

landscene

Summer 2011

Natural Heritage
LAND TRUST

WISCONSIN'S
2010
LAND TRUST
OF THE YEAR

PERMANENTLY
PROTECTED

Conservation easement adds permanent protection of cherished viewshed

In June, the Natural Heritage Land Trust purchased an 80-acre conservation easement on a scenic hill in the Town of Cross Plains, directly across the Black Earth Creek valley from Festge County Park in western Dane County. The conservation easement helps maintain the beautiful view across the picturesque valley from the overlook at Festge County Park. This fulfills a goal of the Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan.

The conservation easement was purchased for less than fair market value thanks to the generosity of the landowners—Mike Festge, Sue Hineline, and Cindy Regan. The landowners are the children of Otto and Evelyn Festge who donated the initial acreage that would become Festge County Park and worked with the DNR on numerous conservation projects on the family farm. Through this new conservation easement, the Festge family legacy of conservation continues. Sue reflects, "The family has always loved to spend time on the land to enjoy nature—walk in the woods, enjoy the flowers, pick berries, observe wildlife, listen to the birds, plant hundreds of trees. We want to carry that forward to future generations."

The property is mostly a hardwood forest, but roughly 11 acres are actively farmed, and a small area of dry prairie remains on the top of the hill. The prairie hosts a population of the state-threatened Hill's thistle and state-endangered small skullcap. Over the years, the Festge family has invested a lot of time restoring the prairie by clearing trees and brush.

Across the valley at Festge County Park, volunteers have been actively clearing invasive vegetation from the oak woodland and prairie that hosts the grand overlook of Black Earth Creek. The transformation has been nothing less than astonishing. The approach to the overlook, which was once a thick tunnel of buckthorn, is now an open vista of majestic oaks and returning native ground cover.

The viewshed from the overlook is now even more special and worth continued protection. Conservation easements are the perfect tool to accomplish this goal. **By purchasing only the restrictions needed to satisfy conservation goals, the Land Trust saves taxpayer money and keeps the land in private ownership and on the property tax rolls.**

Thanks go to the Festge family for selling the easement at less than the fair market value and to the Dane County Conservation Fund, Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, Northeastern Wisconsin Audubon Society's Wisconsin Land Fund, and Natural Heritage Land Trust members for making this project possible. ■



MARIO QUINTANA

Westport Drumlin Day

Saturday, October 1, 2011

1:00 – 4:00 pm

Although it is small in area, the Westport Drumlin State Natural Area, east of Waunakee, provides a very detailed illustration of Wisconsin's rich natural heritage of prairie and oak savanna. As you visit the drumlin, try thinking about it in the same way as you might about the Brazilian rain forest, the African Serengeti, or the Florida Everglades: a beautiful, biologically-rich, but imperiled place.

Bring your friends and family and join us for a fun afternoon in the great outdoors. You will hike the ancient drumlin and learn about prairie plants, oak savannas and more from the experts. There will be time to socialize. Refreshments will be served.

This event is free of charge, but space is limited and pre-registration is required.

To register or learn more, please contact Heidi Habeger at heidi@nhlt.org or (608) 258-9797. ■

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Spring walks along Vermont Creek

A group of Land Trust members, some of whom were anglers, visited Vermont Creek, an important tributary to Black Earth Creek, on a field trip in May.

In early May, Land Trust members walked along Vermont Creek in Black Earth and learned about the recent streambank restoration. Board members Carla Wright and Mike Dubis welcomed everyone. Dane County Water Resources Planner Pete Jopke and DNR Fisheries Biologist Kurt Welke were the field trip leaders. Members saw lunkers, which are fish habitat and streambank stabilizing structures, and weirs, which are V-shaped lines of rocks pointing upstream to create deeper pools immediately downstream.

The Vermont Creek streambank easements allow full public access to over one mile of the creek. Special thanks to Barb & Steve Parrell, one of the streambank easement landowners, for hosting the field trip. ■

Spring conservation easement monitoring complete



Staff monitor the Natural Heritage Land Trust's 52 easements covering 4,430 acres every year. Conservation easements require constant oversight to stay strong.

