

SPRING 2017 Volume 67

landscript



Love the land. *Pass it on.*

OUR ANNUAL REPORT

Meet the People Who
Protected Their Land

What's Next for Acme

Maplehurst — A Jewel
in the Chain of Lakes

PHOTO BY NATE RICHARDSON

Protecting significant natural, scenic and farm lands, and advancing stewardship - now and for all future generations.

A Different Kind of Inheritance

Dear Friends: For land trust professionals, there is no greater satisfaction than removing the “no trespassing” signs after closing a deal on land not previously open to the public. When it happens on a pristine parcel of Lake Michigan shoreline you’ve been working to protect for more than 25 years, you have to conclude that sometimes dreams really do come true.

This was the case recently when we helped the Michigan Department of Natural Resources acquire a critical addition to the Petobego State Game Area on East Bay. Everyone who loves the Great Lakes can be thankful that the Pulcifer and Sleder families recognized the value in preserving their family legacies for all time by putting their trust in us.

As I get older, I appreciate even more what an awesome responsibility it is to be entrusted with the long-term stewardship of what is now more than 40,000 acres representing some of northern Michigan’s most unique and sensitive land.

I am reminded of a weighty dinner table conversation my wife Becky and I had not too long ago with our three sons about our intentions to make a planned gift to the Conservancy. Prior to sitting down, I was pretty nervous about how the boys might react to hearing that we were contemplating diverting a portion of their inheritance.

With dessert on the table, Becky and I laid out what we were hoping to do and why it was so important that the founding CEO of the Conservancy and his wife become members of the Vanguard Society. Our oldest son quickly spoke up and said, “Dad, why are you so nervous?” He then said matter-of-factly, “Of course you should make a planned gift to the Conservancy. We love all the places the Conservancy has protected and so will our kids someday.” William then ticked off the names of his favorite Conservancy-protected natural areas. At that, Martin

and Leonard chimed in, agreeing that we should make a planned gift and adding their own top ten lists.

At that moment, I realized that making a planned gift to support the permanency of

the Conservancy’s mission was simply a different, yet equally important and maybe even more profound, form of inheritance. The “forever” part of our mission is a sacred obligation, one that Conservancy board and staff take very seriously as we work to set aside a

permanent stewardship endowment fund so that, no matter what, we will always be in a position to care for lands such as that incredible unspoiled shoreline on East Grand Traverse Bay.

The good news is that plenty of Conservancy supporters are making similar commitments. Our Vanguard Society is growing at an unprecedented pace. Now *that’s* what hope for the future looks like, and we are so thankful for those who invest in the permanency of our mission, knowing that this gift is one that will keep giving. Indeed, it is not a stretch to say that future generations will be proud of our foresight. I know my own kids will be.



Michigan DNR Director Keith Creagh, left with Glen Chown at the Petobego State Game Area addition.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Glen Chown".

Glen Chown, GTRLC Executive Director

“It’s good for everyone”

LONGTIME SUPPORTERS BOOST GTRLC WITH PLANNED GIFT

To say Bob Dean has been a part of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy since day one would actually be an understatement.

Even before GTRLC opened its doors in 1991, Dean was involved in a committee formed by Rotary Charities to explore the possibility of a land trust in the Grand Traverse Region. GTRLC was borne from that group’s efforts, with many on the committee eventually serving as board members for the new conservancy.

Bob and his wife Arlene have been steadfast supporters of GTRLC since those early days. In addition to Bob serving on GTRLC’s board, the Deans have also been regular donors and enthusiastic participants in GTRLC activities.

Their support stems from their strong belief in the Conservancy’s mission of land protection. Like so many others who support GTRLC, they do it with future generations in mind.

“That’s what it’s all about; it’s why we do it. Conserving property for perpetuity so it will be here for our kids and grandkids — and our great grandkids at this point too,” Bob said.

Bob, 90, is a Traverse City native and former lumber company executive with deep ties in Grand Traverse County. Arlene, likewise, is a Leland native with those same deep ties in Leelanau County. The couple met while working at Morgan-McCool, a fruit company that for decades operated a large processing plant where Union Street meets Grandview Parkway near the Open Space.

GTRLC Executive Director Glen Chown said the Deans are true community leaders whose long and deep ties to the region help them appreciate the Conservancy’s purpose.



“They have a perspective on the changes this region has gone through and a real appreciation for our mission — they get it, and that’s why they’re so passionate about it,” Chown said. “They’ve really put their heart and soul into our mission since day one, and it’s just so wonderful that they’re still supporting it.”

The Deans not long ago decided that GTRLC would get a portion of their estate through a mechanism known as a charitable remainder trust. Under these arrangements, donors draw income from the trust until they die, and the remainder is given to at least one beneficiary of the donors’ choosing.

“We had a chunk of money, and we needed to find a place to put it. This vehicle was a great choice...it really is good for everyone,” Dean said.

Over the years, several donors have used or plan to use charitable remainder trusts to give to GTRLC.

“It’s like having your cake and eating it, too,” Chown said.

To learn more about charitable remainder trusts, or for other giving questions, contact Anthony Rupard at (231) 929-7911 or arupard@gtrlc.org



Maplehurst Moves Ahead

GTRLC STILL SEEKS FUNDING FOR BEAUTIFUL NATURAL AREA

Looking south over the former Camp Maplehurst property, with Torch Lake on the left and Elk Lake and Grand Traverse Bay in the distance.

To Bob Kingon, the former Camp Maplehurst property is a land of opportunity.

Kingon serves on Milton Township's parks and recreation committee. He and others at the township are in the planning stages for a new natural area at Maplehurst after GTRLC helped the township successfully apply for a \$1.8 million Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant.

Although there are many steps left in the process — and nearly \$1.9 million still left to raise — Kingon and others at the township envision a natural area that packs a punch when it comes to activities. Fishing, snowshoeing, hiking, non-motorized boating, bird-watching — the list seems endless when you have 400 acres that completely enclose a beautiful inland lake.

"It's a unique piece of land with beautiful views, and there's a lot of potential for activities there," Kingon said. "We're very excited about it."

Township Treasurer Liz Atkinson echoed those sentiments.

"We're really thrilled — this is a tremendous opportunity to provide some outdoor resources for people to enjoy," she said. "It's going to be a wonderful thing to have that much land earmarked forever for the public."

Maplehurst operated as a summer camp for more than 50 years, and most buildings will be torn down as part of the transformation from camp to natural area. GTRLC is managing the demolition process, which may begin this year.

"It's going to be a truly natural area," Kingon said. "I would expect that we would — at the most — develop bathrooms, a pavilion and maybe a fishing pier. It's just going to be a wonderful and natural place where people and their families come to enjoy themselves."

The eastern edge of the property contains beautifully wooded slopes that will be ideal for a



PHOTO BY GREG MACMASTER, EAGLE EYE DRONE SERVICE

trail system, something that has excited township officials since the earliest days of the project.

“We have a real opportunity here to make some very excellent and interesting trails for hiking, skiing and snowshoeing,” Kingon said. “There’s nothing like that in our township now, or really in the surrounding townships, until you get over to Petobego (State Game Area) or the Skegemog Lake Wildlife Area.”

Atkinson said township officials will be careful to listen to township residents as they finalize plans for the natural area.

“We want to make sure we’re doing what the people want there,” she said. “We’d like to have a lot of meetings and open forums for people to come talk to us and tell us what they want and

don’t want.”

The Maplehurst natural area is a positive next step for a piece of land that housed a camp with its own fascinating history. Thomas Cohn, a psychology professor who wanted to start a camp for gifted and talented kids, founded Camp Maplehurst in 1955. For the first several years, he personally interviewed each camper who attended the camp.

“A lot of bright kids, at that time, really were not getting adequate education, and in many cases they were getting picked on and bullied in school, even by teachers,” said his son, Laurence Cohn. “They thought differently and sometimes had a hard time fitting in, and he wanted a place where they would be safe.”

Although the camp gradually moved away from focusing only on gifted and talented campers, it retained a focus on education and enrichment, often bringing in guest experts

on a variety of topics and encouraging campers to explore themes of leadership and knowledge. More than 10,000 young people camped at Maplehurst over its nearly six decade run.

For many of those children, especially those from urban areas like Detroit or Chicago, visits to Maplehurst were their first exposure to nature. Campers took field trips to Sleeping Bear Dunes, local farms and other attractions.

“Many of them came from a place where they hadn’t really been exposed to silence, or visions of the galaxy and stars,” Laurence Cohn said. “We really made nature an emphasis.”

Cohn, who closed the Camp in 2011 after several years of decreased enrollment, said he and his family — and likely thousands of former campers — are happy to know the land will become public.

“I think it’s just wonderful. There are thousands of alumni that probably will come back, and it makes me feel wonderful that the place is being protected so that they and their kids can always come and enjoy it,” he said. “It’s nice that the land will still be intact from an ecological view.”

Although the camp is forever closed, Cohn hopes the natural area carries on the spirit of what his family established at Maplehurst.

“If nothing else, just having a place where you can bring the kids and tell them: ‘Put the cell phones down and let’s just listen for a few minutes — let’s just look at the stars,’” he said. “That would make me feel good.”

GTRLC needs to raise \$1.9 million for a local match to the trust fund grant, the cost of immediate stewardship (including building demolition) and an endowment for the property’s care. To help, or for more information, contact Anthony Rupard at arupard@gtrlc.org or (231) 929-7911.

WHY SAVE MAPLEHURST?

Water Quality The thickly forested ridge at Maplehurst serves an important role in filtering water that runs into Torch Lake.

Community Conservation Maplehurst will provide a wonderful set of outdoor recreation opportunities for residents of and visitors to Milton Township.

Wildlife Habitat A diverse variety of habitats provide ample opportunities for feeding, nesting and shelter.

Shoreline Park Set for Improvements

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DREAM CONTINUES IN ACME TOWNSHIP

It's time for the next chapter in one community's plan to enrich its access to nature and recreational opportunities.

