



gathering waters conservancy

Sharing Conservation Successes

We love to tell the stories of land trusts working across Wisconsin. As 2011 came to an end we were astonished by the historically significant and inspiring conservation success stories from around the state.

At the end of the year, the Driftless Area Land Conservancy completed an incredibly unique and significant project for southwest Wisconsin. The Conservancy worked with a group of conservation-minded landowners to permanently protect six important contiguous properties – 780 acres of Blufflands along the Lower Wisconsin Riverway. These properties protect hilltop farmland, springs, rugged ravines, secluded valleys, and rare plants and animals. They also preserve continentally-important Driftless area features such as oak woodlands, oak openings, native prairie remnants, and unique rock outcroppings that will be enjoyed for years to come.

This is just one example of the work that shows ingenuity, surpasses expectations, and breaks records in Wisconsin. What follows is just a sampling of a few other terrific projects we're privileged to share.

Easement Donation History Is Made

On December 1, the Winter Park Pines Nature Preserve near Minocqua was established with the granting of a perpetual conservation easement by Ken and Carolyn Aldridge to the Northwoods Land Trust. This 3,195 acre property – nearly five square miles – includes approximately 27 miles of cross-country ski and snowshoe trails at the core of the Minocqua Winter Park Nordic Center's trail system. This is the largest conservation easement ever donated to a land trust in Wisconsin!

A First Preserve for Glacial Lakes Conservancy

Grasshopper Hill represents over five years of work to purchase and create this 25-acre glacial remnant nature preserve in the Town of Rhine in east-central Wisconsin. In Spring 2011, family members of the Fischer Farmstead agreed to an option to purchase because of their shared vision to protect the steep-sided, wooded hill from future development. Notes Vickie Hall, Glacial Lakes Conservancy's Executive Director, "As we have met with locals who spent time around the lake in their youth, we have been hearing a lot of laughter and even poetry, but most of all a deep abiding connection to this beautiful place through many stories." See the margin for a poem inspired by this beautiful property. *Continued on pg. 7*

*Upon a hill, where all is still,
I find a quiet peace.
I sit until my heart's tranquil,
And all my problems cease.*

*I see the trees above me stand,
Like kinds in their magnificence.
Yet luxuries concern them not,
And wealth has no significance.*

*I see the birds above me fly,
With grace soar through the air;
They live without all fear and doubt,
They have no worldly care.*

*And then I see the earth below,
Filled with hate and war.
Greedy, vain and selfish people,
Always wanting more.*

*They do not stop to view the trees,
Or watch the birds above;
For, if it were so, then they would know
The wealth of life is love.*

Maureen Esch Schott, *Upon a Hill*



GLC President Kenn Buelow (left) celebrates the Grasshopper Hill dedication with Fischer Farm owners Mark Meeusen and Noelle Jonas, Board Member Chris Krieg, and GLC Executive Director Vickie Hall

Top photo by Joshua Mayer

in this issue:

- From the Executive Director - p2
- Board Member Profile - p2
- Program Profile - p3
- Warm Welcome - p3
- Wisconsin's Land Trust Excellence & Advocates Program - p4-5
- The Ridges - p6
- Best Wishes - p6
- 2012 Photo Contest - p7
- Outdoor Opportunities - p8

Photo by Evan Eifler



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

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From the Executive Director's Desk...



"We shall never achieve harmony with the land, anymore than we shall achieve absolute justice or liberty for people. In these higher aspirations the important thing is not to achieve but to strive."

—Aldo Leopold, *Round River: From the Journals of Aldo Leopold*

I'm incredibly fortunate to work directly with and get to know the people that make up Wisconsin's 50+ land trusts.

Perhaps the most striking trait in these organizations and people is that, at their core, they are dedicated to striving for harmony with the land. It's a drive that can be absolutely exhausting if not approached carefully. But, I believe that when we recognize the opportunity in that spirit, the most common result is exhilaration — the exhilaration that comes from achieving a success that has multi-generational staying power.

That kind of success obviously requires skills and commitment that don't come cheap. In past issues of *Crosscurrents* and through other means, we've shared both the vision and details of the Land Trust Excellence and Advancement Program (LEAP). As its name implies, LEAP is designed to respond directly to the need and demand for land trust excellence that we see across Wisconsin's landscape. Land trusts and landowners receive financial support from public and private sources in exchange for the promise of perpetual conservation. Launched in January 2011, LEAP strives to ensure that we make good on that promise and that as a community we're putting those valuable resources to use as effectively and efficiently as possible.

