



Natural Heritage
LAND TRUST

Annual Report

July 1, 2002 - June 30, 2003

Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

The Natural Heritage Land Trust continues to protect scenic open spaces, wildlife habitat, and family farmlands in Dane and the surrounding counties.

Our key accomplishments in 2002/03 include:

- Restoring critical wetland habitat in the Black Earth Creek Watershed.
- Working with landowners to protect lands with high conservation values in the Upper Sugar River Watershed.
- Implementing comprehensive and collaborative land protection strategies in priority areas.

On behalf of the board, I want to thank our supporters, without whom our work would not be possible. We very much appreciate your support of our work to conserve the natural resources in our own backyard; to embrace our philosophy of conservation where you live; and to leave a legacy of a healthy landscape for future generations.

Sincerely,

Mark B. Williams

President

Mission:

The Natural Heritage Land Trust is dedicated to the conservation of natural areas and open space in Dane and the surrounding counties.

To accomplish our mission, we:

- Protect land through acquisition and easements.
- Educate and empower residents in protecting their local natural areas.
- Work with willing landowners to protect significant elements of our landscape.
- Develop conservation partnerships and community networks.

Since our inception in 1983, we've protected thousands of acres of wetland, prairie, woodland, lakeshore, oak savanna, and family farmland in our region.



2002/2003

Accomplishments:



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608.258.9797
www.nhlt.org

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John B. Hutchinson

Michael A. Slavney

Norman C. Anderson

William G. Lunney

Jean D. Meanwell

Provided assistance to local groups working to protect natural areas important to them

- *Provided technical, legal, and fundraising assistance to the Patrick Marsh Conservancy.* The Patrick Marsh Wildlife Area is important for its wetland values and abundant bird life. It is located just east of the City of Sun Prairie, and managed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The area includes a deep-water marsh, small wood lots, and prairie and oak opening restoration efforts. The Patrick Marsh Conservancy wants to protect the open space around the wildlife area to expand recreational and educational opportunities for the public. In response to their request for assistance, we initiated negotiations with area landowners, ordered an appraisal for the property, and developed and submitted grant proposals.
- *Co-signed two conservation easements with the Town of Dunn and other parties to protect 194 acres of farmlands and wet-*

Implemented comprehensive and collaborative land protection strategies in priority areas

As a result of long-range planning, the Natural Heritage Land Trust is moving from a "reactive" to a "proactive" land trust. That means in addition to responding to land protection opportunities that arise, we are also spearheading land protection efforts in areas targeted for protection by our board. We're focusing our conservation efforts in three watersheds: Black Earth Creek, Upper Sugar River, and Token Creek. The board selected these areas based on their natural and recreational values, current threats, ability to collaborate with other groups, and inclusion in the Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan.

In 2002/03, the Natural Heritage Land Trust:

- *Created and filled the new staff position of project assistant to work with landowners in two of those watersheds: Black Earth Creek and Upper Sugar River.* Since joining the staff in August 2002, Kate Wipperman, our Project Assistant, has contacted nearly 100 landowners.
- *Hired a new executive director.* After our previous director stepped down, we hired Jim Welsh, formerly with The Nature Conservancy, in May 2003. Jim has extensive experience in negotiating and monitoring conservation easements, and working collaboratively with board, staff, and conservation partners. He also has a background in site conservation planning.

Protected lands in priority areas

The Natural Heritage Land Trust is focusing its conservation efforts in three priority areas: the Black Earth Creek Watershed, the Upper Sugar River Watershed, and the Token Creek Watershed. Last year, we concentrated our efforts in two of those watersheds.

Black Earth Creek Watershed: The Black Earth Creek Watershed, which covers more than 100 square miles in Dane and Iowa counties, is a significant regional resource. Rolling hills and bluffs characterize the landscape. The soils are rich and farmland is productive. Portions of the creek have been classified as Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The creek is an excellent cold-water trout fishery and attracts people from throughout the nation to fish its waters. The watershed is also in one of the fastest growing regions of Dane County. Because of that, many groups are working to protect the natural values of the area.

In 2002/03, the Natural Heritage Land Trust:

- *Restored 53 acres of wetlands along Garfoot Creek, a critical tributary of Black Earth Creek, which Trout Unlimited includes on its list of Top 100 Trout Streams.* Garfoot Creek is classified as an Exceptional Resource Water. The 3-mile creek meanders among farms near Cross Plains and flows into Black Earth Creek at Salmo Pond. It is home for brown trout and mottled sculpin. In 2003, we restored this property from farmland to wetland. These wetlands will help reduce run-off and help protect both creeks. The Wetland Reserve Program and the U.S. National Fish and Wildlife Service helped fund this work. We hope to transfer this land to a public agency that will open the land to the public.