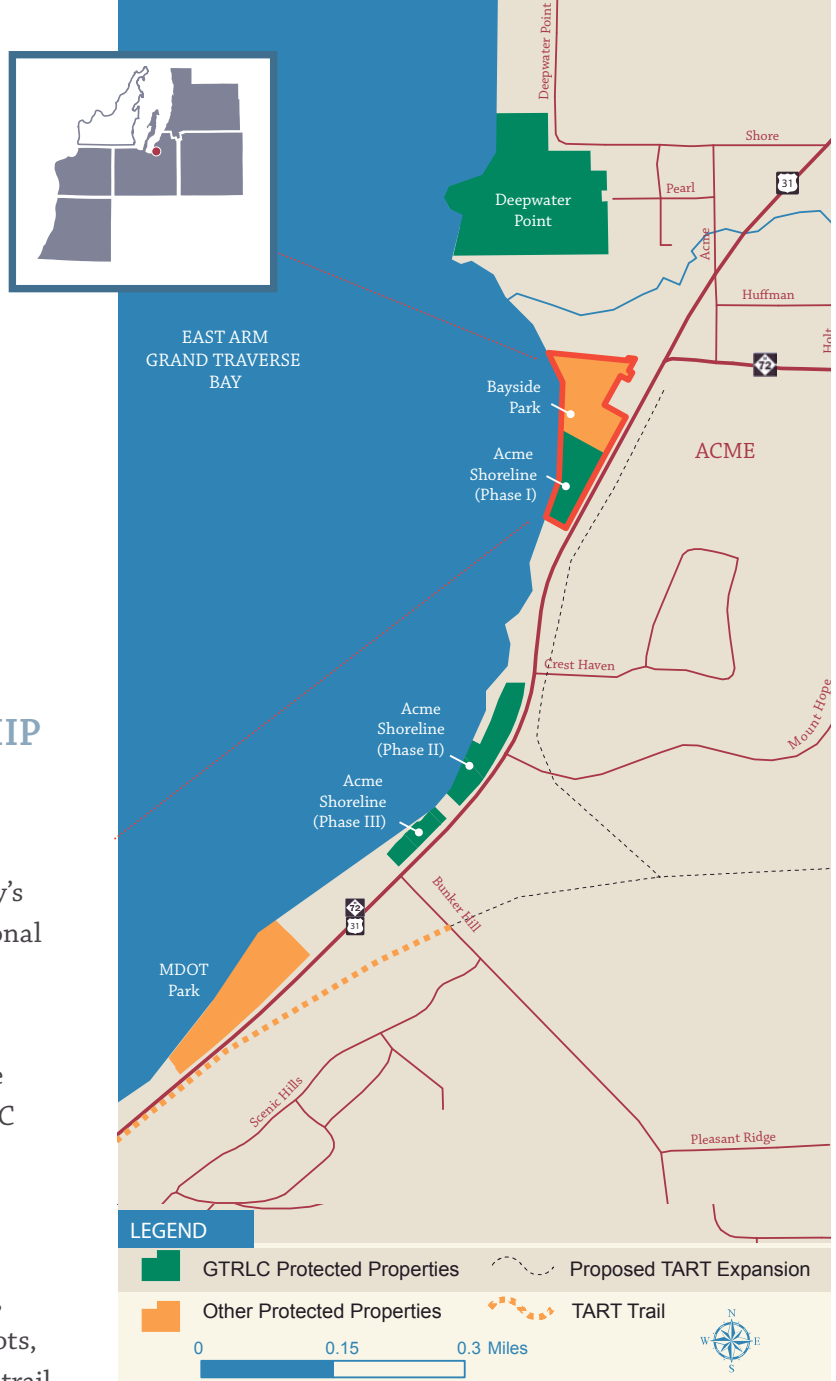
The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund in December approved a \$300,000 grant for Acme Township shoreline park improvements. GTRLC is working to raise an additional \$200,000 in matching funds, while the township itself will kick in \$100,000 for the plans.

This money will fund a series of improvements, including new playground equipment, parking lots, updated restrooms, gardens, a section of TART trail and much more.

"We're definitely excited for this opportunity to take these next steps," said Shawn Winter, the township's zoning and planning administrator. "This has been a long-term collaboration with the land conservancy, and through this grant, we're going to move from acquisition to development, allowing us to make a park that truly highlights this beautiful setting."

Many features will be designed around the concept of universal access (UA). These features ensure that people with mobility issues will be able to enjoy the space. For example, specially designed mats will allow those in wheelchairs to cross the beach and enter the water.

"We wanted to create a park that's accessible to everyone, regardless of age and ability," Winter said. "That's something that's been clearly lacking, and we have people missing out on healthy recreational opportunities as a result."



"We wanted to create a park that's accessible to everyone, regardless of age and ability"

Township officials and residents view this investment as a “placemaking” opportunity — giving people a reason to stop in Acme instead of just passing through.

“We feel that this can be a place that not only residents are proud of, but a place that can also serve as a very nice gateway to the Grand Traverse Region,” Winter said. “When you make that turn off of M-72, that’s the first view of the bay that you have.”

Due to the time it takes money from the trust fund to enter the township’s coffers, it is unlikely that the township will break ground on any improvements until this fall, Winter said. He’s hopeful most or all improvements will be completed by summer of 2018.

Developing amenities at the park is the next logical step after a years-long effort to open up land for public use. From 2007-2013, the township partnered with the Conservancy on a bold and ambitious plan to demolish several buildings that blocked access to the beautiful bay.

During the multi-phase project, GTRLC helped the township secure more than \$5.7 million in successive grants from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and raise \$3 million in local match funding. This money was mostly used to purchase land and cover demolition costs.

In all, a total of about six acres of land and 1,500 feet of shoreline were opened for public use by 2013. Several structures — the largest and most notable of which was the old Mountain Jack’s restaurant building near the marina — were demolished to make way for the new parkland.



Legend

- Coastal Emergent Wetland
- Existing Natural Area
- Existing Tree
- Proposed Tree
- Irrigated Turf
- No-mow Meadow
- Bioretention/Raingarden
- 6' Concrete Sidewalk
- 10' Non-motorized Shared-use Path
- Specialty Concrete Paving
- Porous Pave Surface
- Cultured Stone Beach Edge
- UA Beach Matting
- Property Boundary

GTRLC was intimately involved in every phase of the project. In addition to helping the township secure trust fund grants and generate private donations, GTRLC also facilitated the purchase of each parcel and managed the on time and on budget demolition of several structures.

GTRLC Protects Noteworthy Old Mission Farm

A productive and scenic piece of farmland on the beautiful Old Mission Peninsula is protected forever after a family with deep roots on the peninsula worked with GTRLC to place a conservation easement on their land.

What's known as the Stanek Farm is a roughly 30-acre triangle about a mile north of Bowers Harbor. The parcel, neatly planted with rows of sweet and tart cherry trees, is among the most productive cherry orchards in the immediate area. GTRLC secured a conservation easement on the land in January.

Though wonderful in its own right, the Stanek Farm is extra special because it joins several other protected parcels in the immediate area, including the Pyatt Lake Preserve and several other conservation easements. The Stanek farm sits immediately north of the 80-acre Zeintek/Kroupa farm, which GTRLC protected with a conservation easement in 2014.

"We've worked for years and years to establish a greenbelt of protected land around Bowers Harbor," GTRLC Executive Director Glen Chown said. "Not only does the Stanek Farm preserve another piece of Old Mission's wonderful agricultural heritage, but it also helps us add another important piece of protection around this special place."

The farm is also important from a viewshed standpoint. Cyclists and others who regularly tour the peninsula are particularly fond of the Stanek Farm, GTRLC Land Protection Specialist Todd Vigland said.



Panorama of Stanek farm.

"It's certainly one of the most visible farmland parcels out there. Kroupa Road is known for all of those awesome cherry orchards, and this one is kind of a landmark, viewshed-wise," Vigland said. "People touring or traveling around on the Old Mission Peninsula recognize this one right off the bat."

Despite being called the Stanek Farm, the land hasn't been owned by a Stanek in more than 90 years. GTRLC worked with owners Steve and Nikki Sobkowski, who inherited the land many decades after Steve's grandfather purchased it from the Stanek family in 1926.

Steve's family has a very long history on the Old Mission Peninsula. His great-great-grandfather was Jerome Pratt, who moved to the Peninsula in 1854 and served as the very first lighthouse keeper at the Mission Point Lighthouse when it opened in 1870. His grandparents were prolific and successful farmers of cherries and other fruit, and they bought the Stanek Farm to add to their holdings.

Steve and Nikki met while students at Michigan State University and now live in the Old Mission home built by his great-grandparents. They've received offers to sell the Stanek Farm for development, but it didn't seem right.



“With my history here, I’d like to see the farming continue,” Steve said. “I take a lot of pride in this.”

“To us, it’s important to preserve the history of the area and pass that value along to each succeeding generation,” Nikki said. “It’s leaving a legacy.”

Negotiations with GTRLC were smooth, but took lots of time, as these things sometimes do. Steve and Nikki both were delighted by their interaction with the Conservancy.

“Todd has been not only incredibly knowledgeable, but so patient as well,” Nikki said. “He’s been great, and working with the Conservancy has been fantastic.”

GTRLC raised the roughly \$250,000 needed for the project in about 60 days, a considerably short amount of time for such a figure. Much of that money came from Peninsula residents, including those from the fabled summer community of Neahtawanta on the shores of Bowers Harbor.

“A high percentage of people who live on Old Mission Peninsula are really passionate about land protection, and this project is another good example,” said Anthony Rupard, GTRLC’s director of fund development.

Neahtawanta resident and steadfast GTRLC supporter David Taft gave a \$25,000 lead gift and helped raise additional funds from other residents. Taft said he and others are fond of the Stanek farm, which is scenic



Nikki and Steve Sobkowski in their Old Mission Peninsula home.

and well known by folks in the area. It had been discussed by some as an ideal spot for development, so Taft hoped to convey a sense of urgency as he spoke with other potential donors.

“It’s always been a very pretty little orchard, very productive, and it sits in a spot where you see it a lot — it just epitomizes an Old Mission Peninsula orchard,” Taft said.

“When Glen brought up to me the fact that the Conservancy was trying to retire the development rights, I thought, ‘Boy, there’s a piece of property you’d really hate to see developed.’”

GTRLC also received substantial support from the Brookby Foundation, the Ralph L. and Winifred E. Polk Foundation, the Shaw and Betty Walker Foundation and a sizeable realized estate gift.

“We’re thrilled to see support from this project come from such a diverse set of funding sources,” Rupard said.

Access for All

OVERLOOK TRAIL AT ARCADIA DUNES TO OPEN THIS SUMMER

The breathtaking views from Arcadia Dunes: The C.S. Mott Nature Preserve will soon be readily accessible to people of all ages and abilities.

