



volunteer newsletter

Love the Land. Pass it on.

It was 25 years ago this past April that the Articles of Incorporation were signed and GTRLC became a Michigan non-profit corporation! The breadth of this organization's accomplishments in that time is worth celebration and reflection. Along these lines GTRLC is hard at work on many things to highlight and celebrate our work including a Trails of M-22 book and new swag available in [GTRLC's shop](#). We've also been hard at work on a book-length summary of the organization's work over the past two and a half decades. The great stories about so many of our signature land protection projects and wonderful people will be shared at this summer's [25th Preservation Celebration](#) in August, so make sure to attend if you can! Meanwhile, please enjoy the following updates and information.

welcome

Thanks to incredible donor generosity, the Conservancy has been able to protect a 17-acre addition to Wilcox-Palmer-Shah preserve. The addition helps protect the water quality of East Grand Traverse Bay and preserve critical wildlife habitat.

As of this month we are happy to announce the Conservancy has secured options on two properties on either side of Torch Lake. These parcels are the largest undeveloped and unprotected properties on the lake. Our goal is for one property, the former Camp Maplehurst, to be a public recreation area owned by Milton Township. We have partnered with the Township to apply for a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant, with a December 2016 decision. The other parcel is being protected with a conservation easement and will remain in private ownership.

Additionally, we continue to work on land protection adjacent to Sayler Park in Acme Township. Demolition of existing structures will take place later this month.

Conservation easement appraisals were recently completed on four Old Mission Peninsula properties owned by families interested in permanently protecting their farms. This means we are one step closer to protecting some top priority farms renowned for their farm products, scenic vistas and contribution to the rural character of Old Mission Peninsula.

Additional updates will follow as we continue to raise the necessary funds to complete these important protection efforts.

land protection updates





VIC LANE, Senior Conservation Project Manager

Formerly the Manager of Easement Stewardship and Forestry, Vic will now be managing the two farms, Misty Acres and Maple Bay, where he will be developing new features and programs with the help of community and statewide partners to advance stewardship and demonstrate new sustainable agriculture practices. He'll also be working with partners on regional conservation projects like a pollinator strip project which seeks to establish wildflowers and native grasses on private lands. Vic will also be leading an investigation into new conservation partnership opportunities and new farmland and forestry projects.



MIKE OKMA, Manager of Easement Stewardship

Formerly the Conservation Easement Steward, Mike will be managing and is responsible for all aspects of Easement Stewardship including: program development, easement monitoring and enforcement, easement-owner relationship cultivation, budget, and contract services. This position also works closely with the land protection staff to problem-solve and review proposed conservation easements with regard to easement stewardship implications.



CHRIS GARROCK, Conservation Easement Steward

Formerly serving GTRLC as an Americorps Member and then as a temporary GTRLC stewardship staff member, Chris was selected to fill the Conservation Easement Steward position Mike Okma held for many years. He will work closely with conservation easement owners monitoring their protected properties.



ERAN RHODES, Misty Acres Farm Assistant

Erin steps into this part time position (averaging about 10 hrs/week) formerly held by Will Manty. Duties include assisting with basic farm work, covering for Farm Manager Barry Reed during leave, leading volunteer work days, coordinating rotation of cattle, and assisting with other sustainable agriculture improvements at the farm.



MATT MCDONOUGH, Former Director of Land Protection

After 16 years of service Matt has moved on to Munson Healthcare where he will be Manager of the Properties Management Department. We wish Matt the best of luck on his new path.



CHARLIE KEHR, Former Board Member

Charlie passed away suddenly in April and will be greatly missed. He was one of our longest serving Board members and relished hands-on stewardship of the land. Charlie will be missed but know he leaves behind an incredible legacy. We have set up a restricted fund to honor Charlie's wife Linda's wishes to direct memorial gifts to GTRLC.

It's been a busy spring and stewardship staff is very grateful for the AmeriCorps Members serving with GTRLC and the volunteers who boost their capacity for tackling the long list of land management tasks. Together they opened and maintained dozens of miles of trail, lead public hikes & work days, helped with plant and bird inventories, removed invasive species, installed signs and kiosks, monitored and reported observations on the preserves and much more. While it would be nearly impossible to cover all the great work being done the following are some noteworthy stewardship updates.

ONLINE PRESERVE MONITOR REPORTS

A new online preserve monitoring form for Volunteer Preserve Stewards was launched in April and appears to be working well. Your reports are very much appreciated and are a key link to our ability to manage the land at a high level. We welcome feedback about what's going well and what can be improved so please contact [Nate Richardson](mailto:nate@gtrlc.org) (nate@gtrlc.org) with comments.

TRAINING

GTRLC staff and volunteers attended a Butterfly Monitoring training put on by the Michigan Butterfly Network in April. Trained monitors are citizen scientists helping fill data gaps related to butterflies. If you'd like to assist a previously trained monitor or become one yourself please email [Jake Bournay](mailto:jbournay@gtrlc.org) (jbournay@gtrlc.org).

Thanks to all those who attended the chainsaw safety training in March. If you were unable attend please look for an announcement for the next training in an upcoming newsletter or email Jake Bournay (jbournay@gtrlc.org).



Trail re-route at Arcadia Dunes.



Native seed ball distribution at Timbers Recreation Area.



Volunteer led wildflower hike at Arcadia Dunes.



Volunteer chainsaw training.

ARCADIA DUNES

Volunteers joined staff to move plants from the proposed universally accessible trail route to another location. Our goal is to provide universal access to the grand view of Lake Michigan and the coast while taking pressure of Baldy Dune by creating a new trail. Stay tuned for updates on this project.

