

# landscene

Spring 2017

Natural Heritage  
LAND TRUST

PERMANENTLY  
PROTECTED

#### Save the Date!

Join us to celebrate the 20th  
Anniversary of our partnership  
with the Town of Dunn on Saturday,  
September 16 from noon - 3 pm.

## 20 Years of Community Conservation in the Town of Dunn

This 30-acre easement property is part of a 2,000-acre contiguous block of private and public conservation lands just four miles from the capitol. The landowners, Don and Carole Schmidt, have lovingly restored about half of the property to tall-grass prairie and, through Don's artistic talents, have adorned it with a wonderful collection of metal bison.

Twenty years ago a conservation event of tremendous historical significance occurred in the Town of Dunn between the Nine-Springs E-Way and Lake Waubesa. Nothing like it had been seen in Wisconsin until that day in April 1997, when the visionary citizens of the Town of Dunn joined with conservation-minded landowners and public and private partners to make the first purchase of conservation land for their new Rural Preservation Program.

**Vicki Elkin, the Town's Program Coordinator at the time, remembers: "We were keenly aware of the importance of this project as a precedent for the future success of the Rural Preservation Program. It was quite complicated to put together, but the outcome was beyond anyone's expectations. I think about it often as I bike past the property on the Capital City Trail."**

The acquisition was significant in that it was the first farmland conservation project undertaken by a Town government

in Wisconsin. The citizens of the Town organized to create their Rural Preservation Program to preserve forever the things they valued most about their community: the farmland, woodlands, scenic vistas, and historic and cultural sites. The most remarkable thing about their program is that they chose to tax themselves to pay for it.

Knowing that their conservation efforts might be challenged by future politics, the Town partnered with Natural Heritage Land Trust to monitor and enforce their conservation easements.

"Our partnership with Natural Heritage Land Trust gives us great confidence in the legacy of our Rural Preservation Program. Should the Town's priorities change in the future, we are secure in the knowledge that Natural Heritage Land Trust will steward the Town's protected lands for generations to come," says Erica Schmitz, the Town of Dunn's Land Conservation Director.

Two decades later, Natural Heritage Land Trust and the Town of Dunn have

permanently protected more than 3,000 acres of vital farmland, rolling pastures, woodlands, and wetlands. More is being done every year.

In December, we and the Town completed another 100-acre conservation easement right across the road from the original land purchase that started it all in 1997. And in mid-March we added another conservation easement, this one covering 30 acres. **These latest protected farms expand a contiguous 2,000-acre area of public and private land conservation just four miles from the capitol.** Funding to purchase these permanent conservation easements came from the residents of the Town of Dunn and the Natural Resource Conservation Service's Agricultural Conservation Easement Program. Our thanks go to the landowners as well as to you and the many other supporters of Natural Heritage Land Trust who make these projects possible. ■



The garage and tobacco shed – two of the original nine buildings at the Koltes Farmstead – are finding new lives. In partnership with The Prairie Enthusiasts, we hope to create a hub for prairie restoration in northern Dane County by processing prairie seed and storing equipment in these buildings.

## Something to See



Supporters enjoyed a morning snowshoe at Merrimac Preserve led by Linda Lynch in January. Thank you to our sponsor:



Although the weather didn't cooperate, winter transport was still a viable option at our snowshoe and bonfire at Patrick Marsh in February. Thank you to our sponsors:



Visitors to Westport Drumlin Preserve will notice a new look to the Koltes Farmstead after the successful "green" demolition of several buildings that had outlived their usefulness.

Last summer, Natural Heritage Land Trust met with supporters, neighbors, and community leaders to begin developing a community vision for the gateway to Westport Drumlin preserve. We discussed our shared goals for the preserve and toured the farmstead and each of its buildings. Clear that many of the dilapidated buildings should be razed for safety and practicality, the group suggested a green demolition.

After consulting many people and partner organizations, Natural Heritage Land Trust decided to keep the tobacco shed and a garage for equipment storage and prairie restoration facilities. The two silos will remain as a monument to the farming culture and hard-working agricultural past and present of the Town of Westport. The rest of the structures were either deemed too costly to repair or served no practical use and would be removed in two phases: deconstruction and then demolition.

Deconstruction Inc. began work in early November, saving wood, hardware, and other materials from the landfill through selective demolition. By salvaging usable building materials, Deconstruction Inc. can supply construction projects and reuse material as furniture or art. After the deconstruction phase, only skeletons of the dilapidated buildings remained.

Robinson Brothers began the demolition phase in December, razing the building skeletons and removing the foundations that made up the bulk of the remaining materials. Fortunately, Robinson Brothers recycled much of the concrete and stone for use at other construction and demolition projects. Some materials, such as roof shingles, could not be recycled and were sequestered at a restricted landfill. Robinson Brothers will return in late spring to restore the disturbed areas by spreading topsoil and seeding with grass.

Thank you to everyone who shared ideas for the future of the Westport Drumlin Preserve gateway. This spring we will hold our second community input session to discuss further improvements, such as gates, a parking lot, and trails. We hope you'll join us. ■



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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The view of Black Earth Creek from the overlook at Festge County Park includes several farms permanently protected by conservation easements as well as land along the creek owned by the Wisconsin DNR.

## Smart partnerships for strong land protection and management

Over the years many supporters of Natural Heritage Land Trust have told us that our strengths include focus and perseverance. To keep true to that, we continue to collaborate with our conservation partners and committed landowners to make smart decisions about the land we have permanently protected. Recently, this has produced several creative land trades and strategic allocation of resources.