At the same time, to honor the investment of our supporters, we aim for excellence in LEAP itself. More than a year after the program's launch, we've learned a lot about the evolving needs of Wisconsin's land trust community and our ability to effectively meet those needs. I invite you to visit our website (and read on to pages 4-5) to learn more about how LEAP is helping to strengthen our land trusts.

We are proud of the strides we've made this year, and with the continued cooperation and support of our dedicated land trusts and members, we hope to continue to honor Leopold's vision as we strive toward the higher aspiration of protecting the places that make Wisconsin special.



Michael Strigel, Executive Director

Board Member & Land Trust Council Profile

Ellen Kwiatkowski wears many hats within Wisconsin's land conservation community. In her day job, Ellen serves as the Executive Director of Bayfield Regional Conservancy where her expertise has led to national land trust accreditation status and the conservation of several significant northern Wisconsin sites (like Wisconsin's new tribal national park on page 7!) Ellen has also been a valuable advocate for the preservation of Wisconsin's working lands and serves on the PACE Council, the advisory body to the Department of Agriculture on Wisconsin's new agricultural conservation easement grant program. In addition, Ellen is the first chair of Wisconsin's Land Trust Council, which seeks to strengthen Wisconsin land trusts through program development and improved communication and coordination. Due to her impressive work, Gathering Waters is proud to recognize Ellen with our Conservationist of the Year award! Prior to moving to Wisconsin, Ellen worked with The Nature Conservancy for 10 years, most recently as the Director of Conservation Programs for their Delaware Chapter. Today, Ellen resides in Bayfield where she and her husband Eric own and manage an organic blueberry farm, Blue Vista Farm — one of four farms protected through The Town of Bayfield's Farmland Preservation Program.





Program Profile: GWC's Public Policy Work

Since Gathering Waters Conservancy was founded in 1994, we have been a non-partisan, solution-oriented advocate for public policies that benefit and encourage private, voluntary land conservation in Wisconsin. Our strength as an advocate is derived from the diverse and vibrant network of Wisconsin's 50+ land trusts and the support of conservation-minded citizens across the political spectrum. We strive to make the voices of these individuals and all of Wisconsin's land trust community heard by state and federal lawmakers and by agency officials.

Our government relations program has enjoyed several successes in recent years. When the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program needed a champion in 2003, in 2007, and again in 2011, Gathering Waters Conservancy worked with land trusts leaders and an ever-broadening coalition of individuals and organizations to successfully protect and enhance the program. In 2009, we led a successful campaign to see the Working Lands Initiative

passed into law – legislation that created the Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) Program.

As the land trust community has grown in size and scope, the need and urgency for advocacy work on their behalf has increased proportionately. We are committed to following through on our work to-date, and in our current three-year strategic plan (approved January 21, 2011), our Board of Directors again identified our policy work as one of three core programs for our organization (in addition to direct services to land trusts and outreach).

Looking ahead through 2012 and beyond, we will need to redouble our advocacy efforts by enhancing our government relations program, by working closely with coalition partners and by honing our message. In this challenging economic climate and often-divisive political atmosphere in Madison and Washington, D.C., we're committed to being even more focused and strategic with our resources and political capital.

Photos by Evan Eifler

A Very Warm Welcome to...

Rebecca Smith, a new GWC board member. Rebecca is Deputy Director of The Nature Conservancy's Wisconsin Chapter where she provides leadership to the state's conservation programs and serves as the conservation liaison to TNC's Great Lakes and Mississippi River programs. Rebecca also serves as board chair of the local domestic violence shelter, and as a native Wisconsinite she loves to spend time "up north" at the cottage with her husband, Rob, and two teenage daughters.



Matt Reetz, our newest volunteer. Matt is an ecologist and currently a postdoctoral research associate studying factors contributing to the recent declines in Sharp-tailed Grouse populations in Wisconsin. Matt has a wealth of experience in various disciplines and is applying his diverse skill set to Gathering Waters' needs.



Kristine Euclide, our newest GWC board member. Kristine is the Vice President/General Counsel of Madison Gas and Electric Company (MGE) and is also one of MGE's Foundation Directors. She has over thirty years of legal experience, focusing on energy, environmental and local government law matters and has long been involved in civic activities that promote Wisconsin's cultural and environmental heritage. Kristine and her husband Doug have two adult children, and dedicate much of their spare time to visiting family, prairie preservation efforts and enjoying music and nature.



