

Dane County NATURAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

See story

Dedicated to the protection and preservation of natural areas in Dane County through conservation easements, land donations and education.

Summer 1999

Fish Lake: "One of Our Largest, Most Exciting Projects Ever!"

By now, you've heard – the Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation has undertaken an ambitious new preservation project. Our latest effort will protect shoreline, woodlands and farmland along Fish Lake – one of Dane County's few remaining aquatic gems. Many of you have already responded generously with much appreciated offers of financial support and time.

In January, this land was approved for year-round development. Thanks to a willing seller, your local land trust now has a rare chance to help protect

the health and beauty of Fish Lake by buying nearly 140 acres along its shores.

"We have a window of opportunity to preserve some of the county's best undeveloped lakefront property," says Founda-Jon President John Hutchinson. "This is one of our largest, most exciting projects ever!"

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iteve Lang photo



A shoreline view of Fish Lake in northern Dane County.

Preserving the Trewartha Farm

We call ourselves the Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation, but we don't turn a

a good opportunity vation arises across the county line. We're currently working with former board member. Mary Trewartha and her husband Mark to put an

> easement on their 170-acre Iowa County farm.

> > The Trewarthas bought their farm, which

straddles the towns of Highland and Dodgeville, in 1972. The farm consists of 45 acres of farmland, 40 acres of woods, 40 acres of restored prairie and some old pasture. Mary and Mark have managed the land for grassland birds. from the beginning. They rent the cropland to a neighbor who farms it with the birds' welfare in mind. The farmer plants minimal corn and waits to cut his alfalfa until after July 4, when the birds have finished nesting.

The Trewarthas have put so much of themselves into their land that they don't want to risk seeing the land developed. "We would love it if one of our three children wanted to take over

(continued on page 3)

Bobolinks and other grassland birds find a haven at the Trewartha farm, deep in the Driftless Region.

DCNHF and the Wisconsin State Journal - Making a Splash Together - Again

You may remember how the Wisconsin State Journal helped make the Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation's first conservation project at Lower Eagle Heights Woods a success. For those of you who don't, the paper took up the cry 'Save the Woods!' in a series of articles by longtime columnist Bill Wineke. The Journal's efforts netted \$43,000 for our cause and helped guarantee that the land known as Wally Bauman Woods would stay forever green and beautiful.

We've come full circle. The Journal has adopted the cause of conservation in Dane County again by agreeing to help us raise \$100,000 for our new Fish Lake Project. Starting June 27, and running through the summer's end, the paper is featuring a different aspect of Fish Lake every week in articles by Bill Wineke. The Journal will print a list of contributors regularly to track the level of community support for Dane County's aquatic gem.

We at the Natural Heritage Foundation greatly appreciate the Wisconsin State Journal's support and hope you do too. It shows how much our community values its natural heritage.

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Dane County Conservation Fund Update

By Kathleen Falk, Dane County Executive

Through their collective wisdom this April, Dane County citizens delivered a strong message about their commitment to preserving our magnificent parks, open spaces, trails, lakes and streams for future generations. By a 75% margin, voters endorsed the Parks & Open Space 2000 Plan to invest an additional \$30 million over the next 10 years in acquiring these key lands and natural areas forever. A critical part of the program provides that up to 20% of these funds be used as grants to

Dane County cities, villages, towns and non-profit organizations.



Dane County Executive
Kathleen Falk

I'd like to express my profound thanks to members of the Natural Heritage Foundation as well as other non-profits, local units of government, and other partners for their dedicated service in bringing us to this enviable point in Dane County history. We've come a long way — from identifying the vision and developing the plan — to committing the resources.

Now it's time to roll up our sleeves to put this plan into action! A big step in this process occurred July 8 when I hosted a Conservation Fund Implementation Workshop at the Dane County Expo. This forum engaged leaders and administrators from local units of government and

non-profits in a dialog to identify what ideas and features we should incorporate into the grant program to make it effective, fair, and consistent. Participants exchanged valuable ideas and views on topics ranging from the application process to grant selection and distribution and approaches for non-profit and governmental partnerships. We hope to make a summary of the workshop comments available by late July. You can find details about the workshop agenda on the Dane County home page (www.co.dane.wi.us).

