, school and UW funding."

We are not surprised. Here is a snapshot of our many activities on behalf of the Stewardship Fund this year. Along with our partners, The Nature Conservancy and local land trusts statewide, Gathering Waters Conservancy has:

Helped generate over **150 positive media pieces** on Stewardship including 15 pro-Stewardship editorials, dozens of opinion pieces and letters to the editor. To read these, visit our webpage.

Appeared on radio shows and given **public presentations** to audiences ranging from the downtown Milwaukee Rotary Club to local sporting clubs.

Published **Stories of Stewardship** – a collection of stories written by citizens about places protected with Stewardship Funds – and organized field trips to protected properties around the state.

Called thousands of conservationists and wrote tens of thousands more across Wisconsin asking them to urge their legislators to support full funding of Stewardship. In just one week, over **1,800 people phoned their lawmakers** to ask them to increase the Stewardship Fund to \$105 million.

While coordinating support for the Stewardship Fund has kept us busy, finding support for conservation in Wisconsin is not hard. Citizens' responses to this campaign have been overwhelming and positive. The numbers above alone remind us how many of our neighbors, friends and family care deeply about Wisconsin's outdoors.

Here's what people are saying about the Stewardship Fund

"...the Stewardship program is more relevant than ever as a tool to protect access to our state's precious natural resources.... it is appropriate to adjust for inflation and secure \$105 million each year [for the Stewardship Fund] to preserve these lands."

– Senator Dale Schultz, R-Richland Center.

"The Stewardship Fund is vital to the growth of the state's third largest industry, tourism, which last year generated \$13 billion in traveler expenditures, translating into millions in tax revenue and hundreds of thousands of jobs... As [visitors] enjoy the bounty of outdoor recreational opportunities in Wisconsin, they are also making their way into area lodging, restaurants, and retail businesses."

–Tom Diehl, President, Tommy Bartlett, Inc. supporting full funding for the Stewardship Fund.

"The Stewardship Fund has enjoyed bipartisan support for more than four decades. That kind of political unanimity occurs only when the program makes total sense. Legislators who have common sense about the economy will back the extension of the Stewardship Fund."

–John B. Torinus Jr., Chairman, Serigraph Inc.

"One way to gauge the popularity of this program has been the widespread support of individuals, foundations, and corporations that have "over" matched Stewardship funds. An example is the Mequon Nature Preserve. The total cost of acquiring the Preserve's 438 acres was \$6.7 million. The Stewardship Fund provided \$881,000 of this amount. ... [Stewardship's] dollars prime the pump for a significant infusion of many more private dollars."

–Christine Nuernberg, Mayor, City of Mequon

Hats Off! Gathering Waters Salutes Land Trust Volunteers

Land trusts often get credit for conservation transactions – closing easements or purchasing land. But while permanent protection is a crucial first step, in some ways the work only begins when the deal is done. After the ink dries on the transaction paperwork, the most critical element of land protection is ensuring the vitality of the natural resources that made the property so important to protect in the first place.

While land trust staff work to attract grant funding and negotiate and close conservation transactions, the “dirty work” of land stewardship is often done by volunteers. All across Wisconsin, land trusts and their legions of loyal volunteers are putting in long hours of hard labor to steward those permanently protected places we all celebrate. Here are only a few examples:

On **Riverland Conservancy’s** Merrimac Preserve, engaging volunteers is a full time job for Deb Frosch, Preserve Manager. The Preserve, near Devil’s Lake State Park in Sauk County, is more than 1,800 acres of forest, prairie, savanna, wetlands and streams that have been laboriously restored—mostly by Riverland’s army of volunteer partners.

Spurred by a Gathering Waters workshop on site planning, Riverland Conservancy developed a comprehensive management and restoration plan for the Preserve. Deb coordinates the many partnerships at the heart of Riverland’s ambitious management efforts.

One such partnership involves a group of over 60 hunters who each contribute 16 hours of annual volunteer labor in exchange for a hunting permit. Elsewhere on the Preserve, youth groups from the Wisconsin Conservation Corps, Operation Fresh Start, and the Youth Environmental Project of Sauk County have restored nearly a mile of Manley Creek to a Class One brook trout stream. Students from nearby schools are also on the front lines of significant wetland restoration at the Merrimac Preserve.



Photo courtesy of D. Seitz and the Mobile Skills Crew

“Volunteers from our partner groups have done a lot of fence removal, a lot of invasive species control, repair to buildings, seed collecting and dispersing, boardwalk construction and so much more,” says Deb.

As Wisconsin land trusts grow, more groups are able to employ staff members who, like Deb, dedicate much of their time to land management. While those staff certainly do their share of the hard labor, “land management” often means channeling the energies of steady streams of volunteers.

The Prairie Enthusiasts are one group whose restoration projects are carried out by a veritable river of willing workers, all committed to native grasslands and savannas. In 2006, their volunteers logged more than 12,500 hours of labor in the field, classroom, and office. One of those volunteers, past president Rich Henderson, was a 2004 recipient of a National Jefferson Award for public service, nominated because of his commitment to the mission of The Prairie Enthusiasts and countless hours “on the ground” restoring Wisconsin’s iconic prairie landscapes.