Annabelle DeKok and **Jonas Michael Carlson**, the latest additions to the Gathering Waters family. On June 16th, 2011, GWC Associate Director Sara DeKok and her husband welcomed their first child, an adorable baby girl. On March 24, 2012, GWC Government Relations Director Mike Carlson and his wife also welcomed their first, a bouncing baby boy (9 lbs, 2 ounces!). Both are happy, healthy, and beautiful babies that are already developing an appreciation for Wisconsin's special places! Congratulations to the DeKoks and Carlsons!



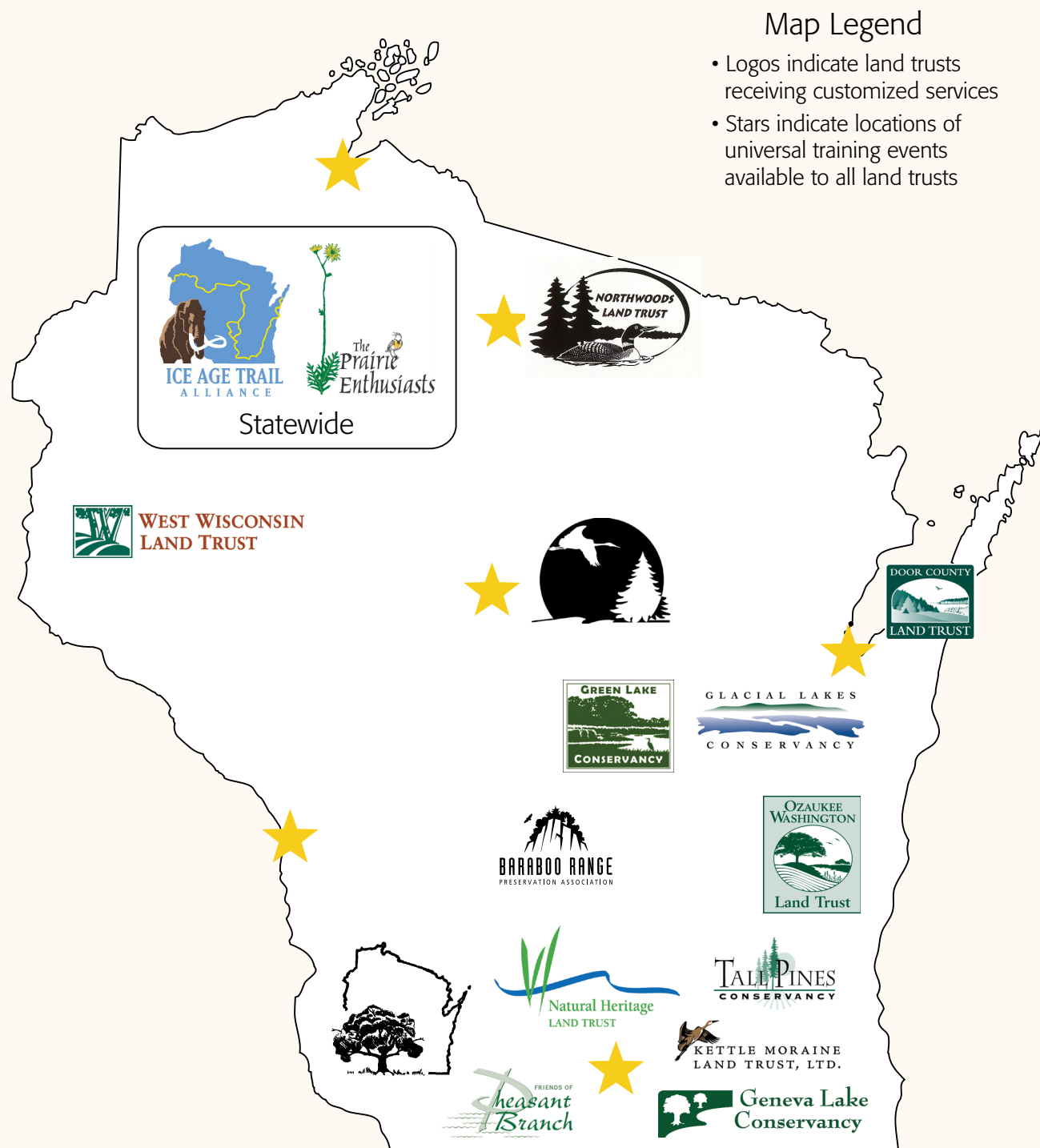
Becky Reich, our new intern. Becky is a recent graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire where she majored in Economics and she just began her master's program at UW-Madison in Urban & Regional Planning. Becky will be assisting with website updates, member mailings and acknowledgments, special event planning, and with a variety of projects in support of our Program Directors.





