



GROUNDSWELL CONSERVANCY

2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT



BEN JONES

Protecting Cherished Places Doesn't Happen by Accident

After 18 years as Executive Director of Groundswell, I have decided to retire this winter. It has been an honor for me to work with so many conservation-minded landowners over the years. Collaborating with our excellent staff and board, our volunteers, our partners, and all of our

supporters has made my job enjoyable and very rewarding.

Every day on the job, I have tried to keep two propositions in mind. The first is that conservation doesn't happen by accident. The second is that Groundswell is fundamentally in the business of building relationships.

The first proposition recognizes that it takes vision, planning, partnerships, and tenacity to permanently protect great places. Although Groundswell sometimes gets all the credit for protecting a piece of land, the acquisition itself is just the culmination of a lot of hard work by many people and partners.

The second proposition is that our work doesn't happen without trust. All of our land protection successes are built on the willingness of landowners to entrust their land to us. Our partnerships with Dane County, the DNR, nonprofit partners like the Ice Age Trail Alliance, Ducks Unlimited, and Friends of Cherokee Marsh, funders like United States Department of Agriculture and the Fish and Wildlife Service, and local governments all rely on mutual respect. And I believe that the tremendous support from our members and funders is due to our shared vision of a world filled with green places where communities thrive.

I am grateful to work in a community that believes in the intrinsic value of land and is so willing and ready to protect great places like Cherokee Marsh and the Black Earth Creek valley. I am also greatly encouraged by the reception we have received for our recent work overcoming some of the barriers that prevent everyone in our community from enjoying the benefits of land.

I am excited about all the great things Groundswell will do in its next 18 years.

Jim Welsh, *Executive Director*

PROTECTED FOREVER THIS YEAR

Conservation opportunities come in many forms. This year our long-term relationships with landowners and communities resulted in the permanent protection of more farm land south of Madison, helped reduce the potential damage of flooding in the Black Earth Creek valley, and preserved scenic beauty in the Wisconsin River valley. Your support makes it possible for us to invest in relationships and build new ones that will yield incredible conservation benefits now and in the future.



Groundswell's former employee Kate Wipperman helped count trout in Black Earth Creek in 2007.

More Stream Protection in Black Earth Creek Valley

Groundswell and Dane County's on-going partnership with landowners in the Black Earth Valley yielded another conservation success. Landowner Fred Wolf protected his land along Halfway Prairie Creek on the east side of the Village of Mazomanie with a permanent conservation easement. This ten-acre easement has two purposes – streambank restoration and extension of a popular hike/bike trail. It adjoins the Wolf Run Trail that connects Mazomanie with Wisconsin Heights School. This is the second time that Fred Wolf has protected land for the public good – his family was instrumental in creating the original segment of the Wolf Run Trail in 2012. Funding to purchase the new easement came from the Dane County Conservation Fund and supporters of Groundswell.

Mazomanie is located near the bottom of the Black Earth Creek watershed and is especially vulnerable to flooding as our climate and land uses change. The community was very hard hit during the big flood three years ago. The easement allows the county to work with the landowner to restore more than 1,000 feet of Halfway Prairie Creek, reconnecting the creek to its floodplain and also improving fish habitat. ●



