



## Celebrating 40 Years of Protecting Special Places

BJ Byers

**“Though I do not believe that a plant will spring up where no seed has been, I have great faith in a seed... Convince me that you have a seed there, and I am prepared to expect wonders.” — Henry David Thoreau**

Spring is a time for planting new seeds and for watching with wonder the seeds you have already sown come to life!

This year marks Groundswell’s 40th anniversary. Our story began in 1983 when a group of concerned citizens came together to protect a small, but important piece of land along Lake Mendota. This group of people planted a seed that would lead to the creation of the Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation, now known as Groundswell Conservancy. Over time, countless others like you who care deeply about the land planted more “seeds” to help us protect nearly 14,000 acres of special places!

During our 40th anniversary year, with the help of supporters, landowners, partners, and volunteers like you, we will protect more special places, build a more inclusive Groundswell community, and address the environmental challenges of today and tomorrow. That means protecting more farmland, conserving more wildlife habitat, providing equitable access to the land, protecting our wetlands from a changing climate, and helping our youth connect to the outdoors through green schoolyards.

As we move forward, we are grateful to you, the seed planters, who have helped Groundswell make it this far. To learn more about our 40 years of conservation success, visit [groundswellconservancy.org/history](https://groundswellconservancy.org/history).

Yours in Conservation,  
Angela West Blank  
Executive Director





## Good News for Yahara River Recreation

Nancy McGill, Volunteer

More people will be able to safely access the Lower Yahara River thanks to Groundswell's purchase of 1.64 acres south of the Dunkirk Dam in February 2023. This special place is adjacent to property owned by the Dunkirk Dam Lake District and to the Town's Charlie H. Lyon Memorial Park.

Immediately after the acquisition, Groundswell transferred the parcel to the Town of Dunkirk. The Town plans to work with the Lake District to construct amenities on the property. Current plans include an ADA-accessible path, an accessible canoe/kayak put-in/take-out, and an accessible fishing pier.

The property had been in the Hansen family

since 1945, when Otto Hansen purchased it. His son, Rollin, fished from the property and cleared about an acre of the land for a vegetable garden. The current landowners are third and fourth generations. Although they were approached by a developer, the family chose to preserve the property. "We want the public to be able to enjoy this land next to the Yahara River for years to come," said Otto's granddaughter Judy Adler.

This acquisition was possible because of the generosity of the landowners, our partnership with the Town and the Lake District, and funding provided by the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program and the Dane County Conservation Fund.