A new trail head parking area and kiosk were installed for Abby's Woods. The forest is beautiful, and one of former Director of Preserve Stewardship Abby Gartland's favorites— check it out if you get a moment.



Native plant moving for Universally Accessible trail.



Abby's Woods parking area/trailhead.

MAPLE BAY

Another great volunteer led Maple Sugaring Day went on the books in March and the Volunteer Organic Garden is now being planted. We are looking for a volunteer who has experience operating farm equipment. If you are interested or know somebody who might be, please contact [Vic Lane](mailto:vlane@gtrlc.org) (vlane@gtrlc.org).

Plans for the farm house continue to evolve as Vic and architects work through all the technical and code challenges. Splitting the house between residential and business/public use presented some challenges that lead us to focusing on an end use including meeting and office space (not residential). The potential for this space is very exciting and only possible with incredible support from donors and volunteers who have helped stabilize the house and continue to do work on this wonderful old structure.



Organic garden preparation and planting.



Maple sap testing for sugar density.

MISTY ACRES

A healthy herd produced eleven belted Galloway/angus mix calves this spring! The farm continues to evolve as GTRLC works on a public access plan and implements many leading-edge and sustainable agricultural practices like silvopasturing, planting a small food forest, pollinator strips and native plant landscaping. GTRLC is investigating the feasibility of an invasive species “digester” that would help turn invasive plants into a useful fertilizer for the farm and other properties, a very exciting prospect!

Volunteers have helped with many tasks on the property including removal of an old barbed wire fence near the parking lot and invasive species control. There are so many things happening at the farm, Vic and Eran are hosting volunteer work days every other Wednesday throughout the summer. Please email [Vic Lane](mailto:vlane@gtrlc.org) (vlane@gtrlc.org) if you'd like to be involved or sign up on the [events page](#).



Belted Galloway/angus mix calves.



Native plant landscaping installation.

PYATT LAKE

The conservancy has partnered with SEEDS to construct and install new boardwalks and viewing platforms made from black locust trees. SEEDS harvests invasive Black Locust trees from local forests and mills them into very durable and beautiful lumber.

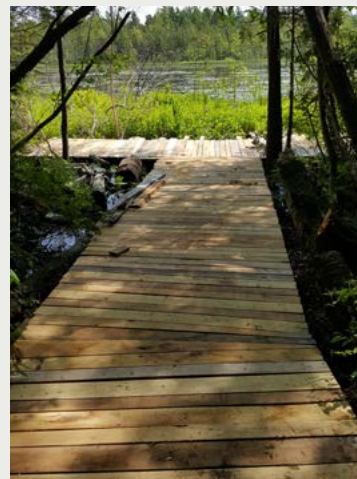
A group of 18 youth and adults associated with the Boy Scouts are volunteering to help construct a portion of boardwalk and the new kiosk while on a break from their Ludington to Mackinaw bike tour. All construction will be complete in the next few weeks so make sure to stop in and check it out.



Boyscout group work day.



SEEDS crew installing the boardwalk.



Black locust boardwalk to Pyatt Lake.

Volunteer support is strong throughout the organization including within GTRLC administration and fund development teams. These volunteers help with everything from a multitude of general office projects, to donor and other mailings, to event attendance confirmation phone calls and research supporting grant submissions. The work this organization does is not possible without its volunteers. Below are ways to engage as a volunteer including some special opportunities!

PUBLIC EVENTS & VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

The Summer Events are posted on the website. Please take a moment to peruse the offerings and opportunities [HERE](#).

SPECIAL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

MAPLE BAY: VOLUNTEER FARM EQUIPMENT OPERATOR

Maple Bay Farm is in need of an individual that has experience operating farm implements independently and safely. If you are interested and able to help in this capacity please contact [Vic Lane](mailto:vlane@gtrlc.org) (vlane@gtrlc.org).

MISTY ACRES: VOLUNTEERS

Misty Acres is in need of volunteers to help with general landscaping tasks and other special project implementation. Please contact [Vic Lane](mailto:vlane@gtrlc.org) (vlane@gtrlc.org) for details about the work and the best way to get involved.

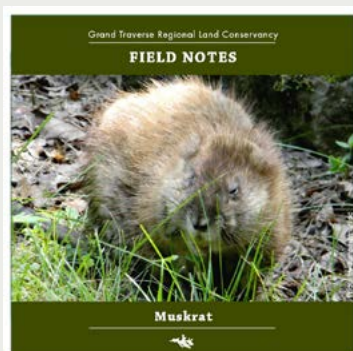
TIMBERS: ASSISTANT BUTTERFLY MONITOR

Volunteer will assist a trained monitor with their work documenting butterflies. Contact [Jake Bournay](mailto:jbournay@gtrlc.org) (jbournay@gtrlc.org) for details.

SELF-DIRECTED/ON-GOING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

GTRLC is a regional entity with limited staff capacity, making it impossible for us to be everywhere all the time. For this reason volunteer observations and reporting out on the land is an invaluable way to contribute—the more eyes on the property the better! If you see anything you would like us to know about, or if you walk GTRLC properties regularly and are willing to report what you see, please contact [Nate Richardson](mailto:nate@gtrlc.org) (nate@gtrlc.org).

“Field Notes”, posted weekly on [GTRLC’s Facebook page](#) and periodically on the [website](#), continue to be popular and are a fun way to learn about natural phenomena on our protected lands. One way to help the Conservancy is to “like” and “share” the these and other posts to keep us present in people’s Facebook news feeds.



[MUSKRAT](#)



[FIVE-LINED SKINK](#)



[TRILLIUM](#)

