

# landscene

Spring 2013

Natural Heritage  
LAND TRUST

PERMANENTLY  
PROTECTED

## 178-acre Black Earth Creek Farm Permanently Protected

The Lucey family standing above the protected farm (left to right):  
David Lucey, Dennis Lucey, Kathy Endres, JoAnn Foote, George  
Lucey, Mark Lucey, Sheila Muehlenbruch, Jim Lucey, Gary Lucey.

On November 7, 2012, Natural Heritage Land Trust completed an agricultural conservation easement on 178 acres of George Lucey's farm in the Town of Black Earth. The agricultural conservation easement ensures that the land will be available for agricultural use in perpetuity and prevents the building of non-agricultural buildings. The farm is adjacent to Black Earth Creek, a world-class trout stream, and the Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie, a state natural area owned by The Prairie Enthusiasts.

"I wanted to make sure this land stayed a farm forever," said George Lucey. George approached Natural Heritage Land Trust about permanently protecting his farm in 2009. It took over three years to bring the project to completion, but George says he doesn't regret any of it. "Back in the early 1960's, my father said this was the best farm in the Town of Black Earth. He didn't live to see me own and farm it, but he would be happy to know it will remain a farm forever."

Preserving farmland in the Black Earth Creek valley is a key strategy of Natural Heritage Land Trust to protect the quality and quantity of water in Black Earth Creek and is consistent with local land use planning. The upland areas adjacent to the creek collect precipitation and infiltrate it to the groundwater, which in turn feeds the creek. Every addition of impervious surface in the valley contributes to stormwater runoff, rather than infiltration. Rainwater that runs off the surface of the land tends to do more harm than good to the water quality of the creek. The surface water is warmer, which makes it less desirable for trout and other cold-water species, and it often carries pollutants. Permanent easements ensure that the farmland itself remains available for water infiltration, but they also send a signal to neighbors that agriculture can remain a viable land use.

Funding for this project came from the NRCS Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, Wisconsin's Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) program, The Conservation Fund, and members of Natural Heritage Land Trust. ■

**Celebrate 30 years  
of conservation  
where you live!**

**Natural Heritage Land Trust 30th  
Anniversary Celebration  
Thursday, April 25, 2013  
5:30 - 9:30 pm**

**Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery  
on UW-Madison Campus**

Celebrate a shared commitment to "conservation where you live" by attending Natural Heritage Land Trust's 30th anniversary event. Join us inside the amazing Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery to experience a travelogue of protected places that you had a role in protecting. Enjoy delicious food and all the festivities in a setting as exciting as the future is for Natural Heritage Land Trust. Tickets are \$50.00 per person and must be purchased by April 18, 2013 (tickets can be ordered online at [www.nhlt.org](http://www.nhlt.org)). All proceeds benefit Natural Heritage Land Trust. Information on parking at <http://discovery.wisc.edu>. Valet parking available. ■

30 years

**Take root. Grow deep.  
Look to the future.**

## Conservation Roundup

Thanks to the strong support of our members, partners, and conservation-minded landowners, **Natural Heritage Land Trust permanently protected eight properties totaling 930 acres of natural areas and working farms in and around Dane County between July and December 2012.** Last fall we reported on two of those projects; here is the good news on the others.

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### Town of Windsor

In August in partnership with the Town of Windsor, we placed a perpetual agricultural conservation easement on a 136-acre farm bordering Highway 51 east of the Village of DeForest. While a portion of the original farm was purchased by the Wisconsin DOT for the widening of the highway, the bulk of the farm and its high-quality soils are now permanently protected. In 2007 the Town asked us to help develop a purchase of development rights program to permanently protect the high-quality soils in the town east of the highway. Twenty-one farmers applied to program, and now the two highest-ranking farms have been permanently protected.

Under the agricultural conservation easement placed on the farm, the land stays in private ownership and on the tax rolls, and the landowners have agreed to permanently limit non-agricultural development. Natural Heritage Land Trust and the Town of Windsor will visit the farm annually to ensure that the protection of the farmland is always upheld. Funding to purchase the agricultural easement came from the NRCS Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, Wisconsin's Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) program, and the support of Natural Heritage Land Trust members.

### Cherokee Marsh

In early December we completed our sixth project at Cherokee Marsh, purchasing six acres of land on the south side of the marsh opposite Gompers Elementary and Black Hawk Middle Schools in the City of Madison. Cherokee Marsh is the largest

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MARIO QUINTANA



Sandhill cranes at Cherokee Marsh, Natural Heritage Land Trust has completed six projects at Cherokee Marsh, adding 311 acres to the city's conservation park since 1991.

wetland in Dane County and one of the highest-quality and best protected; Wisconsin Wetlands Association has named Cherokee Marsh a "wetland gem" in recognition of its significance. This acquisition permanently protects scarce undeveloped upland on the south side of the marsh. Upland habitat is important for managing run-off into the marsh and the Yahara River and it also provides nesting and foraging habitat for wildlife. Our thanks to Cherokee Park, Inc. for selling the land to us at below its appraised fair market value. Funding to purchase the property came from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, City of Madison, Dane County Conservation Fund, and Natural Heritage Land Trust members. The property is now owned by the City of Madison as part of Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park.

PAT SHEAHAN



Canoeing and bird watching are popular activities at Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area in Rock County.