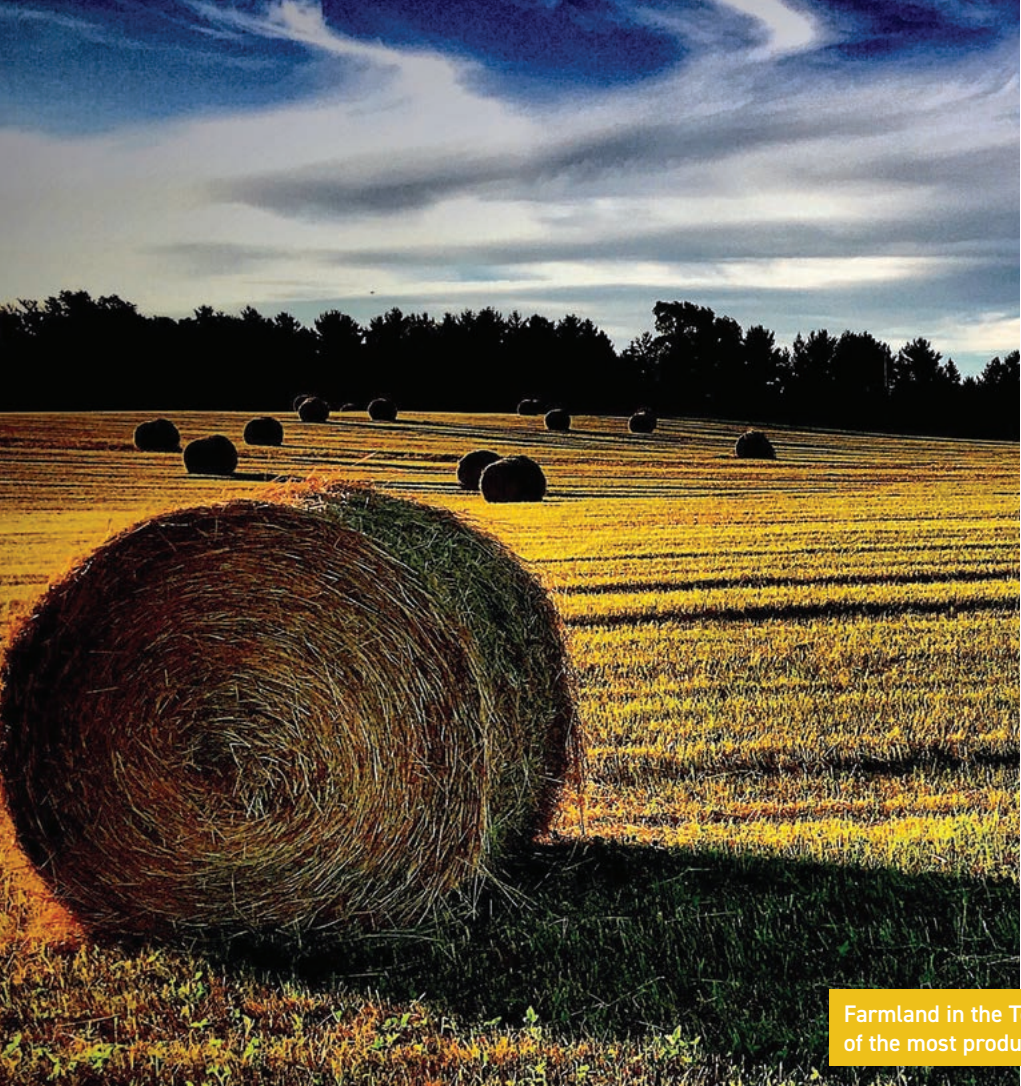
JULIE RACK

Good Things Sometimes Come in Small Parcels

This spring another piece of Wisconsin's wonderful natural landscape was protected forever when Pat and Ron Paska donated to Groundswell a quarter-acre of land on the Wisconsin River north of Arena.

The Paskas enjoyed their spot on the Wisconsin River for many years and always planned a conservation future for the property. "Shortly after we purchased the property, we were contacted by the DNR and asked if we were willing to sell. We assured our contact that we would be in touch when that day arrived. We liked the idea of it becoming permanently protected as part of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway. Unfortunately, when the day arrived funds were not available and they were not in a position to accept it as a donation. Our realtor and friend, John Holbrook, approached Groundswell Conservancy and arranged for us to donate the property. I understand that it will, at some point, be offered to the State. A happy ending!" And that in fact is Groundswell's plan. After we remove the modest cabin on the property, we will offer to donate the land to the DNR as an addition to the Riverway.

The Riverway is one of Wisconsin's great conservation successes. It is a private/public partnership that protects the scenery, wildlife, and historical and archeological resources along 92 miles of the river from Prairie du Sac to Wyalusing State Park. The donation of this land by the Paskas adds another piece to the conservation jigsaw puzzle that is the Riverway. ●



MARK JUNG

Farmland in the Town of Dunn is some of the most productive in the nation.

33rd Farm Protected from Development in Town of Dunn

Last fall, Groundswell and the Town of Dunn permanently protected 53 acres of farmland in the Town thanks to the willingness of landowner John Gefke. His farm is part of the growing mosaic of conservation land in the Town which is south of McFarland. Besides nearly 4,000 acres of conserved farmland, other conservation land owned by Dane County, the DNR, and private landowners means that about 20% of the Town's land base is protected from incompatible development.

This latest agricultural conservation easement was purchased with funds raised by the Town through its Rural Preservation program. It was matched by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. NRCS has been our long-time partner for this important agricultural lands conservation work. ●



Remembering Ed Minihan

We lost a conservation hero in August with the death of Ed Minihan. Ed was a tireless champion of farming in the Town of Dunn where we have partnered since 1997.