GTRLC will open the Overlook Trail at Arcadia Dunes this summer. The roughly half-mile trail is designed for universal accessibility, meaning the entire path is relatively flat and firm to allow easy access for those with mobility issues. People in wheelchairs or those who use walkers greatly appreciate UA trails, but they're also wonderful for young children, families with strollers and people of all ages who struggle to get around.

"For a variety of reasons, many people in our community simply aren't able to complete the hikes that so many of us enjoy and take for granted," GTRLC Executive Director Glen Chown said. "Everyone deserves access to nature, and we're thrilled to offer a universally accessible way to enjoy one of our region's best views."

"People with disabilities have desires and dreams and interests just like the rest of us. By eliminating these barriers, it allows people with disabilities to enjoy full and exciting lives."

The trail starts at the Baldy Trailhead off M-22 and leads to an overlook platform about a half mile south of Old Baldy. It utilizes a series of switchbacks and elevated boardwalks to ensure that the grade never exceeds five percent, a key element of universal accessibility.

“It’s very exciting when we can create these types of recreational opportunities for people with disabilities in the beautiful northern region of our state, especially because there aren’t really enough opportunities like this for them to get out and enjoy our natural splendor,” said Jim Moore, Executive Director of Disability Network Northern Michigan.

Over the past several decades, much work has been done to provide basic elements of accessibility for people with disabilities. Features such as the Overlook Trail begin to add that next layer of life-enriching elements, Moore said.

“People with disabilities have desires and dreams and interests just like the rest of us,” Moore said. “By eliminating these barriers, it allows people with disabilities to enjoy full and exciting lives.”

Although such trails are designed for people with disabilities in mind, studies have shown that UA trails benefit the entire community.

“We know that anytime we do something for people with disabilities, it actually makes things safer and more convenient for everybody else, whether you have small children and are pushing a stroller, or are using a cane or walker, or have trouble getting around,” Moore said.

While universal access was the driving force behind this effort, GTRLC took great care to ensure that the trail would not adversely affect the preserve’s natural features. The first step toward this goal was to place the majority of the trail along an old road cleared years ago for a potential development.

Better still, GTRLC worked to minimize impact in the few areas where grade challenges forced planners to route the trail away from the old road. Save for very few exceptions, the switchbacks wind

through and around native trees and are raised on a boardwalk to protect the forest floor. In the event trees had to be removed, non-native species like Scotch pines were targeted.

“Except for a few limited areas, the path we’re using has already been altered from its natural state,” GTRLC Land Stewardship Specialist Steve Lagerquist said. “Our main goal here was to offer universal access with the least amount of impact to the preserve’s ecology, and we were very meticulous about the path and placement of the trail.”

A volunteer team led by GTRLC staff botanist Angie Lucas even moved a large number of native plants about 100 yards from the switchback area to another section of old roadbed. The team completed this “plant rescue” well before construction.

“We prioritized 13 species to dig up and move to a new location on an old section of road where they ended up doing very well. These species were selected because they don’t generally grow in clones or groups, and therefore would not be able to grow around or under the boardwalk,” Lucas said. “Examples are Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Blue Cohash, Baneberry and Woodferns.”

After moving, GTRLC paid careful attention ensure the plants’ survival. By moving these plants to another abandoned road section, Lucas is hopeful they will continue to do well and will over time increase the diversity in that previously impacted area.

“Once they were put in their new location, they were watered by AmeriCorps members twice more,” Lucas said. “Because we moved the plants in the spring, the moisture in the soil was high, which helped them survive.”

**Keep an eye on www.gtrlc.org/
events for the grand opening
of the Overlook Trail!**

GTRLC'S 2016 YEAR IN REVIEW

471

ACRES PROTECTED
& OPEN TO
THE PUBLIC

2.1

MILES OF SHORELINE*

787

ACRES OF
LAND PROTECTED IN
2016

2.8

MILES OF SHORELINE*

316

ACRES PROTECTED
ON
PRIVATE LANDS
(INCLUDING FARMLAND)

.7

MILES OF SHORELINE*

*Includes rivers, creeks, and lakes.

EVENTS

41 public hikes
& work days

628 event
attendees

VOLUNTEERS

2,003 hrs. 150 monitor
reports

from more than

95 active
volunteers

DONORS

\$ 2,890,000

from more than

3,284 private
donors

INVASIVE SPECIES

2,021 preserve
acres monitored

1,228 preserve acres where invasive
species were removed

6 miles Lake MI shoreline
cleared of Baby's Breath

3 miles Lake MI shoreline
cleared of all invasive species

TRAILS

65 trail miles
maintained

235 feet of boardwalk
added/replaced

EASEMENT MONITORING

ground 168 reports 13,854 acres

air 53 reports 4,999 acres

total 221 reports 18,853 acres

90 in-person
visits

MAPLE BAY FARM

120 lbs organic produce
grown by volunteers
& donated to food pantries

4 gallons maple syrup
produced by volunteers



MISTY ACRES FARM

2,592 lbs beef produced 11 calves
born

55 acres in
rotational grazing





Mike Okma (left) and Richmond Brown along Openo Creek.

Acts of Love

CONSERVATION EASEMENT LANDOWNERS SHARE GTRLC'S MISSION

Richmond Brown's eyes filled with wonder as he watched Openo Creek spill through a valley of lush ferns, gnarled cedars and towering hemlocks.

Even at 92, Brown was always one or two steps ahead of GTRLC easement steward Mike Okma during a visit to his central Antrim County property. Brown led Okma up steep hills, over and under downed logs and across a swamp to the most beautiful portion of his land, where the creek meanders through a primitive and peaceful forest.

Brown donated a conservation easement on his 46-acre property in 2000. To him, the decision was simple — and one that still fills him with pride as he wanders the land.

"I just thought this place belonged to eternity," he said, gazing up at the canopy surrounding the creek.

Since its inception in 1991, GTRLC has secured 228 conservation easements that protect nearly 20,000

acres of land — about half of all land protected by the Conservancy. In addition, GTRLC was very instrumental in the planning and implementation of purchase of development rights (PDR) millages in Acme and Peninsula townships, resulting in an additional 3,800 acres protected by 58 easements.

A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and GTRLC (or the townships, in the case of PDR) that permanently restricts the way land can be used in order to protect its conservation values. It allows landowners to continue to own and use their land, and they can also sell it or pass it on to heirs. The land must be periodically monitored to ensure that easement terms are upheld.

Much of the Conservancy's monitoring work is carried out by Okma, GTRLC's manager of easement stewardship. Okma visits with dozens of landowners a year, and he constantly sees proof of GTRLC

Executive Director Glen Chown's oft-repeated sentiment: While there can be tax benefits to placing an easement on one's property, those who have done so did it for three primary reasons — love of the land, love of the land and love of the land.

"They've all got a real, heartfelt reason for loving and protecting their piece of property — or buying land with an easement — and it's so cool just to walk with someone and listen to those stories," Okma said. "That's what let me know every day that we're doing the right thing."

Chown is grateful to the hundreds of families who have shared in GTRLC's mission by placing an easement on their land.

"We have such a tremendous debt of gratitude to all of these landowners," he said. "Not only are they protecting their own special memories, they're protecting critical wildlife habitat, water quality, scenic views and other things that benefit everyone in the Grand Traverse region."

'We did this for Dad'

When Carol and Steve Shuckra look south over the Boardman River valley, there's surprisingly little evidence of modern civilization. Dense stands of pines and hardwoods hide the river's path, save for some special mornings when the right conditions produce a ribbon of fog that hovers conspicuously over the cool river below.

"As corny as this sounds, we love going out there and hearing the wind through the trees," Carol said. "For us, it's just as though the Chippewa or Ottawa are still here. It's still beautiful, natural land."

The views from their 40-acre property are spectacular, but the memories there are more valuable than anything else. Carol's father, Fred Beveridge, bought the land in 1938 and built a hunting cabin on a ridge overlooking the valley. Since then, the land and cabin have been a treasured gathering place for Fred and his far-flung descendants.

Carol, who grew up in Ypsilanti — where Fred worked for Consumers Power — made regular trips to the property as a young girl. She met Steve at Bowling

Green State University in 1956, and not long after introduced him to the property. Though Carol and Steve eventually settled and raised a family in upstate New York, they made regular trips back to the northern Michigan cabin, where they were joined by Carol's siblings, who lived in Virginia and Colorado. Now, Carol and Steve's grandchildren regularly make the trip.

"This has been a special place for four generations," Carol said. "We just love it."

Fred was a regular at the cabin until his death in 2002. He was at peace there, Carol and Steve said, often sitting with a Stroh's beer and a transistor radio listening to Detroit Tigers baseball. He especially loved to wander the trails and breathe in the fresh air.

"When he was here, every day he'd go out for a hike. He'd take a dog and just go," Steve said. "He'd come back with blueberries, blackberries. He just loved this place."

Not long after his death, Carol and Steve's son, a real estate developer who lives in Washington DC, suggested that they contact their local land conservancy to inquire about permanently protecting the land.

"Dad had always wanted the land to stay the same, it was very important to him. And the kids wanted to honor his wishes. He never took any steps to make it legal, or anything like that, but everyone knew that was his wish," Steve said. "So all the siblings wanted to honor dad and do the right thing for him."



Carol and Steve Shuckra.

In 2004, Carol and Steve, along with Carol's siblings and their spouses — Ellen and Bill Kelso and Jim Beveridge — finalized details of a conservation easement with GTRLC. Carol and Steve know that Fred — whose ashes are scattered in the very woods he loved so dearly — would be grateful that his children decided to seek a conservation easement.

"It would mean the sun, the moon and the stars to him to know the land has been protected," Carol said.

Steve and Carol thoroughly enjoyed working with GTRLC. They had some minor trepidation about an easement at first, but soon came to realize the positives far outweighed any negatives. As with other easements, GTRLC worked closely with Steve and Carol to craft an easement that honors their wishes while protecting the land.

"I think a concern for some people is that you're losing some control over your property, but we don't feel like we've given up the control that's important to us," Steve said. "The trade-off is that you recognize you're preserving the land for perpetuity."

The Shuckras liked working with the conservancy so much that they've included mention of GTRLC on a plaque that honors their family legacy. The plaque is visible near a trailhead on their land, which they allow their neighbors to use, as Fred had always done.

