

2025 Knowles-Nelson Lobby Day and Wisconsin Land Trust Conference Schedule

March 12-14, 2025

Wisconsin Masonic Center – Madison, WI

Wednesday, March 12

- 9:30 am Lobby Day Check-in Foyer**
- Meet in the foyer of the Wisconsin Masonic Center to check in, receive your Lobby Day participant packet, and enjoy a light breakfast. Make sure to check out the sponsor tables in the Catlin Lounge!
- 10:15 am Educational Program, Speakers & Issue Briefing Ballroom**
- Hear from a special guest speaker and Team Knowles Nelson leaders about the status of Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program reauthorization. Materials and key talking points about the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program will be provided. Seats will be assigned by Senate and Assembly districts, so you'll have a chance to meet and strategize with your advocacy team.
- 11:45 am Lunch Ballroom**
- Lunch will be served in the Wisconsin Masonic Center's beautiful Grand Ballroom.
- 12:30 pm Walk to the Capitol**
- Make the two-block trip to the Capitol.
- 12:45 pm Group Photo**
- Say "Knowles-Nelson!" Take a group photo before we enter the Capitol.
- 1:00 pm Legislator Meetings at the Capitol**
- Attend pre-scheduled meetings with legislators and their staff. Share success stories that demonstrate why Knowles-Nelson funding is essential for preserving Wisconsin's outdoor legacy.
- 3:30 pm Conference Check-in Foyer**
- Check-in for participants who did not attend Lobby Day.
- 4:00 pm Networking Happy Hour and Welcome Ballroom**
- As Lobby Day meetings wrap up and those attending the conference start to arrive, meet up for drinks, hors d'oeuvres, and good conversation in the Wisconsin Masonic Center's Grand Ballroom until 6 pm.

Thursday, March 13

- 7:30 am** **Conference Check-in** **Foyer**
Check-in for participants just arriving for the conference.
- 8:00 am** **Breakfast Out with Peer Groups**
Connect with your people in similar roles, or with similar goals or conservation priorities over breakfast out. We'll provide some recommendations of the best spots nearby.
- 10:00 am** **Land Trust Leaders Panel** **Ballroom**
Hear from a panel of land trust leaders about recent trends in the Wisconsin land trust community.
- 11:00 am** **Concurrent Sessions** (choose one to attend)
- Building Strong Foundations for Perpetual Protection** **Lodge Room 2**
MaryKay O'Donnell, Land Trust Alliance; Chris Radford, North Central Conservancy Trust; Brandon Mann, Groundswell Conservancy; Kari Kirschbaum, Northwoods Land Trust
An essential session that demystifies the core components of a robust stewardship program. Whether you're managing conservation easements or fee-owned properties, this workshop will walk you through the critical systems needed to meet Land Trust Standards and Practices and accreditation requirements. Deepen your understanding of why these systems matter for long-term conservation success. This session is perfect for new stewardship staff and seasoned land trust leaders looking to strengthen their organizational systems.
- GIS and Strategic Conservation Planning (Part 1)** **Lodge Room 1**
Charlie Carlin, Gathering Waters; Mike Koutnik, Consultant
This session will provide an overview of the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) resources offered by Gathering Waters and an orientation to using those resources. Learn what data you can access in the conservation geodatabase and how to put the data to work yourself. This session is great for both new users of the GIS database and those looking for a refresher.
For hands-on experience with the tool, attend Part 2 at 1:00 pm.
- The Triple A Board** **Ballroom**
David Allen, Development for Conservation
Every person on a land trust's staff and board should play a role in fundraising, but not everyone has to add to the equation in the same way. The "Triple-A" model (created by Kaye Sprinkel Grace) provides a way to talk about each team member's interests and competencies, and how to utilize these as part of an organization's development team. Gain insights and tools to assess the mix of ambassadors, advocates, and askers on your board, and to identify where further training and recruitment could be helpful.
- 12:00 pm** **Lunch** **Ballroom**
Lunch will be served in the Wisconsin Masonic Center's Grand Ballroom.

To see more information about our presenters and panelists, please scan this QR code:



Thursday, March 13, *continued...*

1:00 pm **Concurrent Sessions** (choose one to attend)

Conservation Finance Strategies

Lodge Room 2

Clint Miller, The Conservation Fund; Kelly Larsen, The Conservation Fund; Chris Gutschenritter, Gathering Waters

The innovative approach, Buy-Protect-Sell, empowers land trusts to respond to unique, and sometimes urgent, conservation opportunities. Whether your land trust is faced with escalating land prices, challenging barriers to protecting working lands, or looking to expand your conservation impact, this session will provide practical insights into structuring deals, building funding partnerships, and managing risks. Drawing from successful examples across the state, get the knowledge you need to evaluate strategies to strengthen your conservation toolkit.

GIS and Strategic Conservation Planning (Part 2)

Lodge Room 1

Charlie Carlin, Gathering Waters; Mike Koutnik, Consultant

This session will explore the decision support tool, which is a powerful interactive application intended to aid conservation planning efforts by putting a tremendous amount of data at your fingertips. Walk through the robust filtering capabilities to help you quickly zero in on particular geographies and conservation priorities. Test drive the tool with the expert guidance of Mike Koutnik, who builds and maintains this app for the Wisconsin land trust community. Both novices and power users are invited to attend.

Juggling the Numbers: A Balanced Look at Financial Management and Communication

Ballroom

Carol Fisher, The Nature Conservancy; Jennifer Filipiak, Driftless Area Land Conservancy

Land trust staff often juggle a lot of different responsibilities and priorities. This session will take a common-sense approach to walk you through the Land Trust Standards and Practices about financial records and basic internal controls. Understand practical methods to communicate financial information in meaningful ways to staff and board members. Get tips that will help you keep all the balls in the air. There is likely to be actual juggling!

2:00 pm **Field Trip to Local Land Trust**

Take a field trip to some of Groundswell Conservancy's conservation easement and fee simple properties in the Black Earth Creek Valley. Hear from landowners, local decision makers, and land trust staff, then hike through this beautiful area (weather permitting).

5:45 pm **Happy Hour**

Ballroom

After the field trip, return to the Wisconsin Masonic Center for a happy hour.

6:30 pm **Dinner**

Ballroom

Enjoy dinner at the Wisconsin Masonic Center.

Friday, March 14

- 8:30 am** **Breakfast** **Ballroom**
- Breakfast will be served at the Wisconsin Masonic Center.
- 9:45 am** **Concurrent Sessions** (choose one to attend)
- Anatomy of a Land Trust Deal** **Lodge Room 2**
- Chris Gutschenritter, Gathering Waters; Stephanie Judge, Driftless Area Land Conservancy; Julie Schartner, The Nature Conservancy; Angie Doucette, American Farmland Trust*
- Back by popular demand (this session was presented at the 2023 conference), explore the various approaches and challenges of a land trust deal. Consider how those approaches and challenges might shift in the future given the social, economic, and other trends impacting land trusts in Wisconsin. Updated information and a new, hypothetical conservation project make this session worth attending again (or for the first time!).
- Storytelling Workshop** **Lodge Room 1**
- Pat McMurtrie, Gathering Waters; Carol Abrahamzon, Mississippi Valley Conservancy*
- Leverage the power of storytelling to build stronger relationships with audiences. Learn effective strategies for communicating the great stories in the land trust community (with tips for both development and communications staff). Take things a step further with tips on repurposing content and sharing your personal values with followers and supporters.
- 11:15 am** **Snacks and Send-off** **Catlin Lounge**
- As the conference wraps up, grab a snack before you head home.