I'm very anxious to hear your ideas as well as answer your questions about the Conservation Fund and implementation of the grant program. Please feel free to contact Jan Zimmermann, my Project. Assistant for the Conservation Fund program, at 266-5623. She will be happy to include your thoughts with those of others and to provide additional information.

DCNHF Plans for the Future

The Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation has been preserving natural areas in the region for over 15 years. A lot has happened since our beginnings at Eagle Heights — not just at the Foundation, but in our community as well. To respond to these changes in a-way that best serves our community, the Natural Heritage Foundation has undertaken a strategic planning effort.

Our community has grown. South central Wisconsin has become an evermore-popular place to live; Dane County alone added about 75,000 new residents over the past 15 years. Real estate values have escalated with this growth. Consequently, conservation work here has become increasingly expensive and complicated.

Our Board of Directors, former board members, and staff met Valentine's Day weekend to address the Herculean task of re-evaluating our mission, conservation methods, organizational structure, and funding mechanisms. With the help of consultants Bert Stitt and Anne Forbes, we identified strategic issues and developed goal statements and objectives. We also developed an immediate plan of attack to address the most pressing issues. To keep these issues at the forefront, the board reviewed and updated the results of the planning session in June. We've taken the first steps toward establishing a regular process of evaluation and planning.

What does this mean to you? Through strategic planning, we are working hard to position ourselves to respond effectively to great conservation opportunities, like Fish Lake. The Natural Heritage Foundation knows that you care about the place you live, and we want to show you that we do too.

Annual Token Creek Forum Packs 'Em In



(L-R) TCWA Treasurer Mary Hudzinski and watershed resident Judith Hutchinson enjoy learning what's happening at Token Creek.

About 65 residents from communities surrounding Token Creek braved torrential spring rains to attend the Token Creek Watershed Association's Third Annual Spring Forum: Rebirth of a Stream April 22 at the DeForest Area Community Center.

People came together to learn the latest on the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and US

Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps) stream restoration. The project will rehabilitate the area surrounding the former Token Creek Millpond

recreating the stream's original bends and sinews and improving

wildlife habitat.

Army Corps Biologist Mark Cornish said he enjoyed the chance to interact with the people who will benefit from his agency's multimillion dollar effort. "I'm working on a number of these projects, and this one has generated the most local interest by far. People asked a lot of good questions"

Scot Stewart, project manager for the

Third Annual Token Creek Clean-Up

On a bright Saturday in April, members of the Token Creek Watershed Association gathered at Token Creek County Park for their third Annual Creek Clean-up. Says organizer Doug Hudzinski, "We've been doing this for a while now. It's a great way

for folks to come out and see just what our group is all about and what their watershed looks like. And it's a good way for neighbors to get to know each other." Every year, the watershed group cleans up portions of the stream from Hwy. 51 to Hwy. C.

Hudzinski said that this year's event brought more volunteers out than in previous years. "We had about dozen people and spent three hours picking up trash in various places including the county park, the old DNR carp pond, the DNR trout ponds, Windsor Park and along Egre Rd. You can really see an improvement in the stream." The clean-up followed closely on the heels of the Token Creek Watershed Association's Spring Forum on April 22, which may have helped boost interest in the group's activities.

DNR, explained that the work on the streambed itself is part of a much larger effort by the DNR that takes into account the entire watershed. "We're looking to cut the impact of stormwater runoff in the watershed. We're also working with the University of Wisconsin to learn more about the effects of development on groundwater."

The restoration is still in the planning phases, but Stewart says some work on the creek will begin this summer. The DNR plans to remove an old carp holding pond that warms up the creek below Culver Springs.

Forum attendees also learned about the Token Creek Watershed Association's efforts to form an independent non-profit organization. "The Dane

> County Natural Heritage Foundation has helped us out a lot," says TCWA Chair Tom Culver. "Now it's time to estab-

> > lish ourselves."