At **John Muir's boyhood home** in Marquette County, we placed the 198-acre Bessie Eggleston farm we acquired in 2014 in two excellent homes. The western 120 acre of the Eggleston farm is now owned and managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as the Muir Waterfowl Production Area at the adjacent Fox River National Wildlife Refuge. The eastern 78 acres of the Eggleston farm is in the good hands of the Ice Age Trail Alliance and may someday sport a leg in the thousand mile footpath across Wisconsin. All this land remains open to the public.

In November we completed a creative land swap with Dane County that will improve land management at two public conservation areas. At **Patrick Marsh** on the east side of Sun Prairie, where we already own and manage 80 acres of land, we received 15 acres of land from Dane County. This land is located between our property and the DNR land surrounding the marsh and includes 800 feet of frontage on the marsh. Natural Heritage Land Trust got involved at Patrick Marsh in 2003 when a citizens group—Patrick Marsh Conservancy—asked us to partner with them to help protect the area. Protecting and managing Patrick Marsh is indeed a community effort, thanks to the strong involvement of Sun Prairie Rotary,

Patrick Marsh Middle School, DNR, Dane County, Patrick Marsh Conservancy, and others.

The land Dane County gained in this swap, the **Wilke Prairie Preserve** on a tributary to Six Mile Creek north of Waukeesh, was set aside in 1994 when Hazel Knudson donated 40 acres to Natural Heritage Land Trust. It is adjacent to the county's 80 acre Waunakee Prairie property. According to Land Trust Executive Director Jim Welsh, "Hazel's original goal had been to see her land become part of the county's system of parks and natural resource areas. It's nice to see that 22 years later we could fulfill Hazel's wishes."

**As Dane County Executive Joe Parisi said, "The land exchanges with Natural Heritage Land Trust are wonderful examples of how Dane County continues to collaborate with our conservation partners to deliver a quality and seamless recreational experience for residents of and visitors to Dane County. These exchanges will increase management efficiencies and reduce operating costs by consolidating land holdings where the County or the Land Trust already owns other conservation and recreational lands. My special thanks to Natural Heritage Land Trust for all it does to further the goals of the County's Parks and Open Space Plan."**

Another of our strengths is in the stewardship of land protected by the 60 conservation easements we hold over some of the best farmland in the nation, as well over streambanks and natural areas. In February we assumed responsibility for a conservation easement that permanently protects 116 acres of prime farmland along **Black Earth Creek** west of Cross Plains. This land is owned by farmer and educator, Pam Allen. Pam's

farm has both Black Earth Creek and Garfoot Creek running through it and has a rich history. The easement was originally granted to American Farmland Trust and Dane County in 2002. After American Farmland Trust closed its operations in Wisconsin, it turned to us to take on primary responsibility for the easement in partnership with Dane County. Protecting the Black Earth Creek valley is a high priority because of its world-class trout stream and rich farmland. Since 2001, Natural Heritage Land Trust has permanently protected more than 1,100 acres in the valley. ■

Even as conservation land changes hand, it remains permanently protected. For example, the former Wilke Prairie Preserve is protected by a DNR Stewardship Program restriction recorded on the deed to the property to ensure it stays in conservation.



As a Legacy Giving Circle member, you are crucial to protecting our special places for future generations. Learn about your options for adding Natural Heritage Land Trust to your estate plans, including bequests, IRA or life insurance designations and more by contacting Heidi Habeger at [heidi@nhlt.org](mailto:heidi@nhlt.org) or (608) 258-9797.



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Conservation where you live

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GUIDESTAR

## Places Worth Knowing

Join Natural Heritage Land Trust on one of our field trips and get to know the places you have helped to protect. Our outings are led by landowners or expert naturalists, offering you unique opportunities to enjoy and learn about our wonderful landscape while meeting others who share your commitment to *conservation where you live*. **Our field trips are free of charge but pre-registration is required. Reserve your spot online today at [nhlt.org/events](http://nhlt.org/events) or call Sara at 608-258-9797.**



ROBERTA HERSCHLEB



JEFFREY J. STROBEL



STEVE AND KELLY LAGMAN

### UW Lakeshore Nature Preserve Founding Bird Walk

Saturday, May 13th  
8:00 am – 10:30 am

Join Roma Lenehan and Caleb Pourchot on **International Migratory Bird Day** for a moderate morning walk along the Lake Mendota shoreline. Hear the story of how 34 years ago a small group of citizens saved the 3.4 acre Wally Bauman Woods on the bluffs of Lake Mendota. Birds we hope to see during the spring migration include many different species of warblers and other neotropical migrants.

Thank you to our Sponsors:



### Town of Dunn Paddle Saturday, May 20th 12 pm – 4 pm

Natural Heritage Land Trust's past president, Willi Van Haren, will lead an enjoyable paddle through the Town of Dunn on the Yahara River ending at Fish Camp County Park. Some paddling skills and the ability to get in and out of a canoe are required to participate in this trip. Everyone is responsible for bringing their own equipment.

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### Sustainable Living in 2017 Thursday, June 15th 4 pm – 6 pm

Join us at One Seed Farm in the Town of Dunn for a tour around an easement-protected property with landowners Steve and Kelly Lagman. Steve and Kelly are committed to providing healthy, homegrown food while practicing more sustainable approaches to food production, distribution, and consumption. After the tour, we will have refreshments and snacks on their front porch.

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