When anyone reflects upon Ed's career and contribution to the world, it is easy to say he was a true "Renaissance Man" who acquired profound knowledge and proficiency in many different fields, always with a zeal for serving others and making his community and the world a better place. Ed served in the U.S. Navy as a Seaman from 1964 to 1966. He served as a Firefighter for the city of Ann Arbor, Michigan from 1965 to 1970, while earning his Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology in 1970 from Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, Michigan. He also served as a Sociology Lecturer at the same university while earning his Master of Arts in Sociology with a minor in Business in 1972. Ed became the Town of Dunn Supervisor in 1977 after completing his preliminary exams in the Doctoral Program of Medical Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1976. In 1979, Ed was elected as the Chairman of the Town of

Dunn and provided inspiration and vision for the town for the next 42 years until his death.

The Town of Dunn is as beautiful as it is, in many ways, thanks to Ed's leadership and tenacity. Wetlands, prairies, farmlands, oak savannas, waterways and wildlife habitat have been restored and permanently preserved as a legacy for future generations to enjoy. Native American burial mounds have been protected. Sandhill cranes (the Town of Dunn symbol) grace the land, providing joy for all who see them. With development encroaching all around, Ed and Town residents stood firm and preserved the rural integrity of the Town. Thanks to Ed's work with American Farmland Trust, other communities followed the lead of the Town of Dunn's trailblazing Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program, and kept their own precious lands and waterways permanently protected. Ed and his wife Sue made many life-long friends in the Town and helped to create a close-knit community of lovers of the land. – Excerpted from Ed's obituary. ●



BEN JONES

CARING FOR SPECIAL PLACES

Prairie plants in summer bloom at Westport Prairie

Last fall we added five more acres of prairie to Westport Prairie. We could not have done this without the help of our seed collector Kaylee Nelsen and all of our trusty volunteers. A lot of work went into collecting the seed, processing it, and then planting it. The work was well worth it and we're sure all of the pollinating insects, birds, and other wildlife would agree. This fall we are planting five more acres at Westport Prairie. We hope to keep this annual prairie planting trend going for years to come. But wait, there's more! This fall we are planting 25-acres of prairie at Patrick Marsh. That's almost 20 football fields in size! This was a great year for planting prairie, and we're excited to add even more this fall for all to enjoy. ●



BEN JONES

This spring a sculpture of a phoenix rising from flames was unveiled at Patrick Marsh. The phoenix represents resilience and second chances. It is also a symbol of the important role fire plays in maintaining healthy prairies. The sculpture was designed in collaboration with Prairie Phoenix Academy and Westside Elementary in Sun Prairie. Prairie Phoenix Academy teacher Cindy Milbrath (seen at left) and Rossi Parisi helped unveil the sculpture in April. Rossi's drawing was the inspiration for the sculpture's design.



ROBERTA HERSCHLEB

An Outdoor Classroom Grows at Mendota Elementary School

Research shows that children perform better in school when they regularly spend time in nature. At Mendota Elementary School in Madison teachers are embracing outdoor learning and play. In 2018, Groundswell began helping the Mendota Green Team create an outdoor classroom at the school. Together, we partnered with students and Urban Tree Alliance to plant trees for shade. We installed a rain garden to address flooding. We rebuilt the school garden to increase accessibility for those in wheelchairs. We obtained a tool shed to store maintenance equipment for the outdoor classroom. The Green Team continues to make improvements and is guided by a landscape plan designed by students, teachers, and families. As we prepare for bigger changes to the outdoor classroom, the Green Team is designing an outdoor curriculum. This way it is easy for teachers to use the outdoor spaces. ●

WHAT'S NEW



Introducing Mike Foy, Land Protection Specialist

Working with land conservation partners has been key to Mike Foy's career, which makes him an excellent fit as our new staff member. Mike is working part time to facilitate conservation easements and other land acquisition deals. He brings a wealth of experience from his 31 years as a wildlife biologist at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, where his work often involved partnering with Groundswell to protect public and private land. More recently Mike shared his expertise as a member of our Stewardship Committee.

When asked for his earliest Groundswell memories, Mike remembered projects in the early 1990's at the Brooklyn Wildlife Area and surrounding Hook Lake. He sees special value in preservation of larger areas, such as Brooklyn Wildlife Area and Avon Bottoms, because their size allows them to function effectively as natural areas.

Mike's interest in the outdoors dates back to his childhood. His mother Rosemary was a volunteer naturalist with the Madison School Forest, and she advocated with the Madison Parks Department to create Owen Conservancy. She is his conservation hero.