The watershed association will end its formal relationship with the Natural Heritage Foundation September 1. Look for more information on the transition in our next newsletter. The group is seeking dues-paying members, and plans to conduct a membership campaign soon. For more information. call Sarah Van Tiem at 258-9797.



Love of nature starts early, as these helpers show.

Preserving the Trewartha Farm, cont'd

the farm, but there's no guarantee that will happen," says Mary. "There's so much development taking place in southwest Wisconsin, we want to make sure that it doesn't happen on our land."

In recent years, Mary and Mark have worked hard to restore portions of their land to native prairie. According to Mary, the land gave them a good head start. The Trewarthas found many native plants flourishing already, such as spiderwort, baptisia, pale spiked lobelia and little blue stem. In the five years the Trewarthas have worked on the restoration, they've added many others, including lupine, pale purple coneflower, and butterfly weed.

In addition to protecting native plants, the Trewartha's land provides a haven for birdlife. The property is home to nearly twenty nesting pair of bobolinks. The Trewarthas have erected 25 bluebird boxes. Mary also

reports five pair of nesting tree swallows and lots of barn swallows.

"This is an easement in which the owners are dedicated to restoring the land themselves, which makes the arrangement really attractive, says Foundation Executive Director Danielle Wood, "The land and its inhabitants benefit greatly from the Trewarthas' stewardship."

"We hope that this easement will serve as a catalyst that encourages neighboring landowners to explore the possibilities for preserving their land," says Wood.



Coneflowers



Above: Majestic cottonwoods border Fish Lake's edge on the property we're working to preserve. **Right:** Development could forever change the face of Fish Lake. **Far Right:** Fish Lake's cold water provides a home to cisco, a locally rare fish related to salmon. **Below:** This Great Blue Heron finds plenty to feed on at Fish Lake.

Foundation Making a Splash at Fish Lake

An Aquatic Gem... Located outside Roxbury in northwestern Dane County, Fish Lake is a small kettle lake, formed by the melting of a huge chunk of ice left behind by retreating glaciers 10,000 years ago. It is in an area neàr Wisconsin's Driftless (unglaciated) Region, where lakes are scarce.

Fed by groundwater, the waters of Fish Lake are deep, blue and peaceful. It had some of the best water quality in the county in the early 1980s. The 254-acre lake now faces declining water clarity and occasional fishkills. Still, it remains one of the healthiest bodies of water in the area. In fact, Fish Lake is one of the few lakes in southern Wisconsin where cisco, a cold water fish related to salmon, thrive. Fish Lake also supports Blanding's turtles, on the state list of threatened species. Other animals that call Fish Lake home include bald eagles and osprey, kingfishers, Great Blue Herons, largemouth bass, and northern pike.

How you can help

Fish Lake has been of concern to conservationists and environmental professionals for a long time. Until the Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation stepped in, they were unable to muster an effective conservation effort.

The lake offers a lot to Dane County residents and visitors: a wonderful quiet place for canoeing or windsurfing, ice fishing during the long Wisconsin winter, ample bird life, or simply the

pleasure of a pretty, serene spot. If you are someone who values such nearby natural areas, the Fish Lake Project offers an excellent chance to participate in preserving this treasure for future generations.

The Natural Heritage Foundation seeks to raise \$660,000 of the project's purchase price from private donations. Your contribution can make a tangible difference now. Just fill out the form on page 7 and mail it back to us. If you wish to donate your

time, we'd also be happy to have your help. Call us at 258-9797 for more details. The Natural Heritage Foundation traditionally relies on individuals who love the outdoors and recognize the importance of joint conservation efforts to making sure precious rural and urban natural areas are protected.

If you share that vision, please help the Natural Heritage Foundation protect the health and beauty of Fish Lake into the next millennium.

Dane County Lakes at Risk

Our community's natural treasures include a wealth of lakes. Dane County boasts 37 lakes, ranging from 9,600-acre Lake Mendota to Salmo Pond on Black Earth Creek. The most common and most serious threat to these lakes is stormwater runoff—polluted rain water or melting snow that carries sediment, nutrients and other contaminants into lakes from farm fields, construction sites and city streets.