Land trusts capture volunteers’ passion for particular places and natural communities – and the satisfaction of spending a day outside. The **Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation** boasts of team of trail builders who cross Wisconsin—through wetlands, woods and prairies—dedicated to the vision of the completed statewide trail. The Ice Age Trail Mobile Skills Crew brings their nationally-renowned trail-building technical knowledge to different sites along the 1,000-plus miles of the Trail. Volunteers dig, lift, sweat, learn trail-building skills, are trained to lead local trail maintenance projects, and they put the “party” in “work party!”

Tim Malzhan, Mobile Skills Crew Program Manager, describes a typical work party: “The post-dinner slate often features an educational presentation or entertainment...[such as] folk, blues and bluegrass music, storytellers,... professional biologists, geologists and other experts....All this, of course, is in addition to the guaranteed hijinks that spring organically from participants!”

Managing and restoring natural communities that provide habitat for plants, animals and human visitors, safeguard water quality, and keep Wisconsin scenic, is a long-term effort. This fall as you hike the trails, bike through the countryside, or take a drive to look at the foliage, say a little thank you to the thousands of land trust volunteers who have contributed their time, labor and sacrificed a few mosquito bites to ensure that Wisconsin’s landscapes and ecosystems are alive and well. Or better yet—call your local land trust and sign up to get your hands dirty!



Photo courtesy of D. Seitz and the Mobile Skills Crew

Look fun?

There are still field trips and work days upcoming – check the Parade of Preserves section of our web page, www.gatheringwaters.org. Land trusts use volunteers and host outdoor events year round. Grab your gloves, check our web page to find your local land trust and Get Outside!

“All across Wisconsin, land trusts and their legions of loyal volunteers are putting in long hours of hard labor to steward those permanently protected places we all celebrate.”

Funding Management: creating a “hedge fund”

Volunteer labor is free, but materials, coordination and long-term stewardship of protected property are not. Securing adequate funding for management and legal defense of protected lands is a key concern of land trusts nation wide. Wisconsin land trusts are growing creative and sophisticated as they strive to support these management expenses.

For example, the Ozaukee-Washington Land Trust has established endowments so that donors can designate gifts that will support land management long term. Donors who want to support general OWLT operations can do so through their “Heritage Fund” at the Greater Milwaukee Foundation. A second endowment, their “Stewardship Fund,” much of which is held by the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, will be used specifically for restoration, easement monitoring and legal defense of the lands they protect. Recently OWLT partnered with the City of Mequon and the Greater Milwaukee Foundation to establish a third endowment fund specifically for improvements and maintenance of the Mequon Nature Preserve.



Photo courtesy of Riverland Conservancy



Photo courtesy of Riverland Conservancy

Gathering Waters would like to thank...

Jennifer Hassrick for her photography and her willing subjects, the Kluesner family, Molly & Evelyn Strigel, Paul Haskew, Karl Hassrick and the next generation of GWC staff.

Egon Bassler Mortensen for help with large mailings

Wisconsin Wetlands Association & River Alliance of Wisconsin for their easels

Brenda Haskins for her answer to our Fall Currents "Ask an Attorney" question

Cricket Design Works for donating their "Dairyland Dare" proceeds to Gathering Waters Conservancy

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John Kaiser
Patti Jeffords
Jerry Smith

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And thanks to

Becky Lloyd for crafting the awards
Amy Sullivan for photographing the event
Kristin and Phil Redman for collecting pebbles along the shores of Lake Superior

From the Program Office

by Karen Bassler, Conservation Program Director

There's a rock in my pocket. If you attended our Land Conservation Awards Celebration, you also have a stone somewhere and know what it represents: just as a rock dropped in water creates ripples outward, every conservation action – a check written, conversation shared, or letter sent to a legislator has an impact larger than just that action. In our efforts to generate conservation ripples ourselves, here are some of the "rocks" our staff dropped in the waters this year.

Training & Technical Assistance

The flagship event in our fleet of direct services to land trusts, our annual **Land Trust Staff Retreat** was in Bayfield in May. During this casual two-day meeting, land trust staff statewide shared presentations about capital campaigns and experience in the national Accreditation Program. DNR Stewardship Fund staff led a discussion about the future of that program. As always, the highlights of the staff retreat were unscheduled conversations shared over the delectable annual dessert potluck.

On money matters, Liz and Sara presented two workshops on building strong membership programs. In September, the Land Trust Alliance asked Gathering Waters to pilot and evaluate their course, **Financial Management for Land Trusts**. Twenty organizations were represented in a lively discussion of the financial nuts and bolts of running sound non-profits.

This fall, Gathering Waters is on the planning team for **LTA's Midwest Regional Conference**, scheduled for March 2008. We're also presenting on private land conservation to two large conferences – the American Tree Farm System's national convention and the Wisconsin Chapter of the Financial Planning Association.