- *Worked with landowners to protect land in the Black Earth Creek Watershed.* Last year, we contacted several landowners to talk with them about protecting the natural values of their lands—scenic open space, streams, riparian habitat, and wood lots—from development. We're currently working with four landowners to explore how we might protect their properties using tools like conservation easements, or facilitating purchase of the property for public ownership.
- *Coordinated land protection activities with other organizations working in this region.* To ensure protection efforts are not duplicated, we worked closely with the following groups: American Farmland Trust, Black Earth Creek Watershed Association, Black Earth Creek Conservation Organization, the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation, and the Southern Wisconsin Trout Unlimited.

Upper Sugar River Watershed: The Upper Sugar River Watershed, which encompasses more than 170 square miles, is located in southwestern Dane County. The river flows through a scenic rural landscape, alongside or near the Military Ridge State Trail, and next to the historic Riley Tavern. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has classified the *entire* river as Exceptional Resource Water, and Dane County Parks has designated the Upper Sugar River Waterway Corridor as a Natural Resource Site. The watershed also includes other notable natural and recreational resources, including the Ice Age National Scenic Trail, Donald Park, and the Madison School Forest.

The Natural Heritage Land Trust wants to preserve the scenic and open space values, water quality classification, and recreational opportunities (biking, canoeing, hiking, and fishing) that the

- *Adopted the process of site conservation planning to guide our land protection activities.* Developed by The Nature Conservancy, we believe this strategic, collaborative approach will enable us to accomplish our mission in a more efficient, timely, and cost-effective way.
- *Laid the groundwork to implement site conservation planning in the Upper Sugar River Watershed by identifying conservation partners to participate in this planning process.*

We are very excited about our new direction and hope you will be too. We will, of course, continue to work with landowners who are interested in protecting the natural values on their property outside of our priority areas.

Upper Sugar River Watershed offers. To that end, we identified two project areas within the watershed—the Verona Sugar River Valley in the town of Verona, and the Riley Game Cooperative.

In 2002/03, the Natural Heritage Land Trust:

- *Identified lands with high conservation values in the Verona Sugar River Valley and worked with landowners to protect specific parcels of land.* In conjunction with Dane County and the Town of Verona, we identified parcels of land that border the river and deserve protection. In addition, we talked with several landowners about protecting their property using conservation easements, and initiated negotiations with a landowner interested in placing a conservation easement on his land.
- *Signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Town of Verona Open Space and Parks Commission to jointly pursue strategies to conserve the Verona Sugar River Valley.* Through this partnership, we are working collaboratively to plan for and accomplish conservation goals, and raise awareness of the natural and recreational values of this area.
- *Explored ways to preserve the former Riley Game Cooperative, just northwest of Verona.* Aldo Leopold—conservationist and author of *A Sand County Almanac*—and area farmers founded a hunting reserve called the Riley Game Cooperative in 1931. In later years, Leopold used the land as a research station for his wildlife management students. We would like to protect the natural, educational, historic, and recreational values of this property. To that end, we involved a UW-Madison Landscape Architecture class, scientists, and design professionals to help us develop ideas to restore this landscape.

The Natural Heritage Land Trust is grateful to all of its members for their support and wishes to recognize its major contributors.

Foundations

Eugenie Mayer Bolz Family Foundation
 Bradshaw-Knight Foundation
 Evjue Foundation, Inc.
 Hooper Foundation
 John J. Frautschi Family Foundation
 Madison Community Foundation
 Vogel Foundation
 Webcrafter-Frautschi Foundation
 Laurence and Frances Weinstein Foundation

Businesses and Individuals

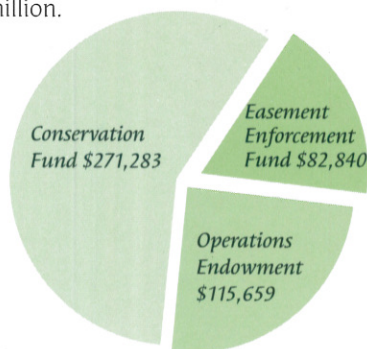
Helen Baldwin
 BT² Squared
 Bremser Group, Inc. Certified Public Accountants
 Chickadee Depot
 Lloyd and Patrick Eagan
 Emily Earley
 Dan Erdman
 First Business Bank
 Fontana Sports Specialities, Inc.
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 Kathy and Bill Pielsticker
 Placon Corporation
 QTI Group
 Scott Sauer
 Jim and Elyn Scherneck
 David Simon with Veridian Homes, LLC
 Michael and Linda Slavney
 Jeffrey J. Strobel
 Suby Von Haden and Associates
 Vandewalle & Associates
 Williams Environmental Associates

Financials:

The Natural Heritage Land Trust's fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30.

