

YOUR DONOR REPORT

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You helped provide hands-on training to strengthen land trusts

Have you ever considered what goes into a land protection deal?

Unless you negotiate offers to purchase, you probably aren't aware of the intricacies involved.

That was Claire Finucane's experience before attending the *Anatomy of a Land Deal* workshop at the 2023 Land Trust Conference in La Crosse.

Claire is the property steward at the Ice Age Trail Alliance. She manages, monitors, and takes care of land *after* deals are closed.

During the workshop, Claire and her peers acted as board members or land protection staff of an imaginary land trust. Their purpose? Decide whether or not to purchase Swan Landing, a hypothetical 533-acre, waterfront property.

It should have been a simple decision, right?

Not so. Claire and her teammates identified many factors that needed to be weighed. There were numerous timelines to meet, grant funding to secure, staff capacity to consider, and the ongoing costs for habitat restoration.

"Land trusts need to be strategic," said MaryKay O'Donnell, Midwest Senior Program Manager,



"I gained valuable insight," Claire reported. "I have a new appreciation for land protection deals and how my role relates to them." ~ Claire Finucane

Land Trust Alliance. "This workshop highlighted the need to evaluate and select projects that make sense long term and comply with Land Trust Standards and Practices.

Attention to detail during land deals helps land trusts make good on the promises of perpetuity."

While not every participant at the conference had first-hand experience in purchasing and protecting parcels of land, the workshop helped them understand the complexities of this work that is so central to the mission of land trusts.

Because of your support, Wisconsin land trusts are stronger and more resilient.



Thanks to your support, special places like these are protected forever.

You helped land trusts navigate a novel legal issue with expert advice

Because of your support, land trusts responded confidently and in a timely fashion

Recently, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) issued a notice about certain provisions in donated conservation easements.

That was welcome news.

But, the IRS only provided a 90-day window for existing easements to be amended to preserve eligibility for tax deductions. This short timeline created a major time crunch and a logistical hurdle for land trusts.

Because you helped provide expert advice through the Land Conservation Law Program, land trusts had clear guidance.

Land trusts received counsel on risks associated with the notice, tips for communicating with landowners, and a sample legal document that included the IRS' "safe harbor" language.

The result of these legal services? More conservation easements were amended to comply with the most current IRS standards.

Thank you for giving land trusts the tools they need to protect land forever.

You helped protect more land in 2022

Because of people like you who care about the land, an additional 60 properties (25,000 acres) were protected forever

Now there are more special places for you to visit, including these three:

Nestled on the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway, **Ringelstetter Wetland** is protected and open to the public forever thanks to Driftless Area Land Conservancy, the Ringelstetters, and the community. For decades, the family fostered a vibrant 154-acre wildlife habitat that still thrives today.

Siskiwit River Preserve, a 102-acre property, is protected by a conservation easement held by Landmark Conservancy. It features cascading waterfalls and a hiking trail. The preserve is open for birdwatching, hunting, and fishing.

Tower Nibiiwan Conservation Area is safe in the hands of Northwoods Land Trust. Tucked away in northern Oneida County, the 31-acre property features 1,000 feet of shoreline along a natural bog lake and ephemeral wetland. A mile-long trail leads to a secluded seating area.

You can find more protected places to visit at gatheringwaters.org/places

You helped create positive impact during a challenging time



Pelican River Forest became a catalyst, forcing public debate

Your investment in advocacy for land protection helped launch **pelicanriver.org** to support the Friends of Pelican River Forest.

Dedicated citizens, like you, were aghast at the lack of

transparency and dysfunction that blocked state funding for the project.

Pelicanriver.org empowered people to write letters to the editor, add their names to a petition, and organize meetings.

This high-profile project has

forced a public debate, causing opponents of land conservation to go on the record.

Even though the Pelican River Forest project is still not finished, meaningful progress has been made.

Your faithful support made all these breakthroughs possible.

You helped fund new research that makes the case for more land protection

This Land Is Our Land, a report from the Wisconsin Policy Forum, shows the benefits of conservation and the need to do more. Here are some results.



- Natural areas provide flood control, clean the air, and filter the water for improved health. These services are worth \$2 BILLION per year.
- Wisconsin ranks 22nd in the US for public land, behind Minn. (19th) and Mich. (21st).
- Wisconsin ranks fourth for hunting and fishing licenses, but is dead last when it comes to reinvesting in parks.

Wisconsin's rich heritage as a conservation hub is dwindling along with public funding for land protection. *Read more about this report and recent polling (see right) at gatheringwaters.org/reports23.*

Polling proved Wisconsinites support state funding and policy reform

Juxtaposed against the dark cloud of blocked funding, was a breath of fresh air from voters.

Polling by New Bridge Strategy (R) and FM3 Research (D), a bipartisan research team, found that voters support funding for land protection. They also want more transparency and accountability from lawmakers.

Results of the 2023 poll, launched in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, show:

- Nearly nine in ten voters support public hearings for land protection funding and want objections to projects voiced publicly.
- Four in five voters support an investment of \$1 billion of Wisconsin's current surplus for conservation projects over the next 10 years.

These results will help fight the dysfunction currently afflicting approval of state funding.

Because of your support, land trusts have data to support land protection projects.

Help introduce people to land trusts and the special places they protect

WILL YOU MAKE A GIFT OF \$35 OR MORE TO HELP SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT WISCONSIN'S LAND TRUSTS?

You can help more people learn about land protection in Wisconsin

Susan loves watching the bald eagles nesting in the tall pine tree by the river. At a family dinner, she talked about wanting to protect the land so the eagles would always have a place to live.

What if the conversation stopped there?

What if Susan never learned about her options to protect her land? What if she never met her local land trust?

Chances are she would sell to the highest bidder and another special place would be lost forever.

It happens all the time.

That's why it's critical to introduce people to their local land trusts and connect them with protected places.

It will help protect more land.

Will you send a special gift of \$35, \$50, or \$100 to help make sure more people know about land trusts and the benefits of land protection?



Right now, Wisconsin Land Trust Days invites people to a series of fun, engaging outdoor events across the state.

“Often at these events, I hear people say, ‘I never knew this place existed,’ said Gathering Waters’ Executive Director, Mike Carlson. “These same people are surprised that their local land trust protects other natural places nearby.”

Awareness of land protection and its benefits is growing, but there's so much more to do.

Will you help get the word out and introduce more people to land trusts and the benefits of protected land with a gift of \$35, \$50, or \$100?

You can help people like Susan learn how to protect Wisconsin's special places.

I want to introduce others to land trusts and the benefits of land protection!

YES! Please use my gift to help spread the word about land trusts and the benefits of land protection, and support all the work of Gathering Waters.

Enclosed is my gift of:

\$35 to help spread the word about land trusts and the benefits of land protection.

\$50 to help spread the word about land trusts and the benefits of land protection.

\$100 to help spread the word about land trusts and the benefits of land protection.

I'm sending \$ _____ to help spread the word about land trusts and the benefits of land protection.

I am giving: by check. by credit card. by DAF or IRA distribution. I want to learn more about including GW in my estate plan.