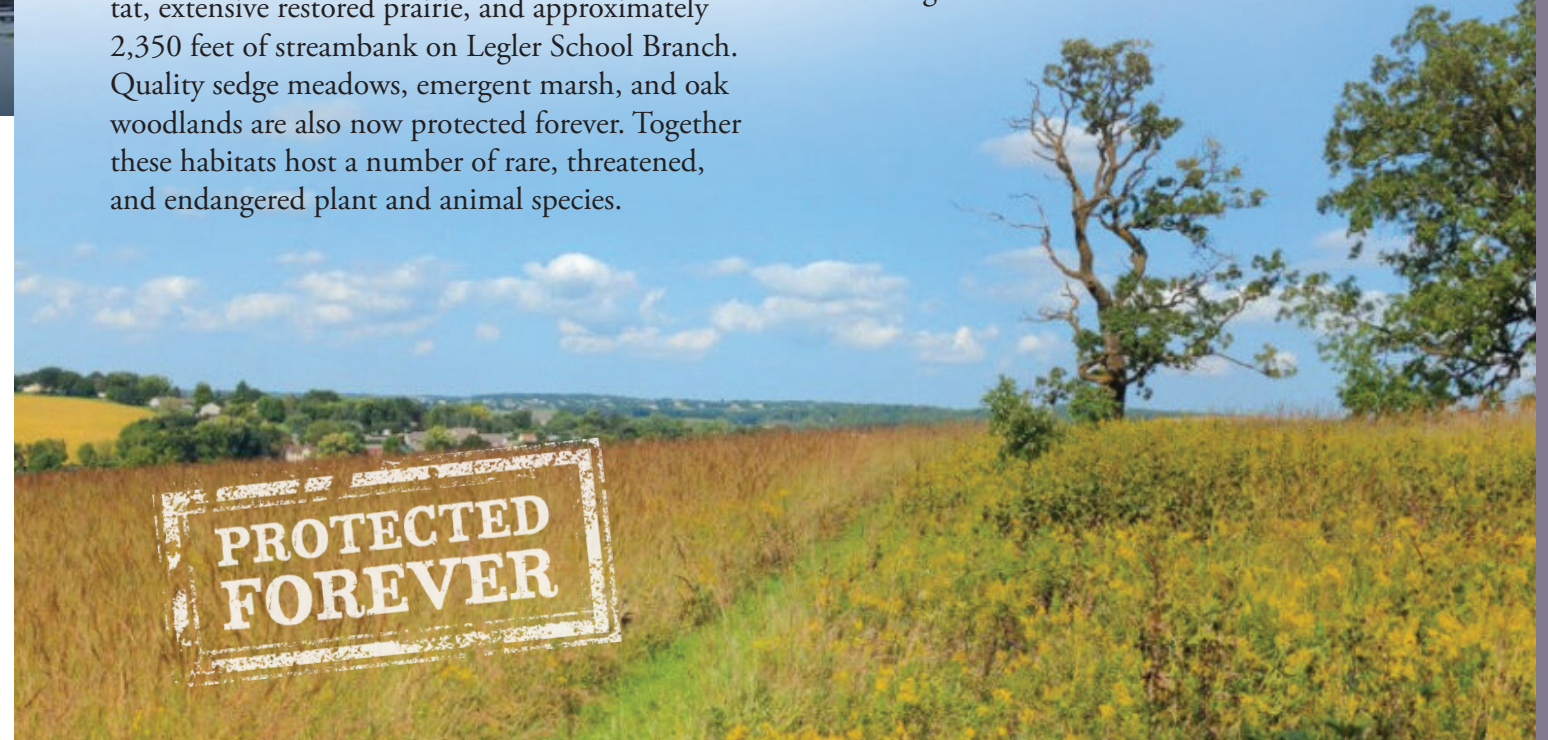
## Donated Easement Protects Endangered Species

Tony Abate, Conservation Director

We protected 180 acres of prairie and oak savanna habitat in the Town of New Glarus at the end of last year. This was made possible by the generous donation of a private conservation easement by landowners Kris and Penny Kubly.

The Four Oaks Farm Conservation Easement protects remnant prairie and oak savanna habitat, extensive restored prairie, and approximately 2,350 feet of streambank on Legler School Branch. Quality sedge meadows, emergent marsh, and oak woodlands are also now protected forever. Together these habitats host a number of rare, threatened, and endangered plant and animal species.

The Kublys have been actively caring for this land for many years. That's why they took the extra step to ensure their hard work restoring and managing this landscape lasts forever. Kris and Penny established an endowment which will help fund land management and restoration of the property forever. Groundswell will work with the landowners (and all future landowners) to ensure the property continues to be managed with care and attention.



*Birds-eye view of purchase on the corner of County M and Woodland Drive.*

Ben Jones

## Prized Property Protected in Westport

Mike Foy, Former Land Protection Specialist

In December 2022, Groundswell helped the Town of Westport purchase 105 acres once proposed for a large bakery.

The property was owned by the principals of Bagels Forever and zoned for a bagel factory for many years. A mix of grassland, wetlands, and oak woods, the land is bordered by the Westport Town Hall on one side and the DNR's Six Mile Creek Fishery Area on the other.

With the open space addition, **there's now an almost unbroken corridor of protected public land around the north side of Lake Mendota,**

stretching from Governor Nelson State Park to Wisconsin 113.

To ensure the property is never developed, the Town of Westport granted a conservation easement to Groundswell. The easement will maintain the conservation values and access for public recreation and enjoyment.

Groundswell supported the purchase by helping to negotiate a large cash donation for the property from Steve and Marianne Schlecht. The Dane County Conservation Fund is also supporting this land purchase with a grant of up to \$1 million.