Another major threat is shoreline development, which destroys native aquatic plant and animal habitat and disrupts lake ecosystems.

The consequences of excess nutrients are easy to see and smell in the algae blooms on Lake Monona in the summertime. The crowded shores of Lake Mendota demonstrate the impact of shoreline development. In contrast, Fish Lake is one of the few lakes in Dane County that have seen limited impacts from urban stormwater runoff or development.

The Opportunity

The Natural Heritage Foundation has the opportunity to ensure that Fish Lake *remains* an aquatic gem. Developers Ken and Karen Kearney recently gained approval to erect and sell 100 mobile homes on the northeastern shore of Fish Lake. However, they have agreed to sell nearly 140 acres, which includes about 3,000 feet of lakefront, to the Natural Heritage Foundation Instead. We intend to transfer the land to a government partner for long-term management once acquired.

In the future, Dane County residents may look forward to a beautiful conservancy park where they can enjoy hiking among the majestic waterside cottonwoods, birding along the shore or fishing from boats launched at the nearby public boat launch. For now, however, there is no public access to the property.

The Purchase

This entire project will cost \$3.06 million. The Natural Heritage Foundation will finance the purchase in stages over two years.

- Phase 1 Purchase of a 40-acre wooded hill that overlooks Fish Lake, a 13-acre tract, including parcels zoned for recreation and business, and 48 acres of farmland. Closing is scheduled for July 15. Cost: \$800,000.
- Phase 2 Purchase of condominium lots. Closing is scheduled on or by April 1, 2000. Cost: \$1.25 million.
- Phase 3 Purchase of the remaining condominium lots.
 Closing is scheduled on or by April 1, 2001.
 Cost: \$880,000.

The foundation is seeking to raise \$660,000 from the public to help purchase the property.

DCNHF Executive Director Danielle Wood says the impending expansion of Highway 12 was a factor in the board's decision to pursue this deal. "Development pressure in northwestern Dane County will only increase. It's only going to get more difficult and more expensive to protect high quality open space for future county residents and visitors."

Fish Lake faces other risks as well. According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), lack of vegetated buffers to filter pollutants, inappropriate handling of animal waste and farm chemicals, and excessive growth of Eurasian water milfoil (an invasive, non-native lake weed) also threaten. Because Fish Lake is a seepage lake, it is more sensitive to the effects of development and agricultural runoff. Seepage lakes recover slowly from the effects of such disturbances because they lack flowing water to flush out contaminants.

The Natural Heritage Foundation's Fish Lake Project will help safeguard the lake from both development and ecological threats. A successful acquisition will permanently protect a substantial portion of the lake from development. It also promises to improve water quality by eventually providing a permanent buffer of restored native vegetation that will shield the lake from stormwater runoff.



A Team Effort

The Natural Heritage Foundation is working closely with the Dane County Parks Department and the DNR to ensure that Fish Lake remains one of southern Wisconsin's aquatic gems. Fish Lake is in the county's Parks and Open Space Plan and may benefit from the proposed Parks and Open Space Land Acquisition Program. The Natural Heritage Foundation has applied to the DNR's Lake Management Grant Program and will apply to the Stewardship Program for financial assistance. In addition, we are working with the Conservation Fund, a national non-profit organization that awards low-cost loans to environmental groups. Finally, we received a private loan from First Business Bank in Madison.

Besides Natural Heritage Foundation board members and staff, the developer, state and local natural resource agencies and local officials, our team to protect Fish Lake includes private supporters like you. (See sidebar for more information about how you can help.)

"We're excited to be completing the first stage of this project," says John Hutchinson. "It's going to a very focused two years, but we urgently need public financial support to continue this project."

Events Calendar

Flapjacks for Fish Lake

August 29

Pancake breakfast at Roxbury Tavern. Look for an invitation in your mail!

Olbrich Home Garden Tour

10 a.m.-4 p.m., Friday and Sat., July 16 & 17 Fee: Call 246-4716 for more details.

Hike Token Creek Park & Dinner

August 11th

Sierra Club — Four Lakes Chapter Call 257-3452 for more details.