Mike and his wife Carrie Morgan have two grown children and enjoy gardening, hiking and traveling together. Mike also enjoys fishing and hunting on our beautiful public lands and waters, plus the small Iowa County farm he shares with his extended family. ●



Operation Fresh Start Conservation Graduate Crew

You don't often see black or brown faces in the field of conservation. That might be due to barriers like a lack of access to the professional networks where job connections are made. And some of our entrance standards are arbitrarily exclusionary. This fall we are partnering with Operation Fresh Start to create a career pathway for its young clients who already love conservation. They have experience, enthusiasm, and interest in land. But for many of them, the doors into our field are closed.

The Conservation Graduate Crew is a year-long program of professional training and mentorship. The goal is to create a career pathway through additional training and credentials, work experience, mentorships, and connections with potential employers.

We have recruited strong partners to hire the crew over the next 12 months: Wisconsin DNR, City of Madison, Dane County, UW Arboretum, Ice Age Trail Alliance, The Nature Conservancy, and Groundswell – each is providing places for crew members to work and learn. We are also lining up entry level jobs specifically for crew members so they have a job waiting for them when they graduate from the crew. ●

In 2018 a crew from Operation Fresh Start prepared the site for the "nature station" Groundswell helped create at Lake View Elementary School.

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By the numbers

July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

Your individual gift makes a big difference!

815 Supporters

63 Acres Protected Forever This Year

Between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 Groundswell Conservancy received \$700,250 for programs and operations and spent \$704,236 for programs and operations. In addition, Groundswell received \$280,850 in private gifts and public funds to permanently protect 64 acres of land.

Income for Programs and Operations

Contributions from individuals	\$578,973	83%
Restricted gifts	\$43,247	6%
Consulting fees, rental income, and other	\$52,041	7%
Endowment distributions from Madison Community Foundation		
Easement Enforcement Endowment	\$14,170	5%
Operations Endowment	\$4,300	
Bob and Anne Bolz Gift Endowment	\$7,519	

Total Program and Operating income	\$700,250	100%
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Total Income for Land Acquisition	\$280,850
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Expenses for Programs and Operations

Conservation, Education, and Outreach	\$539,042	77%
Fundraising	\$95,620	14%
Management and General	\$69,574	10%

Total Program and Operating Expenses	\$704,236	100%
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As of June 30, 2021 Groundswell Conservancy had total assets of \$8,778,557 and liabilities of \$111,316. Most of our assets are our nature preserves.

To view the details of our financial health, please see our financial reports posted at www.guidestar.org. The 2020-2021 report should be posted by February 2022. You can also view our federal tax returns at our website under the tab "ways to give" / "donate with confidence".

MISSION

We protect special places forever. We want everyone to live in a world filled with green places where communities thrive. We believe that land is essential for people's physical, emotional, and spiritual wellness. If we don't protect undeveloped land now, it may be lost forever.



GROUNDSWELL
CONSERVANCY



MARIO QUINTANA

Your Legacy, Next Generation's Future

Include Groundswell Conservancy in your will or estate plans and a donation of \$1,000 will be made to Groundswell in your honor — right now. You will be joining Jim Welsh and the others listed below by leaving a legacy of preserved land.

To learn about your options for adding Groundswell to your will or estate plan or about the Legacy Circle Campaign, visit groundswellconservancy.org/legacycastlecampaign or contact Heidi Habeger at (608) 258-9797 or heidi@groundswellconservancy.org.

LEGACY CIRCLE MEMBERS

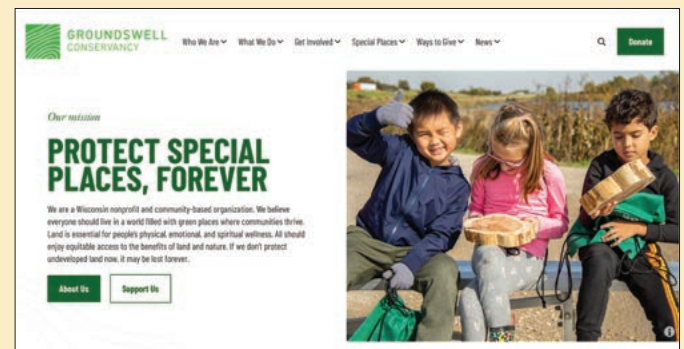
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 Carla Wright
 Susan Young Hoffman
 & Les Hoffman

* New Legacy Circle Members

Check Out our New Website

We are excited to announce the launch of our new site at groundswellconservancy.org. It is mobile-friendly and we hope it becomes one of your go-to sources for local land conservation news. Learn about special places like Patrick Marsh, download a trail map and plan your visit. Search for Groundswell protected lands open to the public or that allow hunting. In addition to giving online with a credit card, you can now give via PayPal or easily set up monthly giving via your bank account. Visit today and sign up for our emails, join our outdoor volunteer list, find a new place to explore, or give a gift in support of local land conservation!