Conservation easements are an efficient way to permanently protect important natural resources such as prime farmland and forests. They keep the land in private ownership and on the tax rolls but generate big benefits for the public by permanently removing most or all of the development potential from these lands. That makes it possible to keep high-quality farmland in production, allow public access to streams, and protect scenic resources such as bluffs along the Wisconsin River.

The Land Trust holds 52 conservation easements covering 4,430 acres of land. It is our important duty to uphold these easements, ensuring that the landowners' wishes and public investments are upheld. Land Trust staff Caleb Pourchot and Jim Welsh visit each protected property every year, discussing the terms of the conservation easements with the landowners, and inspecting each property. We maintain endowment funds to ensure that we will always have the resources to monitor and uphold each easement.

In April, May, and June, we completed monitoring of half our 52 easements; the remainder will be monitored this fall. ■

New members: thank you for joining

New members are a breath of fresh air. In total, 30 new members joined the Natural Heritage Land Trust this spring.

Anonymous (4)	Nancy McGill
Dede Bangs	John & Cindy Mehl
Connie Bettin	Nancy Mladenoff
Conrad & Margaret Campbell	Mark Regan
Tom & Winn Eckert	Ron Rosner
Elaine Gadzicki & Jim Malter	William Rowe
Richard S. Grant	Roy & Beverly Runstrom
& Stephanie E. Reynolds	Dennis & Judy Skogen
Ron & Audrey Haessig	Doug & Janet Wadsworth
Julie Hanks	Eleanor White
Mark Hazelbaker	Wisconsin Archeological Survey, Inc
Jean Knickmeyer	Nancy Worcester
Fred Kamnetz	Carol Ziesemer
James & Betty Manson	Rich & Andrea Zietko

These new members join over 700 active members of Natural Heritage Land Trust in supporting local land conservation. The Land Trust will use contributions made by all members to do what we do best: permanently protect prairies, rivers and streams, wetlands, woodlands and working farms in the greater Dane County area.

New member contributions this spring were matched dollar for dollar, up to \$2,000, by board and staff members: William Van Haren (Blue Mounds), Roz Gausman (Town of Dunn), Angela James (Madison), Mike Dubis (Cross Plains), Mariana Weinhold (Shorewood), Darcy Kind (Madison) and Jim Welsh (Madison).

PERMANENTLY PROTECTED

Additional land protected at Kingsley Bend

In June the Land Trust assisted the Ho-Chunk Nation in purchasing an additional 17 acres of land at the Kingsley Bend Mound Group just south of the Wisconsin Dells in Columbia County. Located on the east side of the Wisconsin River, Kingsley Bend contains several large dome-shaped mounds and a variety of animal-shaped effigy mounds. The new acquisition buffers the mound group from incompatible development and helps preserve the landscape in which the mounds were created. This is our second project at Kingsley Bend: in 2009 we helped the Ho-Chunk Nation protect a three-acre tract with several burial mounds. The total permanently protected acreage at Kingsley Bend is now 52 acres. The site is open to the public; if you visit Kingsley Bend, please respect the cultural features by not walking on them. ■

VOLUNTEER PROFILE



Kevin St. Angel and Tim Mair

Volunteer Web Developers Kevin St. Angel and Tim Mair

Thanks to volunteers Kevin St. Angel and Tim Mair, the Natural Heritage Land Trust has a new and improved website. The new content and photo manager application, written by Kevin, makes it quick and easy for NHLT staff to update the web site. Website highlights include: Interactive map of permanently protected lands; photo gallery featuring pictures from field trips; and safe and secure processing of credit cards via Pay Pal. Membership Coordinator Heidi Habeger collaborated with Kevin and Tim on the new website.

What other web sites have you developed? **Tim:** Kevin and I work at Sony Creative Software where we are part of the team that designs and programs SonyCreative Software.com and ACIDplanet.com. **Kevin:** The first site I created was for the Illinois Pollution Control Board in 1995. Before working for Sony, I managed a web boutique out of the Steven's Point area. We ran the websites Chef's Catalog, Paragon Gifts, Indiana Botanic Gardens, Bits & Pieces, Stewart Outdoors, and many more.