"We have thoroughly enjoyed our experience with GTRLC staff members, Carol said. "We feel like family and look forward to their annual visits when we walk the property together."

A Sacred Place in Benzie County

After a few minutes with Dirk Martin, his connection to the land is almost palpable.

You might assume that Martin, a chiropractor who grew up in Chicago and now lives and works near the Texas coast, wouldn't be comfortable in the wilds of central Benzie County. But there's no place he'd rather be, and when he's there, he sometimes

can't even be contained to a bedroom.

In a few spots around his land he built dwellings out of branches and earth, one near a clear, ice-cold creek where he can dip his hands for a drink. He'll often spend

the night out in the woods, looking at the stars and hearing the sounds of a forest after dark.

When asked about his 76-acre property, Martin paused and grew emotional.

"I've just always known this land was really special," he said.

This truly spectacular place contains the headwaters of two creeks that join together to form the north branch of the Platte River. Down in a grove of cedars and hemlocks, one of the creeks rises out of the sandy ground in a nonstop pulse of clean, cold water mingling with pure sand. A well-worn log nearby reveals that Martin and many before him have spent countless hours enjoying the hypnotic natural phenomenon.

Martin's wife, a fellow Chicago native named Mary, used to regularly travel with her family to Beulah. One of Mary's sisters eventually married a man named Roger, whose family had owned what is now



Dirk Martin and Mike Okma walk a portion of Martin's property.

Martin's land for three generations. On one trip up north in the early 1990s, Martin asked Roger if he could camp on the land, and Roger obliged.

"I really got to know the land pretty well, and I just fell in love with it," Martin said.

Eventually Martin bought the land from Roger. He regularly camped with his kids there, and improved upon a house on the property. He and Mary now spent as much time as they can there, and he may retire to the property someday.

In 2008, Martin placed a conservation easement on his property after researching a few different options. He wanted to protect the land, first and foremost, but he was also very impressed with the fact that placing an easement on his property would prevent his property taxes from coming uncapped should he leave the land to his children.

"Now my children can inherit this property and basically pay the same taxes that I pay, which is really important to me," Martin said. "So you're actually saving the property — and I'm not aware of anything that does it as well as the easement can do it — and your family can inherit the place without being taxed to death. That's a really big deal."

As with most conservation easements, Martin's land is now valued somewhat lower since the easement restricts most development rights on the property. And as with all conservation easement landowners, Martin doesn't mind a bit.

"It loses value on the books, but I can tell you, in my eyes it certainly hasn't lost any value," he said.

For Martin, simply protecting the land from development isn't enough. In 2015, he worked with

the Conservation Resource Alliance to remove an old crumbling culvert through which one of the creeks passed, restoring its natural flow and rehabilitating the bank surrounding it. And he's gone to great lengths to remove invasive autumn olive on his land.

"Any time I do anything, I'm asking myself and trusting my instinct — am I benefitting this land?" Martin said.



Mike Okma (left) and Don Southwell on the shores of Oxbow Lake.

Peace and Quiet

After decades of hustle and bustle, Don and Glenna Southwell are sure to soak up every quiet moment in their rural Kalkaska County home.

Don recently retired after a long and successful career in

the insurance business, the last phase of which was spent in Chicago. The honking horns and frantic pace of the city life are in stark contrast to the Southwell's 183-acre property, which now serves as their full-time home. Their house and an associated woodworking barn are the only buildings on the undeveloped and incredibly picturesque Oxbow Lake, itself surrounded by a tranquil hardwood and evergreen forest.

"I spent my working life in cities, and cities have a lot to offer. But I tell you what, you get up here, get in the woods, and it's just so incredibly peaceful," Don said. "Out on the water it's the same way. Glenna loves the water more than I do, and I love the woods more than she does, and here we've got them both."

The house and land were once owned by Gloria and Joe Whelan, who were among the first to donate a conservation easement to GTRLC. The Southwells, both Mancelona natives who never strayed far from their roots, bought it in 2006 after being delighted to find out it was for sale. Don and his brother had

fished there as children, and Glenna later found out it was also a favorite fishing hole of her father's.

Before finalizing the purchase, the Southwells researched conservation easements and carefully studied the easement the Whelans placed on the property.

"When we looked at the terms of the easement we said, well, we can live with that," Don said. "There were some things I would have done a little differently, but it wasn't a big problem. By and large, I think protecting it for the future is fantastic."

Plus, Don, said, if it wasn't for the easement, it's highly unlikely that he and Glenna would have been able to acquire the entire property.

"Thankfully there was an easement on it, or it would have been subdivided a long time ago," he said. "So we're certainly grateful to Gloria and Joe."

Don and Glenna both were raised to appreciate northern Michigan's wild beauty. Don's ancestors were loggers, and his father — who wrote a book on the matter — told him tales of the lumber camps. When he was a young boy, Don helped his father plant tens of thousands of trees as part of various reforestation programs.

The Southwells have a deep Christian faith and believe strongly that they are blessed to be able to steward a small piece of beautiful land. This, and their love of nature, are things they want to pass on to the generations after them.

"We like to observe the natural order of things — the abundant wildlife here is intriguing," Glenna said. "As our 15 grandkids come over, we are teaching them the importance of preserving and caring for the land, the water and the natural habitat for wildlife."

Don, a passionate and skilled woodworker, spends hours at a time in the forest, relaxing and studying the trees and wildlife around him. He's comforted to know that the land will be protected long after he's gone.

"I roam this land all the time, I just love it. I know it like the back of my hand. It's going to eventually look different, because nature makes changes," he



Phyllis Robinson out for a walk on her beautiful property.

said. "So it might look different 100 years from now, but it's going to be protected, and that's really great to know."

For the Future — and the Past

The Civil War hadn't yet begun when Phyllis Robinson's great-grandfather, an Ohio resident, responded to an ad seeking settlers and workers in the Benzonia area.

Lucius W. Case bought 300 acres in 1859. His youngest son, James W. Case, would eventually farm his share of the land after extensive logging that was so commonplace throughout northern Michigan. That land passed to James' son John, who built a home there in the late 1930s — a home in which John's daughter, Phyllis, grew up in and still returns to for long stretches each summer.

The rolling hills along Case Road have long since recovered from the saw and axe. Beautiful stands of hardwoods and a few old white pines — including an ancient old-growth behemoth known to Robinson and her family as the "Grandfather Tree" — carpet a large chunk of land owned by Robinson and her nieces. A stream that feeds Cold Creek, itself a main tributary of Crystal Lake, runs through the land.

Cherrybrook, as the homestead is known to Robinson and her family, is still the site of family reunions for Lucius' descendants. More than 50 people, ages three to 89, gathered at the site to catch up and share memories at the most recent gathering.

Between the natural beauty and the connection to her ancestors, the land means so much to Robinson. She wanted the peace of knowing it would remain just as beautiful long after she's gone, so she worked with GTRLC to place a conservation easement on her 90-acre portion in the summer of 2016.

"I just wanted this place to stay like I always remembered it," she said.

Robinson, who graduated from the now-defunct Benzonia High School, relocated to Detroit and raised a family there. But she could never stay away from Cherrybrook for long, often returning with her family for rejuvenating visits up north. She bought the land from her father in the late 1970s, and in recent years began thinking about what would happen to it after she was gone.

She knew her children and grandchildren valued the land and would likely never sell it for development, but that feeling of assurance only extends so far. Much of the land surrounding hers has already been chopped into smaller parcels. What would become of Cherrybrook in 30 years? In 50?

"You just don't know what the future generations are going to do with the land, and I really wanted it to stay in its natural state," Robinson said. "It really is very comforting to me to know that even if they did sell it, the new owner would be bound by the terms of the easement."

Misconceptions often surround conservation easements. Some of Robinson's grandchildren were concerned she was signing away her legacy. She told them, of course, that that wasn't the case.

"I told them it's still privately owned, just with conditions — and the conditions are that it stay natural, something they'd be OK with anyway," she said.

Plus, as with all other conservation easements, GTRLC was sure to work closely with Robinson to tailor the easement to meet the needs of both the conservancy and the landowner. Robinson's easement, for example, includes a small building envelope in a place where she and her family had always envisioned building a small cabin.

"I think we came up with a plan that worked for the Conservancy and worked for me," she said.

Robinson believes her grandfather and parents would be thrilled to know she took steps to permanently preserve the land.

"They would be pleased to know that their little bit of beloved Benzie County is not only still owned and enjoyed by family members but is now a wonderful wildlife habitat forever protected from development."

No More Goodbyes

The year before Peggy Beck permanently moved to her beautiful slice of northeast Antrim County, she camped there with her son, Eric.



Peggy Beck (right) and her son Eric standing near Severance Creek.

It was the summer of 1993, and Beck was considering retirement after three decades of playing viola in the opera orchestra at Washington D.C.'s Kennedy Center. It was around this time that two things crystallized in her head: It was in fact time to retire, and there would be no better place to do so than her peaceful retreat in the famed Jordan River valley.

"I said to Eric — I don't want to say goodbye to this place again," Beck recalled.

The next year, Beck loaded two cats, a dog and her most cherished belongings in her vehicle and arrived

at the 94-acre property, which had no structures. Hers was a rustic life for a while, as she lived out of a travel trailer until she was able to start construction of the home she now lives in.

“Here was this city girl, and I’d lie down at night and hear all these sounds coming from outside, and I’d think, ‘Oh my, what is that?’” she recalled with a chuckle.

Beck and her ex-husband had purchased the land from friends in the early 1970s. This spectacular, mostly wooded property has more than 2,500 feet of frontage on Severance Creek, a substantial tributary of the Jordan River. The Jordan was the first river included in the Michigan Natural Rivers Act of 1970, largely because of its beauty and ecological significance.

After years in the hustle and bustle of Washington, the rural life was a wonderful change of pace.

“I had lived in the city all my life, and I really liked the idea of being in the country,” she said. “It’s peaceful here.”

Around 2004, GTRLC helped the state acquire a parcel of land contiguous to Beck’s property. Land Protection Specialist Todd Vigland quickly recognized the ecological significance of Beck’s property and approached her with the possibility of a conservation easement. The time wasn’t right at first — as it sometimes isn’t — but Vigland stayed in touch and was thrilled to start negotiations when Beck was ready.

