



landscript

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Protecting Significant Natural, Scenic and Farm Lands, and Advancing Stewardship, Now and For All Future Generations




PHOTO BY NATE RICHARDSON

**OUR STEWARDSHIP
ISSUE:**
STORIES FROM THE FIELD

*Vital Chain of Lakes
Headwaters Protection*





Dear Friends,

One of the great strengths and key ingredients of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy's track record of success is our talented and dedicated Board. These volunteers are deeply passionate about our mission and serve as ambassadors within the communities we serve. As the founding Executive Director of the Conservancy, I am blessed to have enjoyed a strong and fruitful working relationship with so many Board members over the years who care as deeply about the future of this amazingly beautiful region as I do.

In a nutshell, our Board is tasked with "stewarding" the organization so that the staff can do their job of "stewarding" our region's treasured landscapes in an exemplary fashion. Providing fiduciary oversight may not be as exciting as orchestrating a land deal or constructing a beautiful nature trail, but make no mistake, both the Board and staff are deadly serious about the gravity of the promise we make of protecting land forever. It is no accident that we have balanced our budget for twenty-two years straight and are adding to endowment funds to care for the nature preserves and conservation easements in our portfolio.

As a land trust, we take great pride in our "results on the ground" focus. This strategy is no accident, either. Our Board and staff just updated our 5-year organizational strategy which outlines a powerful, exciting vision and some pretty ambitious goals for our land protection and stewardship programs. Not only am I confident that we are on the right track but I also know that you, our valued supporters, will be proud.

Last month, we held a reunion of current and former board members at the Hagerty Center on West Bay. The conversations were spirited as we discussed our region's most pressing challenges, what excites these committed volunteers most about our work, and how we can build upon our accomplishments to do more, not less, in the coming days and years. Working together is essential, and that tradition is firmly embedded in the culture of our organization.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce you to the outstanding Board of Directors who govern our organization. I hope you, our supporters, will find an opportunity to thank them for their service and hear their thoughts firsthand about why this organization is so important to our region's future.



Glen Chown, GTRLC Executive Director

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PHOTO BY GARY L. HOWE

Part of the GTRLC Stewardship Team removing garlic mustard at Glacial Hills Pathway and Natural Area.

THE PERPETUAL JOB OF STEWARDSHIP

Protecting, Rejuvenating, and Opening Access to Northwest Michigan's Natural Treasures

STEWARDSHIP

Each and every time a piece of land is protected by Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy—whether purchased as GTRLC land or protected through a conservation easement—stewardship is involved.

It is an extremely important, ever-expanding, and never-ending part of protecting treasured natural features across the five-county region.

Stewardship activities vary widely, from clearing hiking or biking trails, to managing invasive species, to monitoring erosion or dumping (and then taking action to alleviate problems). GTRLC's staff also monitor 17,000 acres of conservation easements and help easement landowners improve the ecological health of their properties.

As the acreage of protected land under the conservancy's watch grows, the stewardship team

members, made up of 6 staff members, 3 interns and dozens of volunteers, handle a range of tasks. They are ecologists, they are builders of infrastructure, and, because volunteers and other organizations are greatly needed, they are community conveners and partners.

This issue of *Landscript* focuses on the many facets of stewardship. You will meet GTRLC's beloved stewardship volunteer, Gary Stauffer (page 5); learn about the stewardship and restoration of Arcadia Marsh (page 6); and delve into the lives of two Bellaire residents, Herb and Florence Reiley, who have been 50-year stewards of their 1,100-acre property, which was recently preserved through a conservation easement (page 10).

Along the way, stewardship focus areas—preserve monitoring, trail development, restoration, and conservation easement stewardship—will be highlighted. Read on to learn about this work and the community partners who help make it happen.

Stewardship is supported through donations to our Conservancy Fund and to our Stewardship Endowment Fund. Learn about ways to support our work at: www.gtrlc.org/support-our-work/.



PHOTO BY CARL FREEMAN

STEWARDING OUR PRESERVES

STEWARDSHIP

GTRLC owns and maintains 33 nature preserves, spanning some 7,000 acres of natural land, from Arcadia Marsh in Manistee County to the Cosner & Bennett-Barnes Nature Preserve in Antrim County. The Conservancy has an active role and high level of responsibility in caring for the preserves—clearing trails, monitoring bird and plant life, keeping invasive species at bay, and maintaining or restoring the natural features of the land for both public enjoyment and ecological benefit.

Because of the expansive nature of the preserves, staff cannot singlehandedly care for them.

“Volunteers and partners are key to our ability to responsibly steward these lands,” says Abby Gartland, director of Preserve Stewardship. “Without local input and support, we would be severely short-handed.”

Individual volunteers, like Gary and Jane Stauffer (see page 5), are playing major roles at Maple Bay Farm, an 11-acre property in Grand Traverse County. Volunteers spend countless hours maintaining Maple Bay’s gardens and grounds; Cherryland Elementary School uses the site for educational purposes; and the Institute for Sustainable Living, Art & Natural Design (ISLAND) farms 3.5 acres.