Environmental Policy Development: Getting Boardroom, CEO, and Employee Support

8 a.m. -11:30 a.m., August 20 The Pyle Center, 702 Langdon Street, Madison Wisconsin Environmental Initiative Call 280-0360, or e-mail *wei@itis.com* for more details.

Statewide Land Trust Conference

September 17-19 Devil's Head Resort Sponsored by Gathering Waters, 251-9131.

Wilderness Horizons: An Interdisciplinary Wilderness Conference

September 23-26
Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute,
Northland College
Call (715) 682-1491 or e-mail
crussell@wheeler.northland.edu for details.

Conservation Properties

DCNHF will be selling four lots, including three with houses, obtained through the Dr. Alice Watts Bequest. The lots are near Waubesa Wetlands in the Town of Dunn. Call Danielle Wood for more information at 258-9797.

Memorial

In loving memory of Gylfi Sollie

Harriet Riley

Volunteer Opportunities

The Natural Heritage Foundation offers opportunities to use your skills or develop some new ones. Give us a call at 258-9797 if you're interested. We're open to your ideas as well, but here are a few of the ways you can help:

Special events planning — we're planning some events to help raise funds for Fish Lake. If you enjoy planning and giving parties, picnics, paddles, etc., we'd love to work with you.

Goodwill ambassadors — we're looking for a few friendly faces to sit at our booth during local community events, including the Farmers' Market. This is a great way to meet people and spread the word about our new Fish Lake Project.

Database support — our mailing database could use some attention from someone with an eye for detail.

Telephone greeter — if you have a few free hours every week and enjoy interacting with the public, we have a job for you.

Special Gifts

There's no better way to honor friends or family members who love the Dane County area's natural beauty than by helping to protect it. A donation to the Natural Heritage Foundation can help protect a lakeshore, restore a prairie, or preserve a woodland. Consider a donation to commemorate a birthday, wedding or anniversary, or in memory of a loved one.

DCNHF Wish List

- ⇔ An overhead projector (\$200)
- A microwave oven (\$100)
- A TV/video monitor (\$300)
- A fabric-covered display board (\$500)
- Map holders (\$200)
- A slide projector and screen (\$650)

Friends of Fish lake

Heartfelt thanks to the following for their contribution to our Fish Lake Project:

Special thanks

to the Phoebe R. & John D. Lewis Foundation for its generous support.

Deepest gratitude to First Business Bank for generously donating the fee on our loan.

Turtle Tribute

Emily Early

Cisco Assistance

Helen & Thomas Van Tiem Harriet Riley Jeanie & Jerry Sieling Ann Straw Mark & Peggy Williams

Osprey Offering

Jean Bahr Kristine A. Euclide Mark Jeffries Christine & Robert Selk Bert Stitt Wendy Weisensel & David Marshall Gabriele M. Zu-Rhein

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Bass Boon

Douglas & Alexandra Berry, Mary & Neil Binkley, Mrs. H.D. Bruhn, Daniel G. Cottam, Veronica Guski, Lawrence E. Halle, Rosemary & Lee Jones, Dr. & Mrs. Katzelnick, Norma J. Kolthoff, Christine Kopish, Ina E. Marlow, Bernard F. Micke, MD, Mr. & Mrs. Middleton, Gloria Moyer, Walter & Jean Rideout, Jeffrey Strobel



Thanks Heaps!

The Natural Heritage Foundation thanks our volunteers and supporters, who generously gave us their time, talent and expertise:

- Board members and friends who helped with our Fish Lake Project Dedication and our community meeting: Lloyd Eagan, Dave Marshall (WDNR), Gene Roark, Mark Williams, Jean Unmuth (WDNR) and Wendy Weisensel,
- Matt Nilsson, for writing newsletter articles quickly and proficiently,
- Kathy and Bill Pielsticker for volunteering and assisting with our Fish Lake efforts,
- Theresa Plenty for her continued devotion to our website,
- Ellen Reyser of Suby VonHaden for serving as our bookkeeper (and Treasurer Douglas Berry, also of Suby, for finding Ellen! — not to mention his ongoing dedication to our financial health),
- · Maggie Smith for revamping our membership database, and
- Jan Zimmerman and Rúth Oppedahl for their sage advice on myriad topics.