Near the end of 2016, GTRLC finalized an easement on 76-acre portion of Beck’s land. The easement encompasses all of Beck’s frontage on Severance Creek, along with diverse forest and a large, wooded hill along the creek.

Like so many other landowners, Beck wanted the peace of mind of knowing that her land would remain as it is now long after she’s gone.

“I really wanted to protect this land in perpetuity so it could never be developed. That was the real driving force,” she said. “There’s not a big line of people waiting to buy land in the valley, but it’s changed a lot in 20 years. You want to protect it for the future.”

GRAND TRAVERSE REGIONAL LAND CONSERVANCY

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Conservancy Directors give hundreds of hours of their time, lend considerable life experiences to our efforts, and dedicate their contributions to the Conservancy. Learn more about the Board of Directors at www.gtrlc.org/about/board



Spring Events

We're still finalizing our Spring events, so be sure to check www.gtrlc.org/events soon for a full schedule and more details about the events listed below!

Arcadia Birding — April 15, 8 a.m.

This field trip, in partnership with the Benzie Audubon Club, is a perennial favorite. See waterfowl and returning spring migrants at several spots along the Lake Michigan coast.

Earth Day — April 22, 10 a.m. to Noon

Help us plant trees and shrubs at the Pelizzari Natural Area! Wear comfortable shoes and dress for the weather. Bring gloves, boots and shovels. Extras will be available.

Barnstorming at Hickory Meadows — April 24, 10 a.m. to Noon

Join us as we do some much-needed clean up at the Hickory Meadows barn. Snacks will be provided!

Wildflower Hike at Pete's Woods — May 2 and May 9, 10 a.m. to Noon

Pete's Woods is known for its incredible display of spring ephemeral wildflowers. Join Volunteer Preserve Steward Paula Dreeszen for an informative hike to see these beauties. The hike is about 1.5 miles. Dress for the weather and wear comfortable shoes!



PHOTO BY ANGIE LUCAS



PHOTO BY ANGIE LUCAS

Working Together

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS HELP GTRLC ADVANCE ITS MISSION

Included below are just three of several stories that highlight GTRLC's work with other organizations. To view more — including stories about the creation of pollinator strips for the American Farmland Trust, eradication of invasive species for the Invasive Species Network and our work with local Audubon clubs — please visit gtrlc.org/about/partnerships.

Organization for Bat Conservation

There was a time when bats were far less understood — and much more maligned — than they are today. After much education and outreach by naturalists and conservation groups, even most schoolchildren understand the importance bats play in controlling insects. A single bat can eat thousands of insects each night, including mosquitos and pests that can cause harm to our farm crops and forests.

But despite the boost to their public approval rating over the years, many species of bats are still very much at risk from habitat loss, degradation, disease and other factors. As with most conservation efforts, efforts to preserve and protect bat populations need to start with a thorough understanding of the state and location of at-risk species.

GTRLC recently began an exciting partnership with the Organization for Bat Conservation, a Michigan-based nonprofit and the largest bat-focused conservation group in the Midwest. OBC is based out of and works closely with the Bloomfield Hills-based Cranbrook Institute of Science.

In the summer of 2016, GTRLC worked with OBC and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources on a monitoring project to survey the bats in a portion of GTRLC's service area. Using high-tech monitoring equipment and protocols provided by OBC, GTRLC stewardship staff and longtime volunteer Paula Dreeszen conducted an acoustic monitoring survey along 30 miles of roads near Fruithaven and Arcadia Dunes.

Using special audio recording equipment designed to pick up noises made by bats, GTRLC was able to identify six different species of bats — including two species designated as “special concern” by the state — and get a general idea of where concentrations of these bats are.

“It's really useful data that we hadn't been able to obtain previously,” said Angie Lucas, GTRLC Senior Preserve Steward. “And this project gives us an understanding and awareness of what to look for on preserves that we didn't have before.”

Such information is very useful to GTRLC as it makes future management decisions.

“It helps us to be generally aware that these species are present and a general idea of where they're located,” Lucas said. “For example, if we're doing trail work, we need to be keeping an eye out for potential roosting trees and other structures that might be used for roosting.”

OBC will use the data collected by GTRLC and several other partner organizations to allow biologists and natural resource managers to identify areas of conservation importance in the state, determine when management actions are needed and decide where to concentrate management activities, said Giorgia Auteri, Citizen Science Coordinator for OBC.



PHOTOS BY HEATHER ADAMS

The data can also be compiled with data from other states to paint a picture of relative bat activity levels and abundances at a national level. The data will also help identify species which may be declining, and in need of extra protection efforts, Auteri said. In addition, OBC hopes to document areas that rare species are using, detect changes in how many bats there are, and identify shifts in relative abundance of one species compared to others.

None of this would be possible without partners like GTRLC. It's expected that the partnership will continue — and perhaps expand in scope — next year.

"Organizations like GTRLC greatly expand the amount and quality of work that we are able to accomplish," Auteri said. "Our partner organizations are more familiar with their region than we are, and thus are better able to directly recruit and train volunteers, as well as to design survey routes."

SEEDS

When it came time to build a small viewing deck at Green Point Dunes, which offers some of the best views of any of GTRLC's preserves, Steve Lagerquist had plenty of options.



SEEDS crews work to replace infrastructure at Pyatt Lake.

He could have hired a general contractor, of course, and the deck would have turned out just fine. But what if there was a way to achieve some other positive outcomes along the way?

Lagerquist — a land stewardship specialist at GTRLC — decided to reach out the folks at SEEDS. SEEDS is a Traverse City-based nonprofit that works heavily in the fields of ecology and sustainable design, often involving at-risk youth in the process. The organization had previously done some work with invasive species removal for GTRLC, and Lagerquist felt an infrastructure build would be a good fit. The folks at SEEDS jumped at the opportunity to get their youth



A SEEDS crew built this beautiful deck at Green Point Dunes.

working on another meaningful project in the community.

A youth team from SEEDS designed and built a beautiful deck with a natural, rough-hewn look. What's more, the deck is built from black locust, a troublesome invasive species that SEEDS crews previously helped remove from the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

"It's a great story to tell," Lagerquist said. "They hire local youth in order to teach them useful skills, and there's the black locust aspect — It's just fantastic all around."

The picturesque deck, completed in 2011, was just the first of what's turning into many partner projects with SEEDS. Lagerquist tapped the group in 2015 to revamp aging infrastructure at Pyatt Lake on Old Mission Peninsula. They're now set to build black locust benches for the upcoming Overlook Trail at Arcadia Dunes, a universal access trail to be completed this summer, and to improve the trail at the Elberta Dunes South Natural Area.

SEEDS considers GTRLC a tremendous partner, said Bill Watson, SEEDS' Youth Development Director.

"GTRLC staff has always been great at engaging our young people. They help them understand why they're doing what they are doing, how important the work is and what the impact of the work is," Watson said. "That's not always easy when you are cutting or pulling invasives or hauling black locust lumber up a steep hill."

The partnership is a true "win-win," Watson said. At-risk youth gain skills, get a chance to make a difference, and GTRLC benefits from a project sure to be enjoyed by the public for years to come.

“This allows young people to do meaningful work that has long-term positive impacts for both the land and themselves. Our members receive dozens and dozens of unsolicited ‘thank yous’ from people they don’t know who visit the natural areas where they are working,” he said. “For many of the youth working in SEEDS, they have never been thanked for anything. They end up feeling proud of themselves and the work they are a part of.”

North American Orchid Conservation Center

Throughout Michigan and the Midwest, there’s a long list of highly adaptable plants that can grow pretty

much anywhere. Orchids are not on that list.

Many species of these colorful flowers are as specialized as they are beautiful, requiring just the right soil types and the presence of certain types of fungus to thrive. As such, they are particularly sensitive to habitat loss, degradation and disturbance. Add foraging from an booming deer population, harvesting by

unwitting flower lovers and other threats, and the outlook isn’t rosy.

In fact, of the more than 250 native orchid species in the United States and Canada, more than half are threatened or endangered.

“Orchids are under a stress due to loss of habitat, overabundant populations of deer, invasive plants and many other factors,” GTRLC Senior Preserve Steward Angie Lucas said.



PHOTOS BY ANGIE LUCAS

GTRLC has recently entered into a collaboration with the North American Orchid Conservation Center, itself a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and the United States Botanic Garden. The organization’s main goal is to establish a secure collection of seeds and other genetic material, which will allow for a better understanding of orchid ecology and the development of the best ways to conserve and restore dwindling populations.

By collaborating with organizations like the Conservancy, NAOCC will be able to gather material from specific regions across the country. GTRLC is fortunate to have more than 23 species already documented on its preserves and sanctuaries.

“We want to collect materials (seeds, mycorrhizal fungi, leaves) from native orchids in the US and Canada,” said Dennis Whigham, a senior botanist with the Smithsonian. “When we conduct studies that will eventually enable us to propagate native species for conservation and restoration, we want to use genetic material that is geographically appropriate.”

This work will also let GTRLC gain a better understanding of exactly what grows on GTRLC preserves.

“In addition to assisting with future restoration research with NOACC, this collaboration also provides opportunity to gain a better quantitative understanding of current orchid population and status on our preserves,” Lucas said.

The ultimate long-term goal is to develop reliable ways to restore orchid populations and protect existing populations, with knowledge of the best techniques being shared with regional partners for their own restoration efforts.

“GTRLC will know that genetic material from species in your area is secured in regional and national seed and fungal banks,” Whigham said. “In the long term, you will be assured that you will know how to propagate all species for conservation and restoration efforts - including enabling people to establish sustainable populations of genetically appropriate plants in gardens, arboretums, and more.”

For more information, visit www.northamericanorchidcenter.org

A Helping Hand

FOOD FROM GTRLC FARMS GIVEN TO HELP THE DISADVANTAGED

It was a win-win-win late last year when a longtime GTRLC supporter purchased hundreds of pounds of Misty Acres beef for families in need.

Cherry Republic founder Bob Sutherland, a longtime friend of GTRLC, purchased two animals from the herd of grass-fed cattle at Misty Acres shortly before Thanksgiving. Bob kept some meat for his employees, but the majority was processed and delivered to food pantries at Benzie Area Christian Neighbors (BACN) and Leelanau Christian Neighbors.

Through this generous single donation, Sutherland was able to provide financial support to the Conservancy, help the Conservancy spread the news about its grass-fed beef program and allow families with limited resources to enjoy quality food for the holidays. Vic Lane, who manages Misty Acres for GTRLC, said the move was a natural extension for an organization looking to do more.