BEN JONES



YIMMUJ YANG

Thank you for your investment in conservation where you live

Each and every gift, no matter the size, helps protect the land we love, forever.

These generous supporters gave gifts to Groundswell Conservancy between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021. Thank you for protecting special places, forever.

\$40,000+

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\$20,000 - \$39,999

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Schlecht Family Foundation

\$10,000 - \$19,999

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MARIO QUINTANA



BEN JONES



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“My two year old plays and learns in nature every day, rain or shine. Dane County’s prairies, lakes, and forests will be an integral part of his childhood. By supporting Groundswell Conservancy, I know Wisconsin’s beautiful places will be preserved for my family and countless other people to enjoy.”

**Rebecca Ressler,
Supporter**

\$100 - \$249

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My discovery of Groundswell was two years ago via a sign at Patrick Marsh. When I went on the website and saw the places Groundswell has helped protect, I was blown away. I had not been aware of Groundswell, yet I had visited and enjoyed so many of these special places and I treasure them all. Once these lands are developed we cannot get them back, which is why I support, and have included, Groundswell in my estate plan.

**Maggie Freespirit,
Legacy Circle member**



¹Event Sponsor ²Prairie Partners Sponsor ³Monthly Sustainer ⁴Part or all of gift is to help uphold our conservation easements ⁵Part or all of gift for land acquisitions



When the pandemic threw off my plans to go on an annual birding trip up north, I was so glad that my mom and I discovered the gem that is Patrick Marsh. We were able to safely meet for day trips to catch the warbler migration in spring. This year I decided to become a monthly Sustainer in memory of a dear friend and fellow nature lover as a way to show my appreciation to Groundswell for their work in protecting special places, as well as collaborating with other local nonprofits I support, like the Ice Age Trail Alliance and Foundation for Dane County Parks.

**Samantha Haas,
Sustainer**

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THANK YOU Volunteers

We are deeply grateful to the dedicated volunteers, who devote many hours to serve on our board and committees, help with field trips, assist in the office, manage the lands, and more.

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USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service

In preparing this report, we tried to ensure that it is accurate and complete. If we made an omission or error, please accept our apologies and contact Liz Pelton at 608-258-9797 or liz@groundswellconservancy.org so we can correct our records.

ON THE LAND



BEN JONES

Cave of the Mounds landowner Mark Rooney and general manager Joe Klimczak hosted our August outing. They shared how this underground marvel was discovered and showed off the surrounding land permanently protected by a conservation easement held by Groundswell and Dane County.

Thank you to our sponsors:



On a beautiful July evening with blazing star in full bloom, board member Mary Binkley and naturalist Jan Axelson led a hike through the prairie at Yahara Heights Park.

Thank you to our sponsors:





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PLACES WORTH KNOWING



BEN JONES

Thank You + Jim Welsh's Retirement Party

Wednesday, December 8, 2021
4:00 - 6:00 pm
Garver Feed Mill
3241 Garver Green, Madison

Join us for a celebration of gratitude as we gather to thank you, our dedicated supporters, and wish Jim a happy retirement! Enjoy hors d'oeuvres and refreshments, along with good company and a short program. Sign-up at groundswellconservancy.org/thankyouparty21 or call (608) 258-9797 ●

Don't let the cold weather keep you indoors. Join Groundswell Conservancy outside this winter on our free field trips. Space is limited, so be sure to register at groundswellconservancy.org/events soon.

Patrick Marsh Bonfire & Candlelit Hike

Saturday, January 22, 2022
4:30 - 6:30 p.m.

The tradition is back! Join your friends and neighbors for an easy 1.5-mile candlelit hike at Patrick Marsh Wildlife Area. A warm bonfire awaits you at the end of the trek. ●

Westport Prairie Bonfire & Poetry Hike

Saturday, February 26, 2022
4:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Explore the winter magic of Westport Prairie with a family-friendly hike and cozy bonfire. Check out the new trails with us and enjoy poetry at this special place. ●



BEN JONES



ROBERTA HERSCHLEB