*Scouts and volunteers help build a boardwalk extension*

Mario Quintana

#### BJ Byers, Conservationist

Say goodbye to those soggy boots and hop up onto our newly extended boardwalk! With more hikers at Patrick Marsh and wet springs the last few years, some sections of the trail became quite muddy. When local Eagle Scout Nick Parks heard there was a community need to extend our boardwalk and avoid the mud, he stepped up to the challenge. We couldn't have asked for a more motivated individual to help make one of our favorite green spaces more accessible to the community.

We would like to give a special thanks to all of the volunteers and Troops 47 & 747 who helped with the build. Thanks to Ron Albrecht and Jim Welsh for contributing the tools needed for the project, as well as their woodworking wizardry and knowledge. Lastly, we would like to thank Ron & Ann Semmann and Rex Owens (who gave in memory of his late wife Lynette) for their generous support of this project.

## New Prairie Planting in Cross Plains

#### BJ Byers, Conservationist

In December of 2019, Groundswell purchased 5 acres of agricultural land near Cross Plains in the Black Earth Creek valley. It's a special place that we recently had the pleasure of planting back to native prairie.

The stars aligned perfectly to make this planting happen, and we are so thankful for everyone who helped. First, we would like to thank Ron Endres for his unrelenting passion and commitment to conservation. He has provided seed for numerous local nonprofits in Dane County in need of prairie seed. For this planting alone, Ron donated over 100lbs of native prairie seed collected in Dane County. With over 90 different plant species in the mix and a value of over \$40K, it's safe to say we could not have done this without him.

Our partners, who also helped make this planting a success, include the Ice Age Trail Alliance for aiding with grant administration and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for assisting with site prep. Lastly, we want to thank our trusty volunteers who put boots on the ground



*Volunteer Jan Axelson tosses seed by hand.*

Heidi Habeger

and planted the prairie seed. We could not think of a better way to spend a few hours on a Saturday morning. Thank you all for your help!



I'm Mitch Silva, Groundswell's **Land Management Specialist, LTE**. I handle the hands-on conservation and stewardship work on lands protected by Groundswell. I maintain and improve our natural resources, specifically our beautiful prairies and oak savanna remnants. I perform land management tasks such as prairie plantings, brush management, tree felling, herbaceous invasive plant removal, and more. I also manage natural resources at many different sites, but predominantly I work at Westport Prairie, Patrick Marsh, Westport Farm, and Pasley's Swan Creek Farm.

Before starting at Groundswell, I worked in the conservation field with our partner organization, Operation Fresh Start. I spent the last two years working in the field, studying and managing native ecosystems across southern Wisconsin.

When I'm not managing Groundswell's natural areas, you will still find me outdoors. I enjoy hunting, fishing, hiking, foraging, and really anything outside.



I'm Brandon Mann and I joined Groundswell in March as the new **Easement Stewardship Manager**. I'm excited to join such a welcoming staff and look forward to meeting landowners with a shared commitment to conservation along with other members of the Groundswell family.

Before joining Groundswell, I managed lands in the City of Madison's Conservation Park system for 11 years and was a crew leader for a local environmental restoration company before that. I moved to Madison in 2006 and earned a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a focus on ecological restoration in 2009.

My passion for prairie and oak savanna landscapes is what initially attracted me to Wisconsin and I have since truly come to fall in love with southern Wisconsin. When not at work or volunteering, I spend time canoeing Wisconsin's rivers, reading history, natural and otherwise, growing and making good food, and exploring/ traveling.





Mario Quintana

## Land Ownership Pipeline

Yimmuaj Yang, Community Director

In the next 15 years, farmland in the United States will face major transitions and challenges. The average farmer is over 57 years old, and many farmers do not have heirs who want to take over their farms. Approximately 90% of farmland is owned by non-farming owners, and the cost of farmland continues to rise. On top of that, the most productive farmland is often the most attractive to developers.

To facilitate and address these challenges, Groundswell is creating a pipeline to farmland ownership for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color farmers and land seekers using the Buy, Protect, Sell (BPS) model. Read the successful BPS story by American Farmland Trust and Renewing the Countryside at: [groundswellconservancy.org/land-ownership-pipeline/](https://groundswellconservancy.org/land-ownership-pipeline/)

If you're a farmland owner or know a farmland owner, you can help leave a legacy. To read more about farmland transition options, visit the link listed above.