What are your roles at Sony Creative Software?

Kevin: I am Director, eCommerce. Tim is Art Director.

Why do you provide pro bono web development services to NHLT? **Kevin:** I am sympathetic to conservation causes. In college I minored in biology and considered a career in environmental work, but instead pursued web programming. In 2004 I designed the Land Trust's website as part of the Knupp and Watson Goodstock program, which my wife Erica started. That was seven years ago, and I've been volunteering ever since.

Which NHLT permanently protected lands have you visited? **Tim:** Hickory Hill which is near my home in Cross Plains.

What would you tell a friend to encourage them to support NHLT? **Kevin:** NHLT has a very high protected acres per staff member ratio. Something like 7,000/3.5! In other words, NHLT is an effective land conservation organization with really low overhead. When you contribute to NHLT, you know your money will be put to good use. ■

Check out the new conservation lands map. Go to www.nhlt.org and click on "map" in the upper right hand corner of the home page.

MARIO QUINTANA



Conservation easement land owner Barbara Glass and Land Trust member Dr. Pam Heilman. (Inset) This Henslow's sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii*) sang for Land Trust members on the spring birdwalk at Rattlesnake Ridge.

Henslow's Sparrow sings

On May 7, 2011, Land Trust Conservation Specialist Caleb Pourchot led a bird walk for Land Trust members. Development Committee member Natalie Erdman welcomed everyone to Rattlesnake Ridge, a 290-acre conservation easement north of Dodgeville which protects a forested ridge and valley landscape along Sneed Creek. In general, the birds were quiet that morning; however, a Henslow's sparrow, an uncommon and inconspicuous bird, perched up in the grass and sang for all to see and hear. The Henslow's sparrow's numbers are declining largely because of habitat loss. It was inspiring to see this threatened bird thriving on permanently protected land!

Special thanks to conservation easement land owners Brad and Barbara Glass for hosting the field trip. And thanks to Madison Audubon Society for providing loaner optics for the bird walk. ■

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Conservation where you live

303 S Paterson St, Suite 6
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www.nhlt.org

What's Inside

- 17 additional acres protected at Kingsley Bend
- Save the date: Westport Drumlin Day, October 1, 1-4 pm
- Cherished view from Festge County Park permanently protected

YOU HAVE HELPED PERMANENTLY PROTECT 7,294 ACRES OF CHERISHED LOCAL LAND SINCE 1983

The Natural Heritage Land Trust protects natural areas, wildlife habitat, working farms, healthy lakes and streams, and recreational land to provide a high quality of life in the Dane County region.

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Rural Preservation continues in the Town of Dunn

In March, the Town of Dunn and Natural Heritage Land Trust permanently protected 38 acres along Lalor Road, which is designated as a "Rustic Road" by the Wisconsin DOT because of its scenic beauty. This was our third conservation project along Lalor Road and it adds to the many hundreds of acres protected in the Lalor Road/Waubesa Wetlands area.

The property is owned by descendants of William Lalor, an Irish immigrant that settled here in 1848. The original 150-acre Lalor farmstead immediately to the north was permanently protected in 1999.

Since 1997, we have helped protect nearly 2,700 acres as part of the Town of Dunn's groundbreaking Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program—the first in Wisconsin. This highly successful program has helped to maintain the viability of agricultural operations in the town, preserved its scenic, rural character, and created buffers for high-quality natural resources. We thank the people of the Town of Dunn for their continued support of this program and our members for making our work on these projects possible. ■

Thank you to the Westport Drumlin kiosk team

"In the end, we conserve only what we love. We will only love what we understand. We will only understand what we are taught." Baba Dioum, Senegalese Poet

During May and June, Tom Brock, Judy Borke, and Dave Mickelson did research, wrote text, and gathered images for the new Westport Drumlin kiosk. The purpose of this informal education project is to help visitors enjoy the native prairies and oak savannas at Westport Drumlin, understand the geology of the area, and appreciate the history of the Town of Westport. Cary Reich is designing the kiosk display. The new kiosk will be unveiled in the fall. ■