“We’ve talked for quite a long time about going above and beyond land protection and looking at what the community’s needs are,” said Lane, GTRLC’s senior conservation project manager. “Not only did this address land issues by raising awareness of the ecological benefits and sustainability of grass-fed beef and our work at Misty Acres, but it addressed the social needs of underprivileged folks in the community who really need access to high quality foods.”

Sutherland’s donation supplied between 250-300 pounds of fresh beef to each pantry, Lane said. Much of it was in burger form, but plenty of roast cuts were also available for those looking for a holiday feast. Included with the meat were educational brochures with information about GTRLC, Misty Acres and the ecological benefits of grass-fed beef.

“Our donation to GTRLC for Misty Acres beef that ultimately went to the underserved in Benzie and



Bob Sutherland.

Leelanau County was a great way to help many organizations at once,” Sutherland said. “We brought nutrition to hundreds of families that might not have gotten it, and we supported one of our favorite organizations doing an innovative project that protects farmland and helps regional agriculture thrive. Plus, this is as local as it gets.”

Sutherland’s donation is a perfect example of doing more with less, Lane said.

“This is the value of partnership,” he said. “We aren’t giving up Conservancy time or funds for the outreach, awareness or social benefits, and the donor knows that his money is providing all these wonderful layers of benefits.”

Last year also marked the second year that volunteers at the Maple Bay farm donated more than 100 pounds of fresh produce from the farm to local food pantries. Hot peppers, sweet peppers, squash, tomatoes, zucchini, green beans, onions and more went from the farm to pantries in Elk Rapids, Acme and Traverse City.

“There’s an incredible need in our community for people to have good, fresh, healthy produce,” Lane said. “This is another way for us to create a program that is addressing multiple levels of sustainability.”

Volunteers were more than happy to provide the bounty to local pantries.

“We are so fortunate to be able to grow organic vegetables in the fertile soil of Maple Bay Farm,” GTRLC staffer and Maple Bay volunteer Barb Heflin said. “Sharing the bounty of this healthy food with families and children in need is helping to feed our future and create a better place for everyone.”

Getting Serious About ‘Forever’

About ten years ago, I received a newly printed map from GTRLC that included all of its nature preserves and “assist” properties (lands the Conservancy helps a township, city, county, or the state acquire for parkland) across our five-county service area. My hiking buddy Debbie and I decided that we were going to try to visit them all. There were 26 properties listed on the map at the time; to date we have visited 19. My map is covered with notes like “Good viewing platform,” “Bald eagle’s nest on island,” “Good signage” or “Got lost.”

Over the past ten years, GTRLC has added several more preserves and negotiated and fundraised for many more community assists. At the end of our 25th year, GTRLC has preserved over 40,000 acres with the help of strong community groups passionate about preserving the beauty, water quality and farmland in our region. We are proud of what we have achieved and the support in our region.

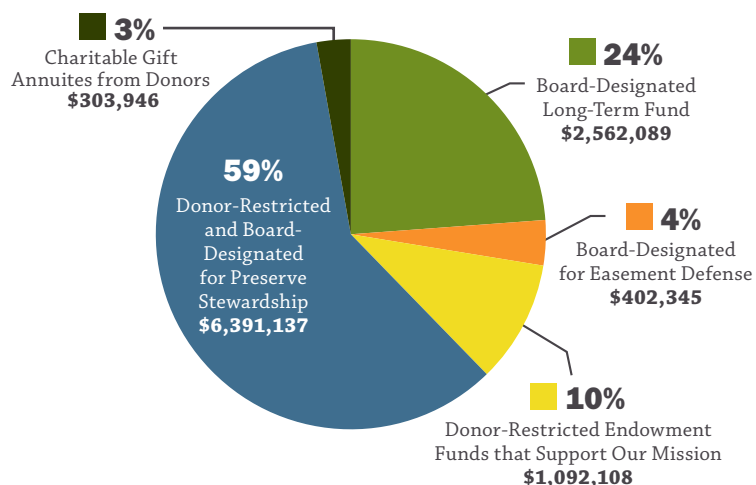
But simply protecting land is not enough. With the acquisition of each new nature preserve and with many community assists, there is the added responsibility of maintaining these properties in perpetuity. When I was a new board member,

I naively thought that preserve management simply meant good signage so I wouldn’t get lost or trespass on private property. While this is certainly part of it, I now realize our stewardship team does much more. To provide a safe, enjoyable experience, the stewardship team — with the help of dedicated volunteers and our eight AmeriCorps members — builds and maintains trails, removes invasive species, revives marshlands, creates birding habitats, builds boardwalks and universally accessible pathways, clears trees from storms, writes grants and management plans, manages a grass-fed beef program at our Misty Acres Farm and so much more!

To keep the promise of the “now and for future generations” part of our mission, the Board and staff have made a commitment to fully funding our long-term stewardship needs. We want to ensure that we care for and maintain our properties in an exemplary manner forever. Along with my multi-year commitment to visit all our growing list of properties, my husband I have made a multi-year commitment to the Stewardship Fund. It’s important to us that our children and (hopefully) grandchildren will be able to enjoy the GTRLC lands as we do today. Please consider a gift to our Stewardship fund so we can all love the land and pass it on.

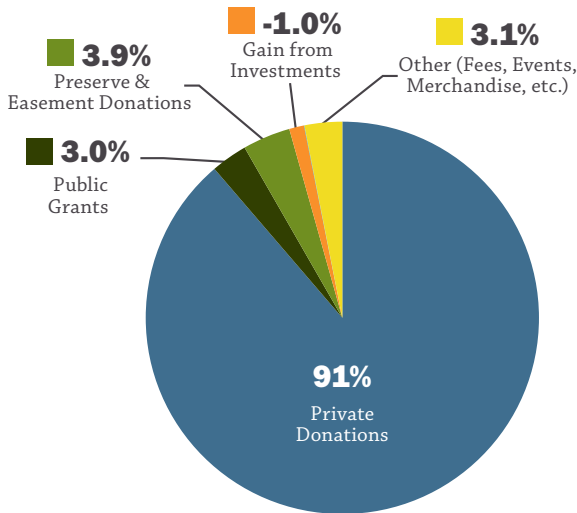
— Jennifer Jaffe, Board Chair

GTRLC Long-Term and Endowment Funds

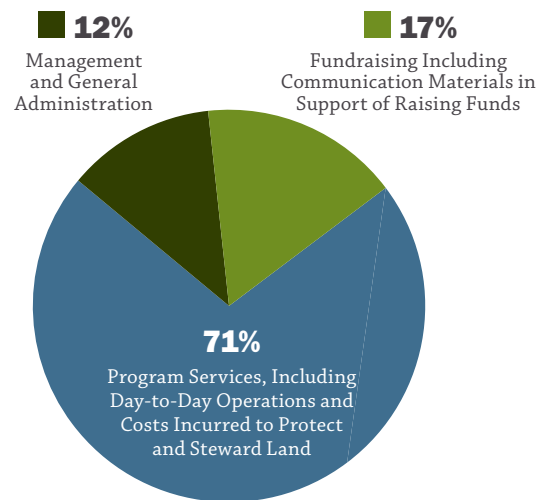


Board-Designated Long-Term Fund	\$2,562,089	24%
Board-Designated for Easement Defense	\$402,345	4%
Donor-Restricted Endowment Funds that Support Our Mission	\$1,092,108	10%
Donor-Restricted and Board-Designated for Preserve Stewardship	\$6,391,137	59%
Charitable Gift Annuities from Donors	\$303,946	3%
	\$10,751,624	100%

GTRLC Revenue



GTRLC Expenses



GTRLC Consolidated Statement of Activities for the Fiscal Year

Ended June 30, 2016

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
REVENUE AND SUPPORT				
Private Donations	\$2,210,721	\$784,053	\$19,012	\$3,013,786
Public Grants	101,610	-	-	101,610
Preserve & Easement Donations	-	133,500	-	133,500
Gain From Investments	(11,858)	(29,520)	-	(41,378)
Interest Income	1,243	98	-	1,341
Other (Fees, Events, Merchandise, Etc.)	66,705	38,398	-	105,103
Net Assets Released From Restriction:	1,299,108	(1,299,108)	-	-
Liens Released On Nature Preserves	-	(148,790)	148,790	-
Total Revenue and Support	3,667,529	(521,369)	167,802	3,313,962
EXPENSES				
Program Services Including Day-To-Day Operations And Costs Incurred To Protect And Steward Land	2,635,229	-	-	2,635,229
Management And General Administration	453,031	-	-	453,031
Fundraising Including Communication Materials In Support Of Raising Funds	606,947	-	-	606,947
Total Expenses	3,695,207	-	-	3,695,207
CHANGES IN NET ASSETS	(27,678)	(521,369)	167,802	(381,245)
NET ASSETS Beginning Of Year	4,542,691	13,637,905	18,208,654	36,389,250
NET ASSETS End Of Year	\$4,515,013	\$13,116,536	\$18,376,456	\$36,008,005

In 2016, the Conservancy received more than \$2,890,000 in private support from 3,284 donors. We are especially grateful to those of you who responded to the generous challenge from the Carls Foundation with new or increased gifts. Together, we are leaving perhaps the greatest gift we can give to future generations — rich and productive farmland, pristine natural habitats, coastal dunes and clean water. Every gift makes a difference in making conservation work possible.

Conservancy Fund Donors:

Your gifts provide the organization with the ultimate fund flexibility to protect land, steward lands that have been protected, and meet our day-to-day financial needs, enabling us to thrive as an organization and retain a talented and committed staff.

Land Champions:

Your monthly gifts support the very foundation of our mission and allow us to plan and sustain our work more effectively.

Project Donors:

Your gifts directed to specific projects are helping to protect special places such as the Wilcox-Palmer-Shah addition, the Stanek Farm on Old Mission Peninsula, an addition to the Railroad Point Natural Area, the new Wintergreen Woods Preserve, Camp Maplehurst and many more. These projects can take years to come to fruition. Your gifts support the development of relationships with land owners, as well as our ability to perform environmental due diligence, conduct appraisals, work through negotiations and closings, and strengthen our community partnerships.