*"I deeply care about spending quality time and connecting with my kids through time spent in the outdoors. Groundswell helps create, protect, and give access to those places close to home."*

-Alton Multhauf, Groundswell Sustainer & Board Member

## 2023 Linden Cohousing Farmers Market

Come support farmers and entrepreneurs of color at the fourth annual Linden Cohousing Farmers Market! The market will be held at 2082 Winnebago Street on the eastside of Madison, every Thursday 3:00 - 6:00 pm, starting on May 25, 2023 and ending on September 28, 2023.



Photo by Sara Bringman

## Become a Monthly Sustainer

Are you looking for an easy way to support conservation where you live in 2023?

It's fast and simple to set up automatic monthly gifts to Groundswell. Your gifts will provide reliable, ongoing support to help protect special places for everyone in our community. Monthly giving is convenient, secure, and eco-friendly. Sign up today at [groundswell.org/donate](https://groundswell.org/donate) and select the monthly donation type or call 608-258-9797.



Heidi Habeger

On a beautiful night in January, almost 200 community members gathered at Patrick Marsh for a candlelit hike and bonfire (complete with s'mores and hot cocoa).

Thank you to our sponsors:



Ben Jones

In February, we hosted our first ever candlelit hike at Westport Prairie. We enjoyed a magical winter hike along the drumlin and finished the evening warming up around a bonfire with friends and neighbors.

Thank you to our sponsors:



## Leave a Legacy

Want to do even more to conserve land for generations to come? Join Groundswell's Legacy Circle by leaving a gift to Groundswell in your will or estate plans.

To learn more about your options, contact Heidi Habeger at [heidi@groundswellconservancy.org](mailto:heidi@groundswellconservancy.org), call (608) 258-9797, or go to [groundswellconservancy.org/legacy](https://groundswellconservancy.org/legacy).



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Mitch Silva

## 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 all people's physical, emotional, and spiritual wellness. If we don't protect undeveloped land now, it may be lost forever.

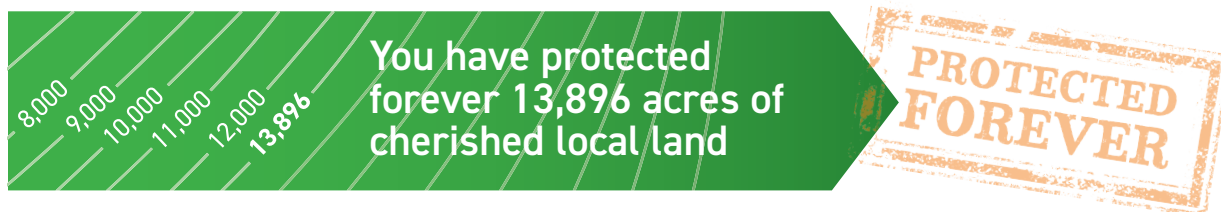




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Newsletter designed by Jeff Weyer

## Places Worth Knowing

Celebrate Groundswell's 40th anniversary this summer with a free community field trip. Reserve your spot today at [groundswellconservancy.org/events](http://groundswellconservancy.org/events).



Historic Indian Agency House



Focal Flame Photography



Vicki France Photography

### Historic Indian Agency House Tour & Walk

Saturday, June 17, 2023  
1:00 – 3:30 pm

Don't miss this opportunity for a guided tour of one of the oldest houses in Wisconsin, which was built in 1832. You'll also have the chance to learn about the land on an easy 1-mile nature trail walk.

### Birding for Families

Saturday, July 8, 2023  
9:00 – 11:00 am

Join Groundswell and the BIPOC Birding Club of Wisconsin for a morning of birding at Patrick Marsh. Get outside and experience the joy of birding with the whole family.

### Hike at Hauge Historic District Park

Saturday, August 12, 2023  
1:00 – 3:00 pm

Explore the second highest public park observation point in Dane County, with several miles of mowed hiking trails and a spectacular view of the Blue Mound.

Thank you to our sponsors:

