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Partners News

Partners In Forestry Landowner Cooperative Newsletter Issue 3 2008

In this issue we wish to celebrate forest land conservation efforts with several of our members. From our early days Partners in Forestry has partnered with groups such as the North Woods Land trust (NWLT) to protect working forest lands.

Roland Rueckert has served on the board of PIF and is justly proud of his legacy of land protection. Dr. Walt Thiede preceded Roland in conserving his woodlands in the region just south of Rhinelander. In Vilas county June Wedell tells her story and we have a brief summary of Betty Beverly's story previously covered by Rachel Hovel for the NWLT. Ed Drager was a pioneer in land conservation in this area, being a founding member of the NWLT after placing an easement on the Monahan Forest. Look for a PIF sponsored tour of Monahan lead by Ed on September 13.

As we have featured in earlier issues some members have worked with governmental agencies to achieve their conservation objectives. [Several PIF members are involved in the Northwoods Forest Partners project](#) application pending for Forest Legacy with WDNR and the USFS . Gil Henderson protected much of his holdings in a transfer to the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands.

We are currently working with the Keweenaw Land Trust (KLT) on a possibly exciting project in the Upper Peninsula. Evan McDonald, director of KLT, has become a close ally to our focus on forest land conservation and gives us a very inviting column herein.

I have felt very strongly about the role conservation of the lands must play in sustaining a forest based economy in this region. Forestry is a traditional focus for the regions economy, providing jobs, much needed fiber, lumber and fuel, and recently a focus on carbon accumulation. It is only fitting we do our part to protect this way of life. If you have any thing to share of your land conservation efforts please let us know.

Rod Sharka and Jeff Niese deserve much credit for organizing the Spring workshop series PIF sponsored at Trees for Tomorrow. We had first class educational presentations by experts such as Brian Swingle, Joe LeBouton, Colleen Matula and very memorably by Dr. Bill Mattson. Dr. Mattson heads research for the Forest Service, and to get the inside perspective first hand on climate change from a research scientist was invaluable. He has coined the phrase "Ragged Forest Syndrome" to describe the picture of declining health we are faced with as a result of climate factors, specifically drought in this region.

This spring and early summer season has seen yet more water deficit in the Northwoods. While some places have been much better following a more normal late fall and winter our rain gauge in Conover has barely accumulated 1.7 inches for the whole month of June.

This is your COOP, if an issue concerns you let us know. We need to keep a stable and hopefully growing member base to be effective, so please renew when your dues are due, and do your part to "talk it up."

[According to Wis. Public Radio](#), less than one percent of all bills introduced in Wisconsin's last legislative session became law. The local lumber bill inspired and passionately supported by PIF was a big success, signed in to law by Gov. Doyle on April 12. Senator Breske was a dear friend in this endeavor and we wish him well in his new role as Wisconsin Railroad Commissioner.

Joe

What's a productive forest got that a working forest doesn't?

By Evan MacDonald

I am happy to tell you about land trusts and their involvement with land conservation and forest management. The US has over 1500 land trusts (sometime named conservancies) that have protected over 37 million acres of privately owned land. I work for the Keweenaw Land Trust (KLT), which serves western Upper Michigan with an emphasis in the Keweenaw Peninsula region. Founded in 1996, the KLT is a member-based 501(c)(3) non-profit, with over 300 households supporting our mission as "a community partner protecting land, water and quality of life through conservation, stewardship and education." I feel a resonance with Partners in Forestry, which promotes good stewardship practices to support sustainable forestry. We all understand that forests are vulnerable to mismanagement and changing land uses. Properties with waterfront and scenic vistas are being carved up for development, and rustic forestlands are becoming more attractive. As economic and development pressures mount, forest fragmentation and parcelization are rampant.



Land trusts work to address these trends with two main land conservation tools: 1) land acquisitions to create nature areas or preserves and 2) partnering with landowners to establish conservation easements. Guided by mutual conservation goals and a property's natural values, land protection agreements established by conservation easements accomplish significant conservation while keeping land in private ownership. An easement defines the type of land uses appropriate to the particular property in order to protect its natural and scenic values, while the landowner retains numerous rights including the right to sell, lease, or pass the property on to heirs. Future owners receive the existing rights but are required to follow the agreed-upon guidelines for land use. Despite common misperceptions about land trusts being opposed to logging, forest management can be entirely compatible with the goals of a conservation easement, with that particular variety often called a working forest conservation easement. So an easement is one way to make sure your forest doesn't end up as a parking lot, and a land trust is empowered to keep it that way.

Before explaining more I want to set the stage. In 2006-07, Afton Sather-Knutsen, a graduate student at Michigan Tech University, conducted research in partnership with the KLT that examined community perceptions of corporate forestland ownership in Keweenaw County and the status of natural resources and public benefits associated with those forests. Keweenaw County has a high percentage of corporately owned forests, and almost all are enrolled in Michigan's Commercial Forest (CF) program that gives a significant property tax break in exchange for management with forest product harvesting and public access for hunting and fishing. Because of the public access rights to these private lands, many people believe CF lands are publicly owned, not realizing the CF status is voluntary and impermanent, as too are their access rights. Needless to say, public access to large forests is part of our way of life, and those extensive forests are a foundation of the region's character.

One of Afton's observations shows the power and limitations of words: most people did not understand the meaning of "working forests" – a result similar to national studies indicating that the

(Continued on next page)

general public has no identification with “working landscapes”. These are terms used within conservation, forestry and land use circles, but they don’t mean much to the average person. Another of Afton’s interview questions revealed something telling. People knowledgeable of forestry believed that forests in the UP should remain productive, and further questioning revealed concerns about federal and state agencies, and land trusts taking forests out of production. These people feared that the local economy would suffer as might the quality of the forests themselves, and implied worries about loss of public access. These findings influenced my thinking...and my word choices. The term working forest conservation easement is commonly used but I think productive forest conservation easement is a more meaningful, intuitive and positive term.

A few years ago, some organizations recognized that managed forests can buffer more fragile and rare habitats that are already protected but vulnerable to surrounding land use patterns. The conservation community now appreciates that forests managed for sustainability have many conservation benefits in their own right and our scope broadened to cultivate those possibilities. A sustainable forest can remain economically as well as ecologically productive – trees are renewable and the land and watersheds can remain healthy. Not only are conservation and forestry compatible, but their marriage is essential for their mutual survival. Like so many things, a driving force can be economics. As land values steadily increase, conservation also becomes more expensive – making conservation easements more cost effective and thus more attractive for land trusts. Likewise, private landowners have financial considerations and federal conservation tax incentives for easement donations and associated property tax benefits can make it more viable to keep private lands in forestry as opposed to the alternatives. Of course we cannot put a dollar value on some of the most important dimensions of conservation or forestry. Visiting special places and well-managed forests instills a sense of satisfaction, harmony, and connection...people with a love for land and forests feel these things and have the future in mind.

We know that people need to make a living and that financial matters affect our choices. Fortunately, federal and state governments recognize the broad public benefits of CF programs and private land conservation, which is why special property tax and charitable income tax incentives were developed to support forestry and conservation. Forestry has been an important way people have been making a living in this part of the world for generations. With good practices and protected lands, that way of making a living and the forests that support it can continue indefinitely – while our watersheds, wildlife and our quality of life all benefit. Now that sounds sustainable.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR WANTED

PIF is still looking for volunteers to fill the position of Editor for our newsletter. If you have computer and writing skills, we would like to talk with you. We write 4-6 newsletters per year. Please call Joe Hovel.

THANK YOU to Bill Klase, UW Extension Basin Educator for being our Guest Editor this issue.

PIF members contributing to this issue were:

Joe Hovel, Ed Drager, June Wedell, Al Gellings, Rod Sharka, Roland Reuckert, Walt Thiede, and Barb Loar, and Evan McDonald Director of the Keweenaw Land Trust contributed an article. Thanks to all of you!

"Protected Forever", 307 acres with 1.4 miles of Pelican River frontage.

By Roland Reukert

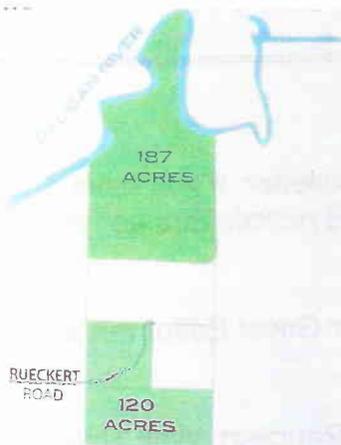


This winter my wife, Ruth, and I signed an agreement that sets aside our Rhinelander woodland, to be managed and preserved forever as a working woodland. That means no new houses can be built there. It means that the forest biome will be preserved in perpetuity, purifying water, removing carbon dioxide, adding fresh oxygen to our air; providing a home for wildlife and recreation for humanity. It will be managed to keep the forest healthy and to produce raw materials for our society.

We still own the land. We can manage it, pass it along to our heirs, make firewood and sell pulp and timber, and even sell it. But the buyer must agree to the terms of the conservation agreement – no subdivision, no development. This, of course, entails a substantial loss in property value. Why would anyone do that? Here is our story.

Ruth, and I were born, raised, and educated in Wisconsin. She, in Watertown; I, in Rhinelander. We met while attending the University in Madison. Our two-week honeymoon, in late September of 1959, was spent on the waters of the Canadian Quetico wilderness, adjacent to the boundary waters of Minnesota. In all that time we saw but a single human party. No automobiles, no motors, no houses, not even airplanes. The solitude, wake of the canoe on quiet transparent water, and cry of the loon in raw wilderness was a spiritual experience. It has been evident to us how our northern Wisconsin forests are being broken up into smaller and smaller parcels. Our wilderness is being lost.

In November of 2004, while attending meeting of Partners in Forestry, we heard a presentation by Bryan Pierce, Executive Director of Northwoods Land Trust. He told us about a Forest Legacy program for conserving woodlands with easements. Ruth and I ruminated on this for a few years but once we decided to proceed we found Bryan very helpful and cooperative. He presented us with a sample easement document. In the course of a few meetings we negotiated changes in wording and provisions. We had the land appraised and the document was reviewed by our lawyer. By the end of December 2007 the deed was done. We are dedicating it to our daughter, Wanda, our only child who died of breast cancer on February 2007, two days before her birthday on Valentine's day.



Property Map



Conservation Sign

To Save my Woodland: A Conservation Easement

by June A Wedell

In 1983 we purchased 37 acres in Conover, WI. Except for an acre for residential space and another acre of lowland brush along the river, which cut through one corner of the property, the rest was a diversified woodland. And there was also a variety of wildlife. Peaceful and private, with clean air and plenty of "elbow" room.

In 1985 we moved here permanently. We then learned that it would be wise to thin the woods. With limited knowledge and resources, we contacted a local logger to do a selective cut. Unfortunately, thinking we were on the same page as the logger, we signed a simple contract, without the advice of a lawyer or a forester. BIG mistake! Not only did he not take the trees which he marked for harvest; he also took large, lovely red and white pine that were not part of the deal. At that point we developed a HANDS OFF policy and all cutting ceased for many years.

In 2001 we attended a woodland owners meeting at Trees for Tomorrow to learn about landowner cooperatives. Next, with volunteers, a steering committee was formed. Eventually, Partners in Forestry was born - an excellent opportunity to network with fellow woodland owners and experienced and helpful loggers and foresters. Workshops were held, including those concerned with MFL (Managed Forest Law) and conservation easements.

After much consideration I applied to enroll in MFL in 2003. At the same time, with much assistance from PIF, I signed a comprehensive contract for a selective harvest with an environmentally friendly logger. My trust had been restored.

In the meantime, forest land in Vilas County was being lost to fragmentation and development (condos, etc.). Also, I had been approached for a permanent easement to create a roadway - 66 feet wide! - to a property bordering my west lot line. OUCH! Good-bye to my trees, my land use and my privacy.

And last, but not least, a few months ago I signed a conservation easement with the Northwoods Land Trust. My land is safe and I have the support I need.

Notes from the Forest Health Workshops

by Rod Sharka

80% of tree disease is a result of fungal infestation. We can reduce this by thinning to open canopy and decrease humidity, limiting harvest/thinning to fall and winter to avoid injuring remaining trees.

Artificial Feeding of deer will attract and concentrate them to an area! This impacts tree regeneration as a typical deer will browse 5 lbs of buds/day in winter. The moral?...Don't feed 'em! Eat 'em!

There are about 800 species of non-native plants in WI, 70 are considered invasive including common buckthorn & garlic mustard. PIF may give you suggestions for combating them, because they suppress tree seedlings and reduce diversity in the understory.

On climate change, "greenhouse gasses" contribute to global warming. CO2 concentrations have risen resulting in milder winters and warmer growing seasons. Good you say? Within decades expect to see a shift from a forest to a savanna/grasslands biome. Expect to see paper birch, black ash, & black spruce disappear. Hemlock and sugar maple also at risk. "Ragged forest syndrome" is already observed everywhere.

"Wits End Farm"
by Walt Thiede

The day I signed the papers to put the 80 acres comprising Wits End Farm under the umbrella of the Northwoods Land Trust was one that gave me a sense of relief. Wits End is my sanctuary, a bit of Eden (really in my eyes) built from a clear-cut abandoned dairy farm, but now a plantation of 52 year old red pine. It is the only private land within thousands of acres of county and state land. The place could tell tales of the fun we've had there as we raised our daughter and grandsons. The love they now have for the farm is solid and infectious, and this will be passed on, I'm sure.