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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### Avon Bottoms State Wildlife Area

In mid-December we purchased approximately 200 acres of land in Rock County, which we immediately donated to the DNR as an addition to the Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area. The property will be restored to native wetland and upland habitats in the coming year by the Natural Resources Conservation Service through the Wetlands Reserve Program and is open to the public for hiking, birdwatching, hunting, and other recreational activities.

Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area is quickly becoming one of southern Wisconsin's premier public natural areas. Boasting nearly 3,000 acres of public lands along the Sugar River, it is home to many rare plants and animals and has been designated a Wisconsin Important Bird Area by the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative. This property is adjacent to a 349-acre property we permanently protected in 2006. Because of the generosity of the landowner, we were able to purchase this property at 50% of the fair market value. Funding for this project came from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program and members of Natural Heritage Land Trust.



The 39-acre addition to Waubesa Wetlands State Natural Area is outlined in red.

### Waubesa Wetlands State Natural Area

At the end of December Natural Heritage Land Trust partnered with Dane County and the Town of Dunn to purchase 39 acres of land along the south shore of Lake Waubesa. The property was the largest remaining undeveloped stretch of shoreline on the Yahara chain of lakes under private ownership and is adjacent to public lands at Waubesa Wetlands State Natural Area. With this acquisition, the public now has access to the eastern portion of the state natural area for nature-based recreation.

The property hosts roughly 27 acres of high-quality wetlands with almost one quarter mile of frontage along the lake. The remainder of the property is upland forest and old field. The Waubesa Wetlands State Natural Area encompasses one of the highest quality and most diverse wetlands in southern Wisconsin. It provides habitat for numerous species of plants and animals including grass-of-parnassus, northern bog aster, Blanding's turtle, least bittern, and sandhill cranes. Natural Heritage Land Trust will transfer the property later this year to Dane County to manage in cooperation with the DNR. Funding for this project came from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, Dane County Conservation Fund, Town of Dunn, Lake Waubesa Conservation Association and the members of Natural Heritage Land Trust. ■

Hook Lake is a soft bog lake, a type of wetland normally found farther north. The agricultural conservation easement will keep a portion of the north shore of the lake in permanent vegetated cover and prevent development of the adjacent farmland.

### Town of Dunn/Hook Lake

Also in mid-December, in partnership with the Town of Dunn, we permanently protected a nearly 80-acre farm on the north shore of Hook Lake – a beautiful state natural area. The farm was protected with a permanent conservation easement ensuring that the agricultural land remains available for farming and the shoreline of the lake remains natural and undeveloped.

This is our 22nd land protection project in partnership with the Town of Dunn. Together since 1997, we have permanently protected over 2,700 acres of important agricultural and natural lands in the town.

Funding for this project came from Wisconsin's Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) program, the NRCS Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, and the members of Natural Heritage Land Trust.

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### Black Hawk Ridge Trail Run

On October 28, 2012, Natural Heritage Land Trust was lucky to be the primary beneficiary of the Black Hawk Ridge Trail Run, which raised \$5,000 for our work. Almost 300 runners came out on a crisp fall morning to participate in an 8k or 16k trail run that included steep switch backs and quad-quivering descents. The participants received a t-shirt and were treated to a hot lunch of homemade soups along with an assortment of almost 1,000 cookies and other sweets made by volunteers. Many thanks go to the run organizers who have been coordinating this amazing event for several years: Willi and Gail Van Haren and Sherren Clark. We also want to thank all the volunteers (including several Natural Heritage Land Trust members) who made this event so successful: Pam Fornell, Leigh Acker, Laura Mason, Barb Charly, Kathy Dalbey, Gretchen Dieterich, Cheryl Koerwitz, John Mason, Roz Gausman, Kate Wipperman, and Angela James. Mark your calendars and let us know if you'd like to help with the trail run on Sunday, October 27, 2013.

## What's Inside

- Celebrate our 30th anniversary
- Land added to three parks and natural areas
- Three farms permanently protected



Conservation where you live

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YOU HAVE HELPED  
PERMANENTLY PROTECT  
**8,722 ACRES** OF CHERISHED  
LOCAL LAND SINCE 1983



Members of the Operation Fresh Start crew pile brush cleared out of the savanna at Patrick Marsh east of Sun Prairie.

## Youth crew begins work

**A**t the end of November an Operation Fresh Start conservation crew began work at our savanna restoration project at Patrick Marsh east of Sun Prairie. This marks the beginning of a new partnership between Natural Heritage Land Trust and Operation Fresh Start that will benefit natural areas that need restoration and young people at risk. Operation Fresh Start has four decades of success preparing youth struggling against poverty, school failure and other life-limiting difficulties to become self-sufficient through employment training and education programs.

The partnership is funded by grants from Madison Community Foundation, Dane County Partners for Recreation & Conservation, and Natural Heritage Land Trust members. Besides thinning overgrown savanna habitat at Patrick Marsh, the crew will work on prairie and savanna habitats at Hickory Hill on the Ice Age National Scenic Trail, Lake Belle View in the Village of Belleville, and Westport Drumlin. The crew will also construct fishing platforms and piers at Black Earth Creek and Lake Belle View and construct or reconstruct trails at Cross Plains Conservancy Parks and Westport Drumlin. ■