At June 30, 2003, we had total assets of approximately \$1.1 million.

During 2003, we received contributions and other financial support totaling \$62,602. We funded programs and other operating costs totaling \$158,864. At June 30, 2003, general operating funds were approximately \$412,000.



At June 30, 2003, we maintained the following funds to help accomplish our conservation work:

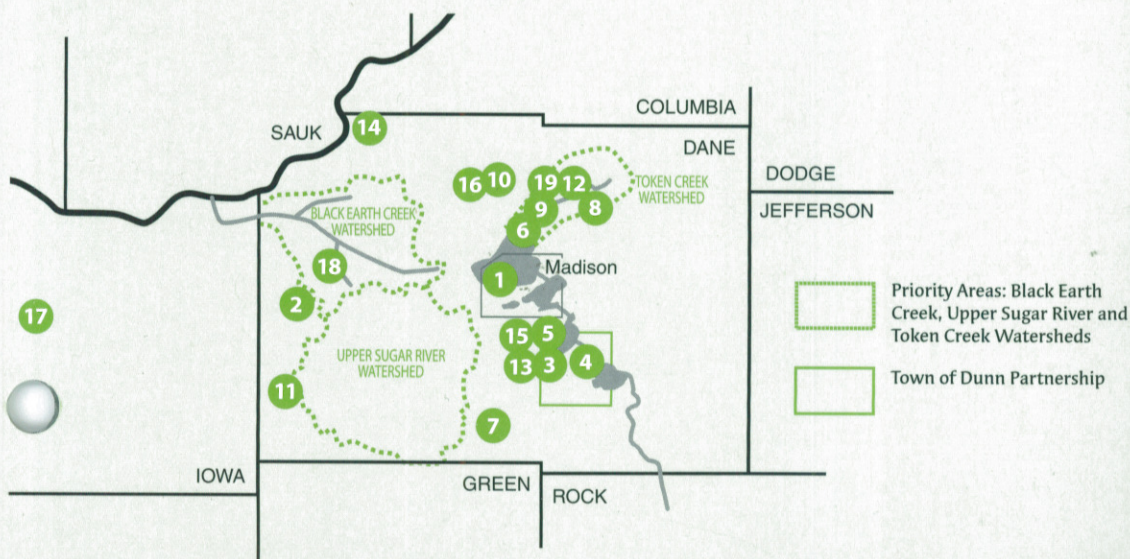
Cash Reserves and Endowments

Conservation Fund (land acquisition and conservation easement costs)	\$271,283
Easement Enforcement Fund (easement enforcement activities)	\$ 82,840
Operations Endowment* (general operations of the land trust)	\$115,659
	\$469,782

* In addition to this endowment, the Madison Community Foundation holds an endowment that also supports the general operations of the land trust. It was valued at \$134,214 on June 30, 2003. Only a portion of the earnings from each endowment fund is available to the land trust.

Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest dollar. The figures in this financial report are unaudited. You may request a copy of the Natural Heritage Land Trust's 2002-03 audited financial statements after December 15, 2003 by calling the office.

the places we've protected:



- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Lower Eagle Heights Woods, Madison 1984 | 12 Smith Streambank Easement, Token Creek 1996 |
| 2 Evenson's Woods Easement, Town of Vermont 1985 | 13 Sinaiko-Nine Springs E-Way Project, Town of Dunn 1997 |
| 3 Watt's Easement, Lake Waubesa 1986 | 14 Fish Lake Project, Town of Roxbury 2001 |
| 4 McClain Easement, Lower Mud Lake 1987 | 15 Purchase of Development Rights Projects with the Town of Dunn 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 |
| 5 Schmidt's Orchard, Nine Springs E-Way 1988 | 16 Bolz Conservancy Park, Waunakee 2001 |
| 6 Addition to Cherokee Marsh 1991 | 17 Trewartha Easement, Iowa County 2003 |
| 7 Storybrook Farm Easement, Village of Brooklyn 1993 | 18 Garfoot Creek Acquisition, Black Earth Creek Watershed 2002 |
| 8 Thomas Streambank Easement, Token Creek 1993 | 19 Pederson Acquisition and transfer to Dane County, Token Creek 2002 |
| 9 Whiteside Easement, Town of Westport 1993 | |
| 10 Wilke Preserve, Waunakee 1994 | |
| 11 Blue Mounds Easement 1995 | |