Wisconsin's Land Trust Excellence & Advancement Program

A look at LEAP in its first two years



The Land Trust Excellence & Advancement Program has provided us the opportunity to more effectively respond to the needs of our land trust members, enhance the strategic application of our resources, and work more collaboratively with our national partners at the Land Trust Alliance. More than ever before, we have the capacity to address timely issues that ensure our perpetual obligations to Wisconsin's land and water resources.

Each logo on the map above represents a land trust receiving a grant or services through LEAP on an individual, customized basis. Whether providing an intensive suite of services leading a land trust to preparation of an accreditation application or assisting a land trust with negotiating staff succession and future planning, we're customizing our services to the land trust community in new ways.

We've also offered universally-available opportunities to all Wisconsin land trusts that ensure land transactions are conducted ethically and within tax code requirements, land trusts have the tools they need to map their conservation priorities and boundaries, and land trusts can access and manage new and complicated federal funding sources. In the coming year, we'll offer even more opportunities that ensure Wisconsin's land trusts have the tools to develop systems for internal financial controls, the best practices in the industry for board engagement and development, and the mechanisms that drive effective community conversations around conservation. This is an exciting time for us at Gathering Waters!

Our commitment to private voluntary land protection in Wisconsin is enhanced through LEAP. We're excited to continue our LEAP work together with our program partner, the Land Trust Alliance, and the land trust community in the coming year.



In the Shadows of Giants

Our state has a storied conservation past with many pioneering figures, organizations, and programs that were at the forefront of our nation's burgeoning movement of land protection and stewardship. Did you know that Wisconsin is the home of the first erosion control demonstration project? Or that many of the beautiful landscapes in our state parks were restored in the 1930s by the young men of the Civilian Conservation Corps? Not to mention the fact that Muir, Leopold, Nelson, and so many other conservation leaders called Wisconsin home. Wisconsin's conservation history is truly jam-packed.

On that note, we would like to congratulate one of our member land trusts on its upcoming 75th anniversary! Founded in 1937, The Ridges Sanctuary is Wisconsin's oldest land trust. The Ridges was formerly a small Range Light reserve surrounded by privately-held forty acre parcels. When the federal government gave the land to Door County in 1936, conversion of the property to a campground resulted in clearing of trees and filling of sloughs. This alarmed Albert Fuller, curator of the Milwaukee Public Museum, who galvanized nature-loving landowners and citizens such as Emma Toft and Olivia Traven (at left) to protect the area and its rare plants. Together they formed The Ridges Sanctuary which has since grown to protect over 1600 wildflower-packed acres. More about their fascinating history can be found online at ridgessanctuary.org

Congratulations to The Ridges on their historic anniversary and for recently receiving our Harold "Bud" Jordahl Land Trust Pioneer Award!

Inez Telfer, Emma Toft and Fred Traven clearing the trail between the upper and lower (pictured) Range Lights, 1955. Photo Courtesy of The Ridges Sanctuary.

Best Wishes and Tons of Gratitude...

We would like to offer our thanks and tip our hats to **Conor Moran** who came to us as an intern in 2004, eager to gain non-profit experience while working toward his law degree. In his three years, Conor brought insight and creative ideas in working to improve our membership systems and expand our capacity. We were especially lucky to have him return to us in 2010 to offer more of his smart attention to detail, Photoshop skills, ability to take on any task, and his magnetic personality. We've greatly enjoyed working with him and thank him for his service to Gathering Waters and the Wisconsin land trust community. Our warmest thanks and best wishes to Conor in his new role as Development Director at REAP Food Group!

We'd also like to extend our gratitude to **Tom Beneke**, our loyal Program Intern since May 2011. A graduate student in the Water Resources Management Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Tom will begin molding young minds as a Teaching Assistant. He has been an asset to our team and we wish him all the best in his future endeavors!

Finally, we deeply thank **Marisa Hernández**, who joined us as part of the Americorps program Public Allies. Marisa worked out of the offices of the River Revitalization Foundation in Milwaukee as GWC's Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance Program Assistant. We were fortunate for Marisa's fantastic work over the last year in enhancing coalition-building among our Lake Michigan basin land trusts. We offer her many thanks and best wishes!

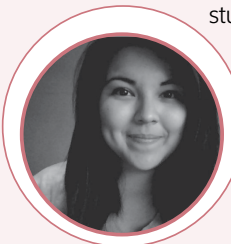




Photo Courtesy of 2010 photo contest winner Paul McMahon

Gathering Waters' 2012 Photo Contest!