I was talking about concerns I had for the future of the farm with my nephew, Joe Hovel. He suggested I look at a role for Northwoods Land Trust, and when I did I had found just what I needed. It was a relief to know that it could be what it is in perpetuity-no subdividing, no changes in the footprint of the existing structures- in other words it will always be as wild as it is now.

Bryan Pierce of the Trust did all of the work. Bryan researched the land's title, and measured each structure. As an incidental aside I made money selling an abandoned windmill, and an ancient outhouse that had a 60 year history for its original function, and 28 years more when converted to a cover for bee hives. Paperwork took a while but finally all was done. Survey work and appraisal were done by Dave Steiro of Green Bay. Again, as an aside, the appraisal resulted in an impressive reduction in Federal income taxes over three years.

It is a comfort to know that my great-grandsons will see the northwoods as it once was, with bear, wolves porcupines, deer, otters, grouse and hummingbirds always around the next corner.

Betty Beverly

Following are a few lines excerpted from a story Rachel Hovel wrote for the Northwoods Land Trust after interviewing Betty Beverly following her completion of a conservation easement in the spring of 2004.

It was with a desire to preserve the land and the personal connection that Betty began exploring the possibility of a conservation easement on her property. She expressed her goal with her easement in four words, "To protect the land". The North Woods has seen a fervent trend toward land subdivision that has become exasperated in recent years, and the area of Betty's property is no exception. Prompted by concern at what northern Wisconsin and its lakeshore is facing, as well as actual encroachment on her land drove Betty to look toward conservation.

"In 100 years, I want my land to look just exactly as it is today," Betty says. "Bigger trees, maybe, but I don't want any development."

She is also dismayed at the rate of lakeshore development and subdivision, and she sees conservation easements as an important tool for protecting the North Woods of Wisconsin. Betty wants use conservation easements for just that reason. Speaking both of her property and of Wisconsin's North Woods, she says, "I just love it. And I want it to stay the same." Betty is enthusiastic about encouraging others to pursue a conservation easement, and puts it in a larger context. "I think that they should just do an easement."

Ed Drager

During the mid 90s, my sister and I, who were co-owners of our tract of land were looking at different ways we could keep our property in the hands of those we chose, family and extended family. We wanted to be assured that it never got subdivided into additional parcels that could be sold and separated from the rest of the land.

We also wanted to keep it in its forested condition, and some how that we could provide that it would continue to be managed as a sustainable forest forever. This would entail some degree of forest management and we wanted to be assured that these wishes of ours could be carried out in some fashion.

After looking at gifts to forestry oriented organizations. I came across an article about Conservation Easements. Although there were not many in existence in Wisconsin, the more I learned, the more I became enamored. It appeared to be the perfect tool to accomplish our objectives. After looking around for an attorney to write one for us, I got some books on the subject and wrote our own. I am an attorney.

I then started to look for an organization to whom we could give the easement. I talked to Gathering Waters in Madison and to the Nature Conservancy. Neither seemed willing to take on our easement. I then talked to Trees for Tomorrow, who had about 50 years before, had written our first forest management plan. They agreed to accept the easement.

A Conservation Easement is legal document, that is recorded and runs with the title to the land. It usually runs forever. It can provide restrictions and limitations on what can be done with the land in the future. It can require certain things be done from time to time. The holder of the Easement is charged with enforcing the Easement, that is seeing to it that no one, any third party or the holder of title or any successive holder of title does anything that is not permitted or is forbidden by the easement. Funds are provide to the holder of the Easement to enforce the Easement.

Our Easement provide that there be no subdivision of the property, that no commercial activities be carried out on the property, that only two additional cabins be built on the property and they must be at least 150 feet from any water, and not to exceed a certain size.

Our Easement also provides that forest management plan must be maintained on the property and it must be followed to provide a sustained yield forest forever. This may even entail planting trees or doing other silvicultural practices to keep the forest in a constant improving condition.

Now you can put a Conservation Easement on your lands by utilizing a Land Trust, such as Northwoods Land Trust located in Eagle River. They can help you walk thru the various steps you will need to go thru to put a Conservation Easement on you land. They have a standard easement, into which you can write whatever limitations or restrictions you want on your land into it. They find it much easier to administer and monitor easements with the same standard terms and conditions for administration.

