



Wildcat Falls gains further momentum toward a Community Forest

Northwoods Alliance (NWA) and its conservation partners are pleased to announce a significant advance toward establishing a community forest at Wildcat Falls, a forested tract just north of the Wisconsin border with unique ecological and recreational values. The project was recently awarded 50% of the funding necessary to complete the community forest, through a successful grant from the USFS Community Forest and Open Space Conservation program. This project ranked fourth in the nation, out of fifteen funded proposals in this competitive program. “We are grateful that the USFS recognized the immense conservation value of this project. Moving forward, the success of this project will depend on support from the community. We are optimistic, as we see strong community benefits from conserving this unique parcel”, said NWA president Casey Clark. According to Clark, a Wildcat Falls Community Forest will permanently protect 160 acres, including a trout stream, waterfalls, valuable wetlands, unique rock mounds and impressive areas of old growth cedar-hemlock forest. NWA has lengthy and detailed biotic inventories of the parcel, and has worked for years to protect this forest for the public good.

The goals of this project are; 1) to ensure perpetual public access to Wildcat Falls and the special features around it while developing hiking trails with community input and promoting non-motorized recreation; 2) permanently protect and responsibly manage the broad range of habitats on the property, to ensure that the diverse aquatic and terrestrial flora and fauna continue to thrive; and 3) establish a model of a community-managed forestland. In addition, a Wildcat Falls Community Forest would support tourism and forestry as primary economic drivers of the local economy.

Director Joe Hovel summarized the financial situation for completing the Community Forest project, “Final figures will be determined by a certified appraisal, but our initial proposed budget to accomplish this goal is \$295,000. With the Community Forest award of \$147,500 and the \$47,700 raised so far from over 80 donors in the community, we need to step up our efforts to raise the remaining funds. We are reaching out to conservation foundations for help, but it truly is community action which will make this project a success.”

The Community Forest Program was authorized by Congress in 2008 to address forest fragmentation at the local level, and to engage communities as stakeholders in the management of the forests. In their efforts to engage the local community in protecting the Wildcat Falls property, NWA has partnered with a number of local and regional organizations. Our current list of partners includes: Copper Country Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Conserve School, Friends of Sylvania Wilderness, Keweenaw Land Trust, Northwoods Native Plant Society, Partners in Forestry Cooperative, Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition, and the Wilderness Society as well as a number of individuals.

For more information on Northwoods Alliance Inc. and Wildcat Falls, please visit www.northwoodalliance.org or contact Hovel at 715-479-8528 or nwa@nnex.net