We are looking for photos that show off your favorite Wisconsin places and celebrate what makes this state such a wonderful place in which to live, work, and play. We would like to receive entries representative of all seasons so get outside and start snapping photos right away! All images must be taken within Wisconsin, and images from land protected by Wisconsin land trusts are strongly encouraged.

Four categories of photos will be judged based on technical quality, composition, and artistic merit: People Protecting Wisconsin, Celebrate the Seasons, Wisconsin Land Trusts, and Student Submissions (submissions from 9th grade – college students). Winning photos will be awarded cash prizes, posted to our website and printed in our newsletter, and framed to be given as awards at the 2012 Land Conservation Leadership Awards Celebration on October 4th. We began accepting photo entries on March 1 and must receive them by September 1, 2012. So send yours in today!

More info can be found online at: www.gatheringwaters.org/about-us/2012-photo-contest.

Did you Know?

You can include Gathering Waters Conservancy in your estate planning!

To learn how and to read stories of others who have made that commitment, please visit our website at: <http://www.gatheringwaters.org/about-us/support-us/planned-giving/>.

Sharing Our Conservation Successes *(continued from pg. 1)*

Wisconsin's New Tribal National Park

In November, David and Marjorie Johnson sold their 88.6 acre property along Lake Superior to the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, in partnership with the Bayfield Regional Conservancy. The acquisition will protect the property, keeping its nearly quarter mile of sandy and pebble beaches in pristine condition and offering views of five Apostle Islands. Bayfield Regional Conservancy will retain a conservation easement on the property and the Red Cliff Band will create Frog Bay Tribal National Park, open to both tribal and non-tribal members for hiking, birding, beach use and other recreational opportunities.

Wisconsin's Largest Ever Conservation Project

In April, collaboration between Wisconsin DNR, Lyme Timber and The Conservation Fund led to the creation of the Brule-St. Croix Legacy Forest property, the largest land conservation project in Wisconsin history. The property comprises approximately 67,000 acres of working timberland and globally significant Pine Barrens in northwestern Wisconsin and is a fantastic demonstration of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program's great value to the state. Protection of this tract with a working forest conservation easement will enhance water quality by sustaining productive forests at a large scale, prevent forest fragmentation, and provide critical habitat for many species including a few with threatened or endangered status.

We're proud to work with such a committed and talented community of conservationists and we're proud to be in a position to bring these stories to you. For more inspiring stories about conservation in Wisconsin, visit our website (www.gatheringwaters.org), read our blog (www.wisconsinlandtrusts.org), or like us on Facebook. We look forward to more wonderful stories from around our state.

crosscurrents

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community of Wisconsin

gathering waters conservancy

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Thank You

We continue to have a long list of people we'd like to thank for their volunteer and in-kind contributions to Gathering Waters over the last year:

Saxon Homestead for hosting the Partnering for Progress barn dance that benefited Gathering Waters

Art Harrington and **Godfrey & Kahn** for hosting a reception at Rally

Godfrey & Kahn, Stafford Rosenbaum, the Forest County Potawatomi Community, and the Milwaukee Environmental Consortium for meeting space

Althea Dotzour for photographing our 2011 Awards Celebration

Karen Bassler for her help with the 2011 Awards Celebration silent auction set-up

Terrence McCormick, Eric Roberson, Kimberly Gleffe, and Eric Schumann for providing lunches during meetings

Will Erikson and Tessa Romanski for their volunteer work while in town over school breaks

Matt Giangreco, Val Klessig, Justin Palm, and Matt Reetz for their time, expertise, and enthusiasm

Outdoor Opportunities Abound!

With such fantastic Wisconsin weather this time of year, it is a wonderful time to get outside and explore the beauty of our protected lands. Lucky for us there are loads of activities, festivals, and gatherings that celebrate the continuing great work by Wisconsin land trusts. Go on a hike, spy some birds, hunt for the seasons' flowers,

enjoy a cookout, or even volunteer to work for a day. Please visit our Parade of Preserves website at www.gatheringwaters.org/parade to be among beautiful landscapes and wonderful people. Registration is required for some trips and space may be limited, so plan ahead. Enjoy!



We're on Facebook! Become a fan for current conservation news and highlights as they happen!

Save the Dates

Are you staff or board member of a Wisconsin Land Trust? The 2012 Wisconsin Land Trust Retreat will be July 19-21st at the Waters of Minocqua. More information is available on our website!