Conservation Easement and Land Donors:

Over 23,000 acres of land have been permanently protected by landowners who have placed permanent easements on their property in order to ensure that conservation values—the health and wealth of these precious lands—are maintained forever. Thank you to those whose private easements benefit the public by providing local farms and food, healthy habitats for wildlife and fisheries, protection of water quality and the conservation of scenic viewsheds.

Vanguard Members:

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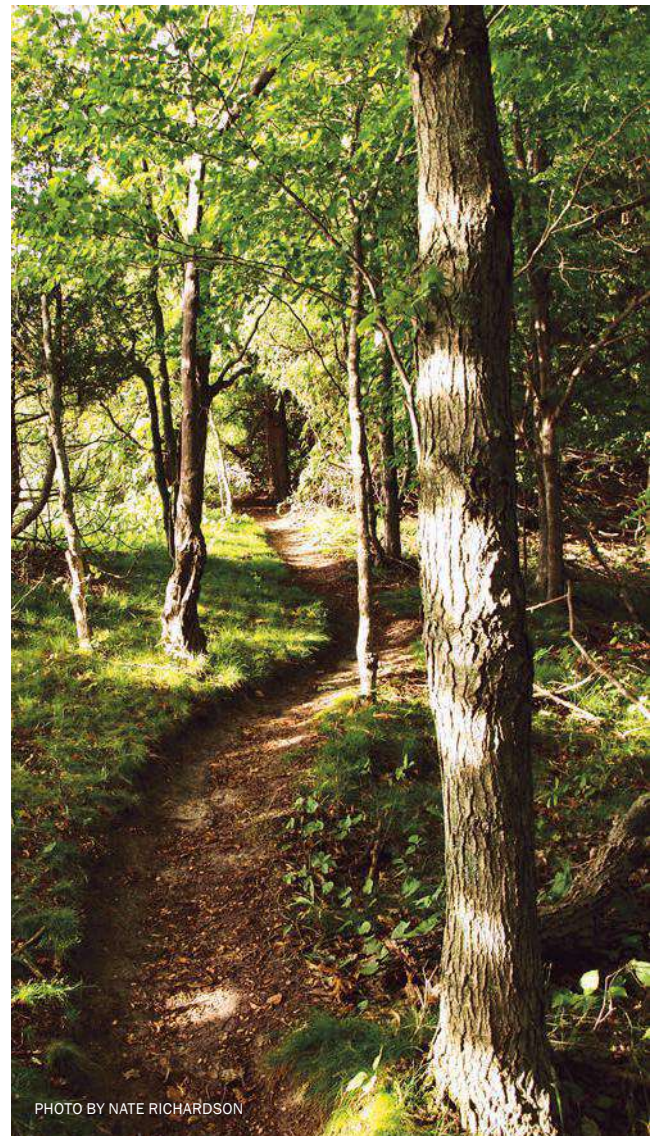


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JANUARY 1 – DECEMBER 31, 2016

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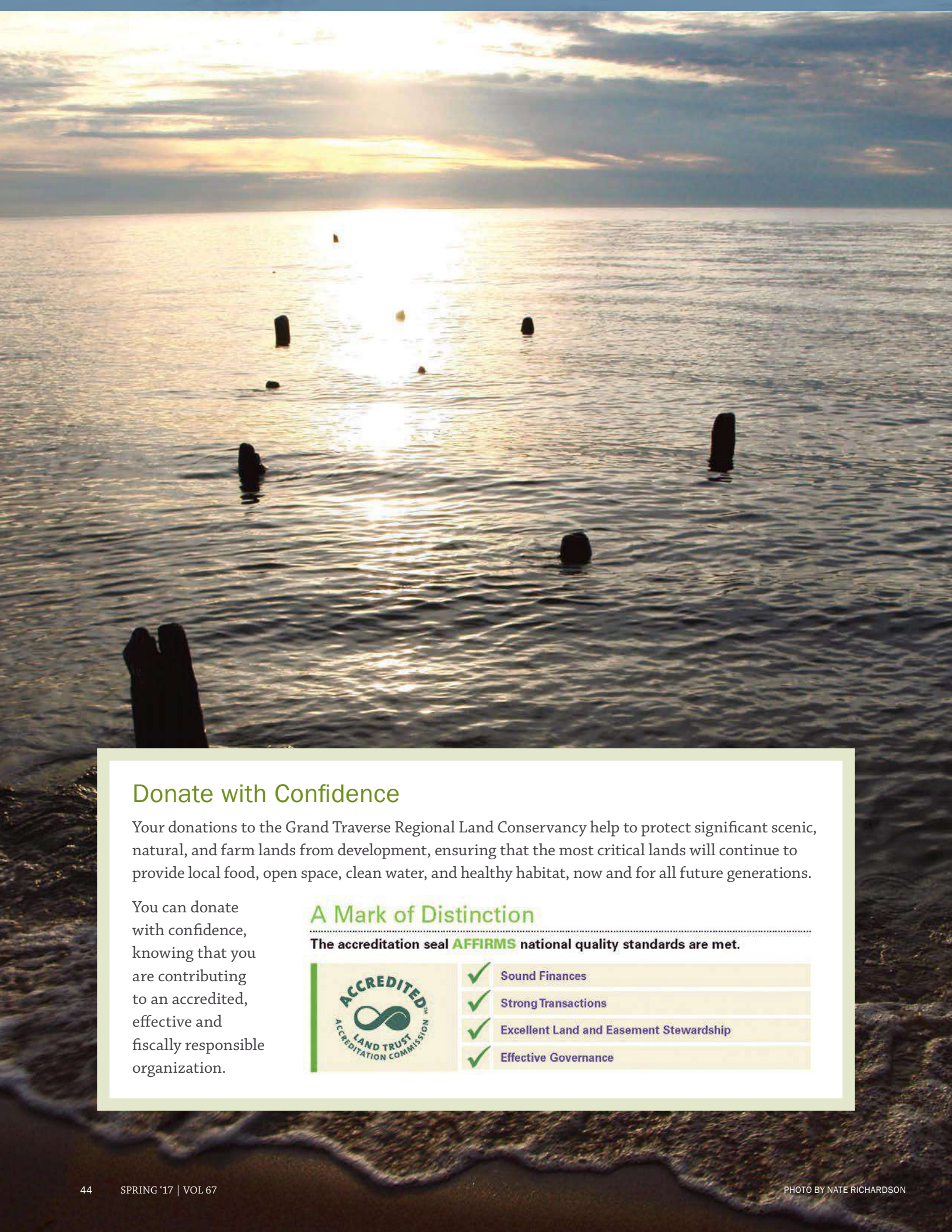
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**After many years of
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This leaves our Stewardship field crew in need of a trustworthy auto or two. If you have a vehicle you would consider donating, please contact us. We are looking for something in good shape with some life left to it. Not much need for a sports coupe, but the crew would be open to most other types.

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Anonymous	Charles Ellinwood	Stanley and Betty Holzhauer	Sarah and Lawrence Peck
Robert and Elizabeth Atkinson	The Natalie Field Foundation	Mary and Jeffrey Huspeni	William and Leone Renis
James Ball	Norman and Mary Anne Frey	Robert and Karen Kingon	Kent and Mary Ann Reynolds
W. Dean and Carol Bigelow	Gary and Karen Gabriel	Donna and Jerry Klinefelter	The John Riley Family
Robert Boisvert	Dean and Sharon Ginther	Jerry and Judy Kulka	The Edward and Elyse Rogers Family Foundation
Deborah Bunker	Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation	Joseph and Norma Mariage	Don Schuster
Margaret Bushnell	Jane Greenfield	James and Judith McDivitt	Amy and Clark Shuler
Julie and Albert Catallo	The Duane Hefty Family	Friends of Milton Township	Melinda and Chris Weinzapfel
Max and Reatha Cochran	Herrington-Fitch Family Foundation	Rebecca and Tyler Morris	James and Gera Witte
William and Paula Cordes		Doris Norling	

Misty Acres: The Borwell Preserve

Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation

Old Mission Peninsula Land Protection

Katherine Aldrich	Peter and Patricia Fink	Mariel Foundation	Janette and Alan Pivitt
Lois and David Baru		Ann and Gary Moeller	
Cara Binder	Marcia Gest	Himanshu and Heena Patel	Ralph L. & Winifred E. Polk Foundation
Century 21 Northland	Cathy Groves	Mary Peters and Patrick Mcmanaman	Joni Stover
Charles and Jeannie Chapin	Chris Holmes		Shaw & Betty Walker Foundation
Brian Chodoroff and Patricia Benson	Eileen Huntzicker		
	Susan Huntzicker		

Pelizzari Natural Area

Anonymous	John and Gina Erb	John and Theresa Pelizzari	Patricia Pelizzari
Mack and Lorraine Beers	Martha and Philip George	Dave Murphy and Sue Peters	Douglas and Kelly Wright
Burnette Foods, Inc.	Pam, Jason, Sylvia and Aaron Jones	Marilynn and Jim Pecott	
Phyllis and Brent Cooley		Pamela and Charles Pelizzari	

Petobego State Game Area Addition

Dole Family Foundation	Barb and Gregory Mort	Kate Pearson and Steve Cruzen	Bob [†] and Grace Rudd
Scott, Jane and Luke Fochtman			

Preserve Stewardship Endowment

Marlene and Terry Caszatt	Rick and Chris Halbert	Linda Kehr	Robert and Nancy Marshall
Tom and Linda Farrell	Jennifer and Brian Jaffe	Vic Lane	Ann and Al Taylor
Ward and Margaret Griffen			

Pyatt Lake Stewardship

Michael Conway
William and Karen Tasch

Railroad Point Natural Area

Anonymous
Mary Jane Meier

Railroad Point Natural Area Addition

Crystal Lake & Watershed Association	Roger and Helen Dewey	John and Kathy Walthorn	Mac and Marilyn Whisner
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Severance Creek Conservation Easement

Anonymous (3)	Ken and Frances Bluhm	Robert and Sheridan Haack
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Skegemog Lake Wildlife Area

Community Foundation Evelyn A. and Charles H. Drummond Skegemog Lake Wildlife Area Education Endowment	Kathleen Gober-Waggoner and Rod Gober Allen Janis
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Stanek Farm