PHOTO BY GARY L. HOWE

At Misty Acres Nature Preserve in Benzie County, partners including Michigan State University and the Natural Resources Conservation Service are working with the Conservancy to explore a grass-fed beef program there.

By engaging other conservation groups, municipalities, schools and individuals, the Conservancy is able to rigorously steward these preserves.



PHOTO BY ANGIE LUCAS

ELK RAPIDS RETIREE WEARS MANY HATS AT CONSERVANCY



After retiring and moving to the area from Kalamazoo in 2008, Gary Stauffer began volunteering, first assigned to the Bauer Preserve near Bellaire.

Proudly clad in his GTRLC khaki hat, volunteer Gary Stauffer, 65, of Elk Rapids, speaks passionately about his work.

"I firmly believe in giving back in some way," says Stauffer. "By being involved as a volunteer, I can help protect and secure the lands we love so that they can be enjoyed by all."

That enthusiasm can be seen, heard and felt in Stauffer's work at Maple Bay Farm, a place close to his heart, where he has spent much of his volunteer time.

Maple Bay Farm is an 11-acre GTRLC property on the west side of North US-31, adjacent to the Maple Bay Natural Area. It includes a farmhouse, root cellar, sugar shack, and pole barn.

Along with GTRLC staff, Gary is currently working with a team of 5 other volunteers who share the love of caring for a special place to renovate the former "sugar shack," with hopes to have an operational maple syrup setup in the future. In the warm-weather months, Stauffer and the rest of the volunteer team manage the lawn care and trimming, which takes up a lot of their time.

Stauffer's wife Jane loves to garden and took an interest in the flower garden at Maple Bay Farm, and, as Gary says, "she fell in love with the place." She also took a class this winter on organizing and storing digital pictures, which she then used to help the Conservancy with our extensive photo archive.

"She loves to be outdoors, so it didn't take any convincing on my part for her to join the team at Maple Bay," says Stauffer.

After retiring and moving to the area from Kalamazoo in 2008, Gary Stauffer began volunteering, first assigned to the Bauer Preserve near Bellaire. He was the preserve steward, ensuring the trails were uncluttered and clear and helping to build new trails.

While Stauffer had never volunteered before then, he knew two months into retirement that he needed something to fill his time. He attended a volunteer open house and was immediately impressed with the Conservancy's mission and the staff members' passion and encouragement.



Jane & Gary Stauffer

A self-proclaimed lover of the outdoors, hiking, and learning about local flora and fauna, Gary found the Conservancy to be a perfect fit. Over the past five years, Stauffer has planted trees, cleared existing trails, and built new trails at GTRLC preserves. He has interviewed GTRLC staff to gather information from them for future planning.

In fact, one of the most enjoyable, memorable parts of Stauffer's volunteer work with the Conservancy is the exchange of information with staff members, who each have an area of expertise and openly share their knowledge.

"I have learned about native and invasive plants, chainsaw safety, trail building, land protection and acquisition; the list goes on and on," says Stauffer. "I especially enjoy feeling as though I am part of the team. They listen and request my input on decision-making."

Indeed, the volunteer-staff relationships at GTRLC foster mutual respect. "Gary is one of those 'great at everything and willing to share' kind of people," says Nate Richardson, communications and volunteer program specialist at GTRLC. "We absolutely could not do our work without key volunteers like Gary."

Working with staff and other preserve stewards in a learning environment—while getting plenty of work done—reinforces Stauffer's interest and motivation. Feedback from community members adds to that. Stauffer says that visitors at Maple Bay often express their gratitude for the opportunity to use the trails and view the beauty of undeveloped frontage on East Bay.

Stauffer's advice to would-be volunteers: "I would say that if you love the outdoors, learning from expert staff, and being a part of preserving land for future generations, then go for it!"

For information on volunteer opportunities, please fill out the volunteer questionnaire on our website at www.gtrlc.org.



THE AMAZING RESTORATION OF ARCADIA MARSH

As one of the most stellar GTRLC restoration projects of this decade, the Arcadia Marsh Preserve tops the list of eco-victories for our region

PHOTO BY NATE RICHARDSON

The Arcadia Marsh Restoration project has all the elements of a great novel: depth, suspense, villains, heroes, a hopeful ending—and even a dramatic fire, albeit staged.

Following an in-depth interview with GTRLC Land Protection Specialist Chris Sullivan, we've created a "CliffsNotes" version of the marsh restoration story.

IDENTIFYING THE VILLAINS

Arcadia Marsh Restoration work began in the summer of 2010 with samplings of vegetation, birds, fish, and aquatic invertebrates to assess the precarious conditions in the marsh prior to the start of restoration. Some serious threats were identified.

To start, phragmites, which are tall marsh grasses, and reed canary grass were choking out native plants, creating a troublesome monoculture that lacked proper nesting and foraging habitats for native animals. The invasive grasses left a huge volume of dead vegetative matter every year with thick growths of underground stems and roots that made it nearly impossible for native plants to grow. Over time, this thick mat raised the land surface, compromising the

marsh's ability to flood adequately to settle out nutrients and sediment.

The wide, shallow ditch alongside a railroad grade that cuts through the marsh was also of great concern. Over time, the ditch compromised the natural channel of Bowen's Creek, a coldwater stream that historically cut a curvy path through the marsh. Once relatively narrow, deep and winding, Bowen's Creek channels had over time diverted to the railroad ditch, which lacked the depth and shade to keep temperatures cool and provide sanctuary to fish and aquatic invertebrates. Worse yet, when water was diverted to the ditch, Bowen's Creek lost several thousand feet in length—length needed to support a high-quality habitat for plant and animal life.

THE PLOT THICKENS

GTRLC determined three activities that would best address the marsh's harshest adversaries:

Restoring Bowen's Creek

To restore flow in Bowen's Creek, channel plugs were constructed where creek waters entered the railroad ditch, forcing the flow back into the original channel. For Chris Sullivan, land protection specialist at GTRLC,

the restoration of flow in the historic stream channel was monumental: “Looking down into that restored stream channel for the first time was one of the biggest highlights of my entire career.”

Removing Invasive Species

While removal of invasive species began three years ago with herbicide treatment, and continues as new patches crop up, the thick mat of vegetation left behind needed to be burned. Planned and postponed twice since early 2012, the weather cooperated in April, with near-perfect conditions for the prescribed burn.

Around 80 percent of the marsh was burned, ridding it of dozens of acres of dead thatch from the reed canary grass and phragmites. With the addition of nearly ideal conditions after the burn, the re-generation of native plants in the burned areas happened quickly.

Seeing native vegetation—especially a stalk of wild rice, a state-threatened species—grow where the soil was disturbed cemented the victory of the restoration for Sullivan.

Re-creating an Open Water Habitat

Altered creek flows, low Lake Michigan levels, and sod formation by invasive plants had caused losses to open water and emergent marsh habitats. To reverse some of these impacts, Ducks Unlimited orchestrated “scrapes,” which are shallow excavations ranging from six inches to two feet deep. At times of high water they are ponds, while at lower water periods, they offer exposed mud flats and emergent vegetation that create lovely habitats to suit different species at different times of the year.

HEROES AND PARTNERS

The heroes of this story number many. GTRLC worked with local, state and national partners to move

restoration forward, including Ducks Unlimited, the leader in the design and physical work to restore the marsh; Conservation Resource Alliance and Manistee Road Commission, partners in road-stream crossing work outside of the marsh; and the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, with their equipment, expertise, and credentials for aquatic monitoring.



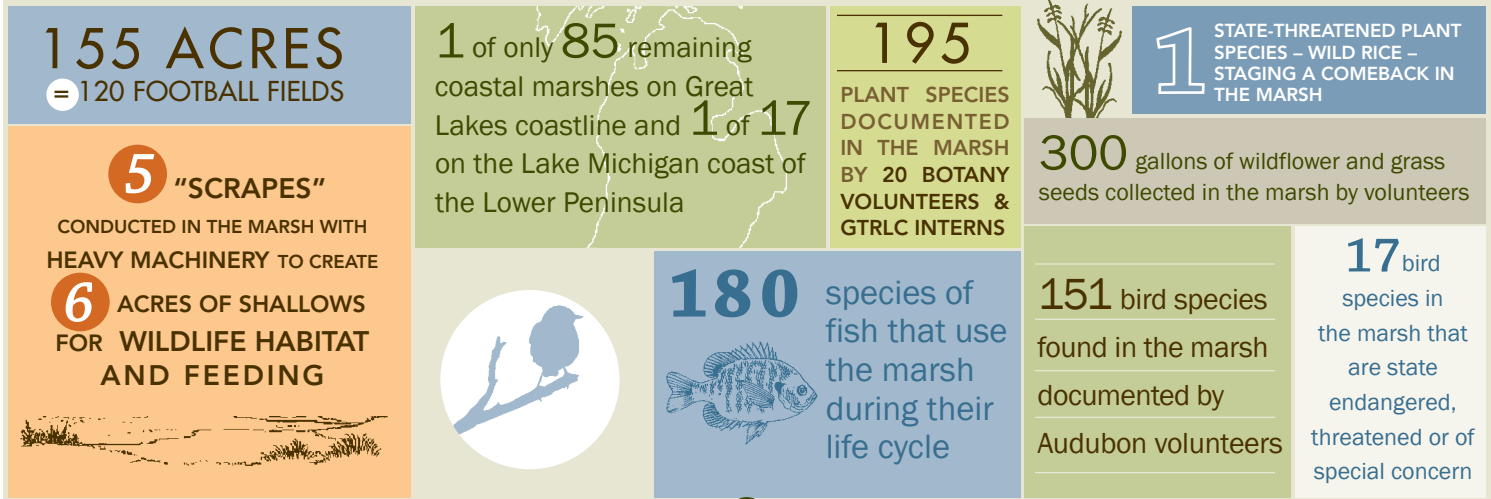
Key funding came from Great Lakes Fishery Trust (for acquisition of the marsh), Sustain Our Great Lakes via the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program, and others.

Volunteers played a role too, documenting and monitoring plant and bird species and collecting seeds.

OUR HOPEFUL ENDING

The Arcadia Marsh restoration will improve habitat for all of the wildlife in the marsh and, with work yet ahead to create trails and bridges, will provide improved conditions for people interested in enjoying this plentiful ecosystem, including anglers, hunters, birders and nature lovers.

ARCADIA BY THE NUMBERS



OUR WORK IN ARCADIA CONTINUES!

PROJECT COSTS AND FUNDING SOURCES

SUNSET BEACH

Total project cost, Phase 2	\$ 400,000
PENDING: Requested public funding	300,000
Private funding needed	100,000

ARCADIA MARSH

Total project cost	\$ 253,698
Land acquisition	205,801
Site planning and engineering	47,897
PENDING: Requested public funding	23,000
Private funding needed	230,698

UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE TRAIL AT ARCADIA DUNES

Total project cost	\$ 307,900
PENDING: Requested public funding	292,100
Private funding needed	15,800

TOTAL COSTS	\$ 961,598
Private funding secured	125,583
Remaining need	836,015
Project management cost	80,360

TOTAL PUBLIC FUNDING REQUESTED	\$ 615,100
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TOTAL REMAINING PRIVATE FUNDING NEEDED	\$ 301,275*
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* If all public funding requests are awarded



Arcadia Marsh: Ecosystem Treasure

By Chris Sullivan


Coastal marshes are tremendously productive ecosystems—nearly as productive as tropical rainforests in terms of the amount of biomass per acre. There are a number of different types of coastal marshes; Arcadia is considered a “drowned river mouth” marsh type, fed by Bowen’s Creek.

Over 90 percent of the 200+ species of fish found in the Great Lakes rely on these marsh systems for some part of their life cycle. Rare plants and animals use marshes for nesting and foraging, and they are incredibly important stopover sites for many species of migrating birds, from raptors to waterfowl to warblers.

Approximately 85 marshes remain on Michigan Great Lakes coastline, with only 17 on the Lake Michigan coast of the Lower Peninsula. Many of

these remaining marshes have been degraded through urbanization, agriculture, man-made changes in hydrology, and the advent of invasive species, all of which limit the habitat quality of the marshes.

The Conservancy’s intent with Arcadia Marsh was not to restore it to its original condition. The hydrology of the marsh will always be impaired because it is surrounded by paved roads. Also, we chose not to remove the railroad grade and spoils ridge, as these provide the only opportunity for public access. Our goal was to re-establish the functional aspects of the marsh that had been lost or degraded. Encouraged by the early response of plants and animals in the marsh, we’ve been successful in achieving our goal.



A scene from one of the region's magnificent properties protected with a conservation easement.

STEWARDSHIP OF EASEMENTS

Currently, the Conservancy monitors more than 17,000 acres in conservation easements

A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement whereby the landowner, retaining private ownership, agrees to limitations on the type or amount of development on their property. Stipulations apply to all future landowners, ensuring the property will be protected forever.

When GTRLC arranges and accepts a conservation easement, we are responsible for upholding the terms of the easement in perpetuity. This involves a staff member walking the property with landowners at least every other season, reviewing easement conditions, and discussing strategies to preserve the natural features of the land.

The donors and owners of conservation easements are some of the region's best land stewards, having chosen to restrict the use of their property in order to protect the natural character of the region. And, notes Mike Okma, GTRLC conservation easement

steward, "They are also the ones doing the on-the-ground work of caring for their properties."

In return, Okma advises landowners on how to best manage the property, alerts them of any invasive species, and connects them with resources to accomplish their goals.

Currently, the Conservancy monitors more than 17,000 acres in conservation easements—half the total acres GTRLC has protected—with just two staff members meeting with landowners and walking the properties.

Our valuable partners in this stewardship work are the over 200 landowners who entrust us to help them with their conservation efforts and interests. Read about the Reileys, who recently granted a conservation easement of 1,100 acres in the Chain of Lakes, on page 10.



A small portion of the Reiley property in the Chain of Lakes Watershed

REILEY FAMILY PROTECTS SIGNIFICANT LAND IN CHAIN OF LAKES

For such humble, gracious people, Florence and Herb Reiley's life has been surrounded by big numbers.

They planted more than **15 million trees** in northwest Michigan.

The Bellaire couple's combined age is **186**.

In the prime of their Christmas-tree growing years, they planted **12,000 trees a day**, and they sold **26,500 trees a season** in peak years.

Florence, quite the markswoman, has **70** single-shot deer harvests to her name.

Herb was a Mason for **72 years**; Florence was an Eastern Star for **67 years**. They served in the Lions and Lioness Clubs, Herb is a life member and has a Melvin Jones award—and at one time was the president of three clubs for an entire year.

The old Jeep that still sits in front of the barn adjacent to their homestead was used to plant **4 million trees**.

Todd Vigland, land protection specialist at Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, knows these numbers and the Reiley family well. He has gotten to know them and their four children over the last ten



Herb & Florence Reiley

years as they discussed ways to protect their property from future development.

In July, the Conservancy and the Reileys finalized a conservation easement on 1,080 acres of their Antrim County property.

The entire family had wanted to preserve the land as private, but protected—a place that they, their neighbors and occasional visitors, including snowmobilers, could enjoy. A grant through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative allowed the Conservancy to purchase a conservation easement on the property with terms that the Reileys found fair and comfortable.

Conservation has been in the Reiley's blood since the get-go. Florence served on the soil conservation board for 8

years and the Kearney Township zoning board for 25 years. And the way they used their land and forested their property followed sustainable practices, long before sustainability was the buzzword it is today.

A drive through the property clearly shows the result of the care that's been taken. It looks natural, with tall, straight stands of hardwood, wetlands, stream corridors, mature stands of pine, meadows of wildflowers, and an occasional farming plot of wheat or corn.

"They've done a fantastic job of stewarding the property," says Vigland. He says "the Reileys are not only good conservationists, but good business people who have taken time to build relationships with those they work with."

They've worked with the same logger for decades, leaving downed logs on the ground to naturally decompose. They've also worked with the same Christmas-tree buyer for 30 years, a Texan named Tony, who comes up annually to harvest 25-to 60-foot firs for municipalities and businesses around the country. Their trees have landed on presidential ranches (of Lyndon B. Johnson and George H.W. Bush), and one at the White House during the Johnson administration.

The Christmas tree farming business has been an integral part of their lifestyle for many years.

"When we started in Christmas trees, there wasn't anything made in the line of machinery to do Christmas trees," remembers Herb.

So he started out in the shop and made what they needed, modifying old, salvaged equipment to get the job done.

Herb and Florence would come home from a day of planting, and Florence would make supper while Herb headed to the shop to tear down a piece of equipment, returning after the family meal to put it back together with a little modification.

"And that was a standard procedure: that we modified it almost every night," says Herb. "Then we'd build a new one because we had better ideas. And then we'd build another one and another one. I think we built seven planters."

Herb and Florence have made quite the team over the 72 years that they've been married. When they started farming trees, Herb would drive, and Florence would plant. "We could plant 12,000 trees a day," says Herb. "She couldn't drive straight and I couldn't plant as quickly as her, so we made a good team".

Herb remembers selling Christmas trees for \$1.

The Reiley's property falls within one of the Conservancy's land protection priority areas, straddling the spine of the Chain of Lakes watershed and serving as headwaters for four unnamed creeks. It's a groundwater recharge area,

and because the land is undeveloped, rainwater goes right into the land without manmade pollutants. This ground water eventually feeds into the lakes, keeping them supplied with clean, cold groundwater vital to healthy plant and animal life.

With a long history of productive farming, 40 percent of the Reiley's property has been designated as "farmland of local importance" by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. It was designated as a Centennial Farm in 1995.



Herb's grandfather, a logger, bought the original 640-acre property in 1905. Although previously owned by a lumber company, it still had virgin timber. "They couldn't do the hills because they didn't have the equipment back then," says Herb. "That's why the forest here was left."

The bell from the old lumber camp hangs from the Reiley's back porch, and the coffee grinder from the camp serves as a base for a television stand in their living room.

After purchasing the initial 640 acres, the Reileys made a priority of acquiring adjacent properties as they came up for sale.

Today, the land in its entirety is over 1,100 acres of pure bliss: farm land, northern hardwoods, creeks, grassland, and planted conifer stands. A lumber shelter, cottage, and two Reiley homes, including Herb's grandparents' home now occupied by the Reiley's daughter, are also located on the property.

Next to their house is a towering white fir, planted by seed (the Reileys had their own nursery and also bought from the state's nursery). It's a symbol of their astute farming practices and love of the land.

Herb and Florence are modest, but proud, of the life that they've led. A plaque from their 50th anniversary reads, "Two individuals who give more to the community than they take."

"It does say what we've strived for all our lives here in Bellaire," says Herb. "I think we've accomplished it too."





BAYSIDE PARK—A NEW VIEW IN ACME

Celebrating the progress of “Phase 3”

On June 20th, supporters and partners who have been working to create and protect Acme’s shoreline came together to celebrate the progress of “Phase 3” of the Bayside Park initiative and to witness the deconstruction of the Mountain Jacks building, formerly the “Embers.” Nearly every member of the crowd that gathered for the public deconstruction event raised their hand when asked if they had celebrated a special occasion with friends or family at this memorable community restaurant. As Mountain Jacks, the Sun ‘N Sands motel, and the Beach Club motel come down and unveil new views of East Grand Traverse Bay, we pause to reflect on this corridor’s past and happy times at these special places, as well as rejoice in the community’s vision for its future.

Acme’s Bayside Park initiative began in 2007 when a group of community members approached Township officials and GTRLC to explore the potential to create a shoreline park along this well-traveled and developed road corridor. In just six years, a lot has been accomplished thanks to landowners who were willing to sell their properties at fair market values, and due to the efforts of a host of public and private partners. This new park provides new beach and shoreline access, offering places to swim, sunbathe, put in a

kayak, picnic, fly a kite, watch a sunset, or just relax. It also showcases new scenic water views for travelers along US-31.

The property purchases have been made possible by significant grants totaling \$5.6 million from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and by generous donations of over \$2 million from private individuals and foundations. A “blight elimination” grant from the State of Michigan, via Grand Traverse County, has also supported some of the deconstruction activities. The Acme Business Association and the Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce have also helped to champion the project. The overwhelming support for the creation and expansion of Bayside Park is a testament to the strength of Acme’s vision and the spirit of the people who care about its future. This project is not just about creating a park. It is about enhancing quality of life and creating a place in Acme where people want to be. A place where people will want to live, work, and play.



Deconstruction efforts on acquired lands will continue throughout the summer. The Township is in the process of finalizing a park development plan that will guide investments in park improvements. Enhanced parking, landscaping, walking paths, natural water features, picnic and play areas are all featured in the proposed design.

You can support Acme’s Bayside Park by making a gift to support land protection efforts and the park’s improvement, including a permanent endowment for the park’s stewardship, by contacting Megan Olds at molds@gtrlc.org or 231/929-7911 or by giving a gift online at www.gtrlc.org



PHOTO BY DANA VANNOY

WATER TRAIL TO ENRICH PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE OF AREA LANDS

The Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy has received a grant from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's Office of the Great Lakes, Coastal Management Program, as well as a generous matching gift from Jim and Diana Huckle, and will be creating and marketing a new non-motorized water trail through the Chain of Lakes and along the coast of East Grand Traverse Bay.


Many significant shore lands have already been protected as parks and natural areas along East Grand Traverse Bay and within the Chain of Lakes, thanks to the leadership of landowners, neighbors, community groups, visionary local leaders, donors, and State agencies. The development of the water trail will effectively "double" people's experience of lands that have already been protected with the intention of providing public access to nature in the form of recreational paddling, birdwatching, scenic viewing, and relaxation and enjoyment of the water. GTRLC's development of the water trail follows the

lead of other conservancies, "friends" groups, and parks and recreation organizations around the state and nation.

GTRLC will be working with a long list of public and private-sector partners to develop the new trail. Local units of government from Ellsworth to Acme; Chambers of Commerce in Ellsworth, Bellaire, Elk Rapids, and Traverse City; Shorts Brewery (which hosts an annual paddling event from Bellaire to Elk Rapids); and the Traverse Area Paddling Club, have all signed on in support of the effort and will be involved in trail planning. By next summer, the trail's launch sites will be mapped and a variety of trail routes (including their level of difficulty) will be identified. A logo and marketing plan for the trail will also be developed and implemented with the support of project partners. As part of the planning effort, the route will also be audited to determine where future improvements might be warranted. These water trail improvements might include better parking areas, Universally Accessible kayak and canoe sites, enhanced restroom facilities at existing parks, and places to clean watercraft to discourage the spread of invasive species.

The development of the water trail also provides an opportunity for public education about water quality protection and land stewardship. We are deeply committed to the perpetual stewardship of protected lands and shorelines. Thanks to your support for our land and water conservation and restoration programs, as well as state and federal grants and the partnership efforts of the Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network, we continue to prioritize the removal of invasive species such as Phragmites, which impact the health of our waterways. We hope to develop and install signage along the water trail route that provides information about ways that recreational users can support and sustain ongoing efforts to preserve and manage lands and shorelines to maintain high water quality.

To learn more about the water trail or how you can make a gift to support its development, including the creation and installation of signage that supports education and stewardship, please contact Megan Olds at molds@gtrlc.org or 231-929-7911.

For more information about GTRLC's land stewardship activities, including efforts to eradicate and manage the spread of invasive species in the region, contact Abby Gartland, Director of Preserve Stewardship at agartland@gtrlc.org or 231-929-7911. 