Policy Advocacy

Althea has been tracking recent changes to the **Federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program**, a source of funding for farmland protection. New rules have complicated the application process for Wisconsin land trusts. Working with USDA administrators in Washington DC and on the state level, Althea reports that at press time, it seems as though a solution is on the horizon.

We've also been working to see that generous but temporary federal tax incentives for donated easements are made permanent. The Senate Finance Committee has approved the "Habitat and Land Conservation Act of 2007," a bill including **permanent extension of conservation contribution incentives**. Wisconsin Representatives Ron Kind and Paul Ryan have signed on as cosponsors of the House bill. Working through our network of land trust supporters, we're urging the rest of the Wisconsin delegation to do the same.

Encouraging Land Trust Excellence

Althea and I met with **colleagues from land trust service centers** around the nation this summer to keep abreast of issues affecting the land trust community, including recent IRS audits of conservation easement donations.

We're in touch with the two Wisconsin land trusts who have gone through the pilot of the national **Land Trust Accreditation Program**: Geneva Lake Conservancy and West Wisconsin Land Trust. Several others have entered the lottery for application for Accreditation in 2008.

One accreditation requirement is a **full organizational assessment**. Through a Land Trust Alliance cost-share program, I conducted assessments for the Glacial Lakes Conservancy and the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust as those organizations anticipate accreditation in coming years.

I have also been meeting with Wisconsin DNR to identify ways our land trusts can connect their projects to the goals of (and potential funding sources associated with) the State Wildlife Action Plan and the DNR's Land Legacy Report.

There's more to report than room to report it, so stay tuned for future newsletters to learn how we strengthen Wisconsin land trusts and create ripples of conservation support around our state.



Two Executive Directors, Chris Goebel of Glacial Lakes Conservancy and David Wernecke of the Baraboo Range Preservation Association share notes and dessert at the 2007 Staff Retreat.

Ways of Giving

If you have read one of our newsletters before you know that we enjoy highlighting stories of our members, specifically, stories of those who find innovative ways to support Gathering Waters. In the past few months we've been graced with the unique generosity of a few loyal supporters.



Jennifer Hassrick and daughter

In July, close friends of Gathering Waters Conservancy were married and named Gathering Waters as one of their registry options. Guests were given the opportunity not only to shower the happy couple with kitchen utensils and bath towels, but also to support one of the newlyweds' shared passions – conservation in Wisconsin. We received several calls and emails leading up to the wedding from people interested in making a donation in honor of the big day, some from folks new to Gathering Waters. A big thank you to the bride and groom!

Portrait photographer **Jennifer Hassrick** donated her artistry this summer by spending a glorious day at a local county park, shooting images of spirited kids outside which she has donated for our use in printed material. She and her husband have both lent their talents to Gathering Waters in recent years, (Karl has helped with computer issues). Jennifer's contributions are a much-needed improvement to our photo library, and we're very grateful for her time and talent. Look for her work in upcoming publications.

We're always looking for high-quality photos of people outside in Wisconsin. If you know a photographer whom you think we should meet, please let us know!

Speaking of in-kind contributors, we want to thank our 2007 Silent Auction Donors –

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to the members
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Tales from our Big Backyard

We have been overwhelmed by the enthusiastic response to ***Stories of Stewardship: Tales from Wisconsin's Big Backyard***, our publication about Wisconsinites' connections to places protected by the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund. Requests for the booklet have poured in—from public libraries, high school teachers, citizens who heard about it on Wisconsin Public Radio—even a college professor in Canada wanting to use it as a teaching tool in a class on land stewardship!

At Gathering Waters we welcome a good excuse to bring people together outside to see first-hand what Wisconsin conservationists have accomplished. So, to celebrate the success of *Stories of Stewardship*, we joined forces with **Madison Audubon Society** and **Couderay Waters Regional Land Trust** to visit two properties featured in the booklet to meet some of the folks responsible for their protection.

On August 18, a large group met at Madison Audubon Society's Faville Grove Sanctuary in Jefferson County. Volunteer sanctuary managers and contributing storytellers David Musolf and Roger Packard treated us to a guided tour of "Buddy's Place," a beautiful section of restored prairie and wetland, and shared their moving stories of land stewardship and the commitment that has motivated their significant efforts there.

The following weekend we headed north to the Chippewa Flowage in Sawyer County. Jerry Smith, natural and cultural historian for the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Ojibwe, unraveled the rich history of the Ojibwe people in the area that is now the Chippewa Flowage. Doug Kurtzweil of Couderay Waters Regional Land Trust told the tale of the local grass-roots effort to prevent development on wild islands in one of Wisconsin's largest lakes. We topped off the afternoon with a boat tour of the flowage.

David Musolf sharing the wonders of prairie seeds at Faville Grove

Many thanks to David, Roger, Doug, Jerry, Bruce Paulsen, and to everyone who attended the field trips! If you haven't yet seen *Stories of Stewardship*, contact us at (608) 251-9131 or info@gatheringwaters.org for a free copy.



Photo courtesy of Jeff Strobel