Dennis Arouca and Anne Treadway	Christopher Gores	Ralph L. & Winifred E. Polk Foundation	Shaw & Betty Walker Foundation
Brookby Foundation	Bill and Kirty Heald	Kathy Polk Osborne	Warrington Foundation
Brian and Robin Dailey	Louise Ladd Charitable Fund	Ms. Susan Scyphers and Mr. Charles Scyphers	
George Fabe Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation	Ken and Susan Morrison	Mary and William Swift	
	Dick and Joanie Paulsen	David and Sara Taft	
Douglas Gage and Cheryl Sisk	Monnie Peters	Emily Todd	

Stewardship

Christina Boothman

Flory-Shultz Charitable
Gift Fund

Ma-Me-Ne-Sewong
Garden Club

Trapp Farm Nature Preserve

Royce and Marj Beers

Deerhaven Family Dentistry

William Lee

Wesson and Janie Schulz

Ronald Chao

Grand Traverse Oral
Surgery

Jan Manning

Kris Stegmann

John and Lynn
Collins

Patrick and Mary Kelly

Northway Orthodontics

David Swan

Robert and Diane Portenga

Timbers Recreation Area

Frederick and Lisa Brodeur

Andrew M. Vander Molen Foundation

Torch Ridge Farm Easement

Robert and Anna Barron

Dottie Gerrity

Denny and Deb Malone

Susan and Thomas Palmer

Robert and Leslie
Cooper

Jeffrey Green, MD and
Donna Green, DDS

Terence Malone

Gilbert and Mary Richards

Bob and Pam
Currey

The Lorimer Family
Charitable Fund

Robert and Susan McLean

Samuel and Veronica Smith

Richard and Diana Milock

Joy and Theodore Whittlesey

Carl and Zan Palmer

Trail Creation and Maintenance

Michael and Kathleen Bruno

Patrick and Carol Conway

Wilcox-Palmer-Shah Addition

Anonymous

Shirley Denman

Nell and Lee Lockhart
and Lynn Guernsey

Frank and Joanne Rosengren

Wayne Appleton and
Laura Septic

J. Bennett and Tauna
Donaldson

Jane and James Lund

Philip Ruedi and Laura Staich

Jeanne Boyd

John and Ruth Edick

Tim Lund

Jean Schurch

Patrick and Carole Brady

Jeffrey and Sandra Ehlers

Charlotte Marx

Victor Schwenke

David and Marcia Carney

Jack and Donna Fahlen

Edson Murray

Robert and Michelle Stephanoff

Dr. Salvatore and Mary
Castronovo

Rhea Kish

Steve and Lucy Polemitis

Lester and Joanne Teague

Gary and Mary Chenoweth

Fred Kraft and Gayle Davis

Patricia and Brian Pulver

Norman Veliquette

Daniele and Michael Cobb

Ellen Kurath

Arnold and Joan Ratkowski

Ellen and Rick Wojtowicz

John and Edith Davies

James Lagowski

Conrad and Adele Reiter

Thomas and Kaye Yocum

Graydon and Sherri DeCamp

Jean Livingston

Theodore and Maureen
Robinson

Robert and Elizabeth
Zurschmiede

Wintergreen Woods Nature Preserve

Charlene Abernethy
and Mike Gill

Graydon and Sherri DeCamp

Sanford and Ellen Kossek

J. Terry and Barbara Stein

Dayne Bess and Pam Reno

Daniel DeWitt and
Lisa Deferrari

James Lagowski

Vern and Joan Steinfort

Jeanne Boyd

David and Claudia Fry

Jane and James Lund

Eric and Julie VanderHaagen

Paul and Amanda Brink

Michael Grusenmeyer

Kathy Magliochetti

Norman Veliquette

David and Marcia Carney

Kathleen and Mark Guy

Charlotte Marx

Ellen and Rick Wojtowicz

Gary and Mary Chenoweth

Floyd and Jana Hassett

Steve and Lucy Polemitis

John and Marylou Zaloudek

Daniele and Michael Cobb

Susan Helton

Conrad and Adele Reiter

Pat Zigarmi

Jo Collins

Wayne and Ruthanne Kladder

David Simpson and Anne
Pawlak-Simpson

PRIVATE LAND PROTECTION

While the parks and nature preserves we protect are open to and enjoyed by the public, more than half of the land we have permanently protected are private properties whose owners have generously granted conservation easements. We monitor these properties annually, often hand-in-hand with the land owners, to answer questions and to ensure that conservation values — the health and wealth of these precious lands – are maintained forever. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the following land owners:



Acme Township
Alan Adams
Dorance and Julia Amos
Roland and Marilyn
Andreasson
Anonymous (2)
Antrim County
Baillio Company
Mark and Elizabeth Banker
Mark and Karen Barbera
Bash Enterprises
Thomas and Ardis Bauer

Bay Harbor Club Association
Bayshore Real Estate
Associates #1
Margaret Beck
Leon and Shirley Beal
Bill and Marti Beals
Michael and Leah Bell
Robert and Barbara Below
Linda and Craig Bethke
Roland and Katy Bielert
Boardman Township
Philip Bolton

Rudrick and Mary
Ellen Boucher
Ruth Briggs
Lee and Richmond Brown
James and Justine Buck
Keith Burns
Jon Bylsma and Jennifer
Johnston
Kathryn Bytwerk
Pat Capps
Archibald Carey
David and Nancy Carey

John Carey
Andrew and Andrea Carolus
Shirley Carris
Marlene and Terry Caszatt
Cedar River Group, LLC.
Charles and Jeannie Chapin
David and Jody Charlton
Glen and Rebecca Chown
City of Traverse City
Tom and Janice Cook
Richard Cooper and
Jan Tennant

Ella Cooper-Froehlich Croft, LLC	Ann and Harold Gurian Donald and Heidi Hamilton	Scott Nugent Wendy O'Brien	Michael and Shanna Shea Virginia Shover
Crystal Highlands Owners' Association	Thomas Hanna Alan and Carol Hart	Leobardo and Carmelita Ocanas	Steve and Carol Shuckra
Richard and Linda Cushman	Jed and Dawn Hemming	OCS Watervale Ltd.	Peggy and Kimberly Simpson
James Dalley and Lois Brennan	David and Barbara Henton	John O'Hair	Richard and Diane Simpson
Jeannette and Luc De Vigan	Todd Herber	OHK-SEK	Loring Sims and Edward Smith
Alice and Jerry Deck	Jane and Carol Highsaw	Peter Ohrnberger	Russell and Kim Sims
Development Engineering	Frances Housman	Brad Oleson	Nicklaus Slocum
G. Michael and Barbara DeGraeve	Russell and Kay Hughes	DJ and Lisa Oleson	Dale and Carolyn Smith
Michael and Claudia Delp	Mark Hullman	The Oleson Foundation	Julie and John Smith
Michael and Ann DeVries	Dean and Kurt Iverson	Dustin and Kim Ordway	Donald and Glenna Southwell
Harold and Edna DeYoung	Alice Jeffers	Paradise Township	Reg Sprik
Lance and Allyson Docken	David Kelley	Paul Pelica	William and Patty Springstead
J. Bennett and Tauna Donaldson	David and Katy Kern	James Petrie	Anne Starr and Kristin Hall
Deborah Doyle	Tom Kladzyk	Gary Pomeroy	David Steffey
Roger and Angelica Dunlap	Anthony Kramer and Barbara Bailey	James and Anne Porritt	Lois Szumera and Gene Gerring
Earl and Susan Dutton	Brent and Tami Kroll	Steve Pray	David and Sara Taft
Julie and Jim Dutton	Bruce and Libby Krone	Brian Price	Barry and Arreta Thompson
Martin Easling	Louise Ladd	Brian and Dodie Putney	Terry and Constance Timm
Laurie Eberhardt and Peter Martin	Cliff Larkins	Charlotte Putney	Jennifer Tobias and Tom McCracken
Kenneth Edwards	Leelanau Conservancy	Loy Putney	Tosebo Clubhouse, LLC.
Phil Edwards and Laura Reid	William Lentz	Putney Real Estate Holdings, LLC.	Sally Van Vleck
Ralph and Mary Ellen Edwards	Joe and Kathy Lessard	Marvin and Jodi Radtke	Kenneth Vanhouten
Russell A. and Pat Ehler	James and Judy Leto	Charles and Abby Rammelkamp	Village of Kalkaska
Phil and Rita Ellington	Ryan and Logan Lockman	Eric and Joni Rammelkamp	Andrew Villov
Jeff Elliott	Long Lake Township	The Ranke Family Partnership	Roy and Pamela Volkening
Daniel Ellis	Calvin Lutz	Ray Ravary and Mary Carlton	Randall Vyverberg
Evans Brothers Fruit Company	Charles Lyon	RF Reiley Family Partners, LTD	Melinda Wagner 2014 Revocable Living Trust
James Fisher	T. Grace Macdonald	Rick and Kay Rieck	Watervale
Laura Fisher	Susie Mackay	Riverview Gun Club	Wayne and Joan Webber
Fountain Head Vineyards	Bob and Kris Mampe	Phyllis Robinson	Wellington Real Estate Holdings, LLC.
Chip and Terrie Frey	Robert and Lois Manigold	Robert and Penelope Rosi	Greg White
Cameron and Dawn Fuller	Francia Mann	Rotary Camps & Services of TC	John Wilkinson and Robin Silva-Wilkinson
Garfield Township	Kirk Marckwald and Christine Desser	Herb and Kristin Roth	Windward Partnership
G.D.O. Investments LLC	Dirk and Mary Martin	Wayne and Joan Rowe	John and Charlotte Wuepper
John Gehring	William and Joan McCool	Ralph and Patricia Rugan	Isaiah Wunsch and Colleen Valco
Brian and Lisa Getty	McGuire Real Estate Company LLC	John and Margaret Sargent	Shelby Ziegler
Jeremy Gibson and Carolyn McDonald	Robert and Joni Metiva	Michael and Melissa Scanlon	
Gordon Gienow	Amy and Dan Meyer	Nathan Schultz and Stephanie Woodfin	
Judy Gienow	Jean Meyer	Nancy Seasholes	
Ron and Diane Gillison	Philip and Connie Micklin	Send Brothers Properties L.L.C.	
Matthew Godlewski and Jacob Whitman	Kelly and Debra Miller	Shaffer Family Partnership	
James and Sharon Goodheart	The Philip E. Miner Revocable Trust	David and Ingrid Shambaugh	
Charles and Bethany Goodman	Susan Montei	George and Roberta Shambaugh	
	Neahtawanta Resort Association	Gary Shanker	
	Steve and Kathleen Newman		

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