BETSY DOLE

FOLLOWING THROUGH ON FOREVER

When Betsy Dole thinks of “forever,” especially as it relates to the work of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, she understands the importance of a well-funded endowment. Acting on this imperative, she was willing to give a significant gift to help establish a Land Conservancy Stewardship Endowment Fund. A former Board member and Chair of the Board, she has nurtured the growth of GTRLC and knows that stewardship of the lands that have been protected will be ongoing.

In the Conservancy’s first twenty-two years as a land trust, over 35,000 acres of land and more than 114 miles of shoreline along the five counties’ exceptional rivers, lakes, and streams have been protected. With each project approved by the Board and with each conservation easement accepted, GTRLC has taken on the obligation to steward those properties . . . forever. Currently, most of our stewardship obligations are funded annually through gifts to the Conservancy Fund. This practice imposes on future Boards and staffs an increasing burden to annually raise the money to pay for mounting stewardship expenses.

Annual stewardship work includes the management and removal of invasive species, the maintenance of trails, and the conservation of habitat and preservation of water quality throughout the five-county region served by GTRLC.

As longtime summer residents of Antrim County, Betsy and her husband, Stan, have been strong supporters of the Land Conservancy. Thus, Betsy was more than pleased to learn that the current Board had established a Stewardship Endowment Fund. All contributions to this fund are permanently restricted for stewardship purposes. Only the income from the fund will be

available annually to support the ongoing work of protecting and preserving resources and assets that the Conservancy holds in its portfolio of protected lands.

“When you truly care about an organization and its work, you want to know it will be able to survive long into the future. Contributing to an endowment is an excellent way for a donor to be assured that the work will continue,” according to Betsy.

She has championed the concept of endowment funds for the Land Conservancy ever since she first began her service on the Board, more than ten years ago.

Among her previous volunteer involvements, Betsy has chaired the Board of Trustees of Olivet College, served as founding president of United Church Outreach Ministry in Grand Rapids, Michigan—where she and her husband spend their winters—and sat on the boards of the Grand Rapids area YWCA and United Way. But of all her volunteer service, Betsy says that serving on the GTRLC Board was “the most fun,” crediting the skilled staff and highly dedicated Board members for the satisfaction of good work accomplished there. The Stewardship Endowment Fund will assure that future Boards and staffs will have the

financial support to continue this important work.

Current Board member Terry Rogers chaired the Board that established this fund. He believes that “this is indeed an important step for the organization, and will begin to lay the groundwork for endowing our stewardship obligation in perpetuity.”

After the Board decision had been made, GTRLC Executive Director Glen Chown telephoned Betsy with the news, announcing, “One of your longest-held dreams for the Conservancy has come true!”

Chown states, “I am proud of the fact that past and current Board members have led the way.” He invites everyone who is passionate about land protection in our region to “cast a sharp eye on the future by helping to endow a protected-lands legacy that over the past 20-plus years has safeguarded some very special places.”

Megan Olds, Associate Director, adds that the Stewardship Endowment Fund “will make sure we can follow through on ‘forever.’”

For more information on the Stewardship Endowment Fund, or to make a contribution to it, please contact Megan Olds at molds@gtrlc.org or 231-929-7911.





OUR RIGOROUS INVASIVE SPECIES RESTORATION PROGRAM focuses on high-priority species on high-priority sites. For example, the dunes and shoreline at Arcadia Dunes Nature Preserve are a priority; the program is working to control baby's breath, bladder campion and spotted knapweed.

"We have several state- and federal-listed threatened plant species in this rare habitat and are working to control non-native plants which monopolize the dunes and displace the native flora and fauna," says Abby Gartland, Director of Preserve Stewardship.

GTRLC's invasive species restoration program aligns with larger efforts, including the Eastern Lake Michigan Invasive Species Strategic Plan developed by the Michigan Dune Alliance and the more local Invasive Species Network. Two large Sustain Our Great Lakes grants have increased GTRLC's capacity to effectively control invasive species and boosted work to re-establish aspects of the natural landscape that have been lost or degraded by invasive species.

THE NEW BIKING, CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING, AND HIKING TRAIL SYSTEM at Glacial Hills Pathway and Natural Area northwest of Bellaire is a great example of the work the Conservancy is doing in the area of trail development. While GTRLC staff members lead these efforts (and helped acquire nearly half of the 763-acre area), our partners, including Forest Home Township, Antrim County, Village of Bellaire, Bellaire Chamber of Commerce, Short's Brewery, and Shanty Creek Resorts, play a key role in stewardship efforts.

An ongoing interest in the area of trail development is building trails that are accessible, meaning they are open to and enjoyable for all, even those with limited mobility. GTRLC is working with Explore the Shores to design and build a universally accessible half-mile trail through the Arcadia Dunes Nature Preserve to Lake Michigan.

"Our staff, volunteers, and partners are passionate about providing avenues for people of all abilities to get out and enjoy these spectacular, protected lands," says Abby Gartland, Director of Preserve Stewardship.



A GROWING PARTNERSHIP...