And thanks go to the following businesses and organizations for their support:

- First Business Bank for providing an account for our Fish Lake Fundraising Campaign,
- Magic Mill Natural Foods for donating the proceeds from their Earth Day Cookout,
- Michael, Best & Friedrich, for their invaluable advice regarding our Fish Lake Project,



Whole Foods employees show their appreciation of the Natural Heritage Foundation's work in the community to President John Hutchinson (far left).

- · Jim Rawson of Rawson Realty for donating appraisal services,
- Saiki & Associates for lending us their slide projector,
- St. Norbert's Church in Roxbury, for graciously letting us use their hall for our community meeting,
- Jeff Strobel of Print Wave for donating a portion of his services to the creation of this newsletter,
- Whole Foods Natural Food Market for choosing us as the beneficiary of their April 5% Day — we raised almost \$1,300!
- Williams Environmental Associates for updating the Environmental Assessment for our Fish Lake Project, and
- Wisconsin DNR Photographer Bob Queen, for lending us his photographic talent and many of those pretty pictures you see in our newsletter.

Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation

Help us make a splash at Fish Lake!

Here's my contribution to the Fish Lake project:

\$25 Bass Boon Send to: Heron Help \$50 **DCNHF** Osprey Offering \$100. 303 S. Paterson, Suite 6 Cisco Assistance \$250 Madison WI 53703 Turtle Tribute \$500 Other

Name Contributions are tax-deductible as provided for by law.

Address Please make checks payable to the Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation.

City/Zip _____ Thank you!

☐ Check this box if you prefer to remain anonymous.



Thank you!

'Save the Woods' – A Retrospective

Editor's note: This is the first in a series of articles on the Natural Heritage Foundation's preservation projects over the years.

By Matt Nilsson

Sixteen years ago, Dane County nearly lost a priceless piece of its natural heritage. Three and a half acres of undisturbed woodland on Lake Mendota's southern shore was in danger of being transformed into condominiums. However, many county residents valued Wally Bauman Woods and were determined to save them. In the process, the Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation was born.

There were many reasons for saving what one ardent supporter described as "the crown jewels of the Midwest." First, they were the city of Madison's last untouched, private lakefront woodland. Second, the woods sheltered a unique variety of plants, including bloodroot, hepatica, may apple, moonseed vines, red elderberries, white peas and tasty morel mushrooms. Finally, they contained at least 84 species of flowering plants and 125-year-old red oaks, maples and cedars.

Jean Meanwell, Natural Heritage Foundation Past President and active participant in the effort to save the woods, says the area provided an essential link to a larger stretch of forest that the university had already protected.

"It was a buffer for the [upper] Eagle Heights Woods, which is a very important natural area in the community," she says. "There are quite a

few Indian mounds there — some of the best preserved ones around."

Saving the woods required two things: a unified voice to speak for the public interest, and about \$400,000. In September 1983, the community gained a strong voice for conservation with the formation of the Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation.

The money, however, was still a problem.

"And then we ran around and tried to raise the money," recalls Bill O'Connor, the foundation's conservation director. "I went down to the offices of the *Wisconsin State Journal* very early one morning, and was able to walk into the office of the publisher before his secretary got there. I

told him that we wanted the *Wisconsin State Journal* to help us raise the money, and that's what launched the 'Save the Woods' campaign."

Bill Wineke, still a columnist for the *Journal*, helped generate community support with his weekly articles promoting the project. "It really showed our readers' generosity. They really didn't know anything about the woods in the beginning," he says. With his latest effort to help raise \$100,000 for Fish Lake, Wineke has come full circle with the foundation.

The campaign helped raise \$43,000, which was used with money from the city, the county and the university to purchase land. The woods — now part of the university's Campus Natural Areas — are named after the late Walter Bauman, a former Natural Heritage Foundation and Dane County Board member who helped negotiate the deal and generate county-wide support.

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