Having a Conservation Easement on your property gives you the ability to determine the future course of what happens to you property after you have passed on. It works to keep some long range planning guidelines on the property forever.

Workshop Report by Rod Sharka

PIF hosted a pair of forest health workshops at Trees For Tomorrow, one in May and the second in June. These workshops provided a wealth of information important to all who attended, whether they were forest landowners or average northwoods residents.

The May 10th workshop focused on tree health and regeneration. A HUGE Thank You to Brian Schwingle, DNR Forest Health Specialist, for his presentation on tree diseases and insect pests, and to Joseph LeBouton, Consulting Forester, for sharing his research on deer browse impact on hardwood regeneration. Also, thanks to Jeff Niese (BCPL) for leading the off-site field trip to the BCPL Pickerel Lake site and discussion of the deer browse problems impacting attempts at reforesting the area, as well as for providing the beautiful tree seedlings to all who attended.

The June 14th workshop focused on climate change impacts and terrestrial, non-native invasives and their impact on forest ecology. Once again, I'd like to thank Dr. Bill Mattson, USFS, for his thorough and thought provoking presentation on climate change. I'd also like to thank WDNR Forest Ecologist Colleen Matula for her presentation on the identification, potential impact, and control methods of terrestrial invasive species. Also, thanks to Colleen's daughter Erin, for her expert help in the door prize drawings at lunch. For those who chose not to attend the optional field trip to the Phelps area, you missed an outstanding demonstration of native plant gardening at the home of Pat Goggin and Quita Sheehan. Thanks Pat and Quita, for your gracious hospitality and efforts to provide a wealth of information.

Finally, PIF would like to thank our workshop sponsors, Big Bear Outpost and Loarwood Tree Farm for their generous monetary donations, which helped to defray facility rental fees at Trees For Tomorrow. Also, thanks to Big Bear Outpost for its donation of the numerous gardening items given as door prizes. Sponsor support of these educational workshops was greatly appreciated.

Photos by Al Gellings



Invasive worm survey



Door prize drawing

SAVE THIS DATE!

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2008

Ed Drager has invited us to his MONAHAN FOREST in Conover for a FIELD DAY.

In his own words, "Start at the cabin where I can give a history of logging during the 1890's when we are standing on the site of a real logging camp. Show them the ice roads. Show them scrap pile from blacksmith shop. We can carpool over to the SE corner where there is a 20 year old regeneration of evergreens and also 3 year old evergreen regeneration stand. We can look at 8 year old clear cut and a stand of red pines that have been thinned 5 times over 50 years There is a site of a potato field where they grew them for the loggers back in the 1890's see the site of our small fire 6 years ago and look at regeneration there. Finally, we'll go back to cabin for an eat and drink session, and a chance to ask questions."

DETAILS COMING IN A SPECIAL NOTICE



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PIF MERCHANDISE FOR SALE (Also available at PIF events)

T-shirts and sweatshirts with the PIF logo embroidered on them. T-shirts are tan, pocket T's are brown, sweatshirts are tan. Sizes are M, L, XL, and 2XX. T's are \$10 each + \$2.75 shipping, Pocket T's are \$12 each + \$2.75 shipping, sweatshirts are \$15 each + \$4.60 shipping.

To order, just drop us a note telling us (1) how many, (2) what size, and (3) enclose your check payable to Partners in Forestry. Send orders to "TShirts" c/o Partners In Forestry, 6063 Baker Lake Rd, Conover, WI 54519

Tree identification books titled Tree Finder and Winter Tree Finder, both by May T. Watts

Not your average tree books. These are true dichotomous identification keys to aid in the systematic identification of most coniferous and broadleaved species in the Eastern US. These keys include both native and non-native species. The Tree Finder bases identification mostly on size, shape, arrangement, and other characteristics of leaf structure so is useful in the growing season. The Winter Tree Finder provides the same general information, but relies on bud, twig, and bark characteristics when leaves are not present. Does not include evergreens.

Cost is \$4.00 each. To order, send check to PIF plus \$1 per book for mailing. Tell us how many and which book (s) you want.

Partners In Forestry COOP
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Conover, WI 54519

A Landowner Cooperative Serving The Northwoods & Beyond

PIF Membership application

Partners In Forestry
6063 Baker Lake Road
Conover, WI 54519
Fax: 715-479-8528
E-mail: logcabin@nnex.net

_____ \$25 Voting member (owns or manages
10 acres or more)

_____ \$25 Supporting member (owner of less
than 10 acres or organization)

Name

Mailing address

Daytime Phone #

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