We'd like to give special thanks to Fairmount Minerals and their employees at the Wexford Sand Company. The company, with facilitation through Saving Birds Thru Habitat, has provided funds to purchase tree seedlings for each of the last 6 years. This spring, not only did they increase their financial support—enabling us to buy 1500 healthy young hemlock trees—they also sent out 8 employees to work hand-in-hand with our dedicated volunteers to plant them at our Arcadia Dunes Nature Preserve! Their increased support is greatly boosting our efforts to improve forest species diversity, which is critical to the implementation of our ecologically-based forest management plan for the property.



INVESTING IN LAND PROTECTION

The following donors made gifts and/or pledge payments to land protection projects between January 1 and June 30, 2013.

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PHOTO BY JAY BURT

GIVING

LAND CHAMPIONS

Land Champions commit to monthly gifts that support the very foundation of our mission. By supplying a steady and reliable source of income to fund the day-to-day work of the Conservancy, Land Champions allow us to plan and sustain our work more effectively. We are grateful for their commitment and generosity.

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** New Land Champion*



If you would like to learn more about how you can become a Land Champion, contact Anne Brasie, Fund Development Manager, at abrasie@gtrlc.org or 231/929-7911.

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By making plans to benefit the Conservancy with future gifts—accomplished through estates, trusts, annuities, insurance policies, and other planned giving options—Vanguard Society members will continue to make a difference for land conservation far into the future, helping to ensure that the places we save today will be protected and cared for forever.

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Because so much of our land protection work is about ensuring that the places we save today will be protected forever, planned gifts are indispensable. There is no better way to continue to make a difference for land conservation many years from now. If you would like to learn more about how you can become a Vanguard Society member, contact Diane Dupuis, Planned Giving Program Manager, at ddupuis@gtrlc.org or 231-929-7911.

** New Vanguard Society member*

OMISSIONS IN OUR 2012 ANNUAL REPORT

The following gifts were inadvertently omitted from our 2012 Annual Report donor lists. We sincerely apologize to these generous donors who put their trust in us.

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Special thanks to
Eric Pearson for
donating his knowledge,
patience and time
assisting Conservancy
staff in managing our
technology. These gifts
are **greatly** appreciated.

A NOTE TO OUR READERS

The Conservancy is currently in the middle of moving to a new fully integrated database. If you notice an error of any kind with your address or donation acknowledgements, please contact us and we will make sure the problem is corrected. We thank you for your patience as we complete this major project.

THE CONSERVANCY FUND

The following donors made gifts and/or pledge payments to The Conservancy Fund between January 1 and June 30, 2013. This unrestricted fund supports our annual operating budget. Your gifts support the very foundation of our work and ensure our programs are sustainable. Please note: Pledge commitments made, but not yet received,* are acknowledged in the year or years when payment are made.

We deeply appreciate and depend upon your generous support.

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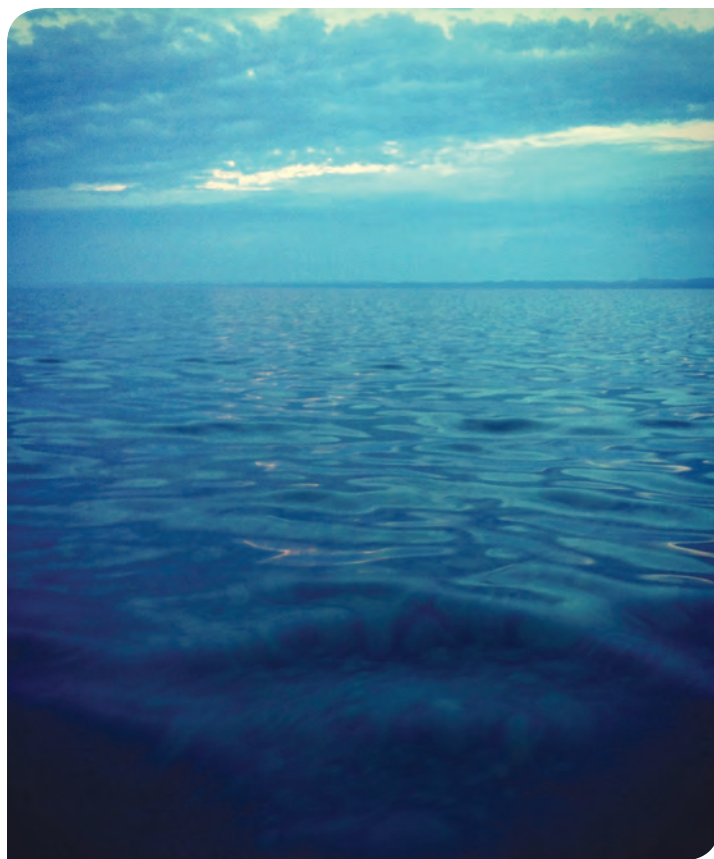


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