

community update

PHOTO BY NATE RICHARDSON

**Universal Accessibility
in Arcadia**

**A Public Park for
Platte River**

**Misty Acres:
Farm as a Classroom**

Love the land. *Pass it on.*

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Dear friends,

While it's true that the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy serves five counties, we will always have a special place in our hearts for Benzie and Manistee. It was here that we completed some of our earliest projects, and it was here that our sweeping Coastal Campaign protected thousands of acres of irreplaceable dunes, natural lands and farmland. Thanks to your continued support, we remain as busy as ever in these counties. Read on to find out about our latest exciting endeavors!



Arcadia Marsh

Important work continues at Arcadia Marsh, which has been the site of a substantial and ongoing habitat restoration project since we first acquired part of the land in 2007. As one of the last remaining Great Lakes coastal marshes – it's estimated that as much as 80 percent of this type of habitat has been destroyed – Arcadia Marsh is an extremely valuable ecosystem that merits our continued attention.

In the near future, underwater carp exclosures will be installed to protect wild rice, an ecologically valuable native plant that is making a comeback at the marsh. Scraping down the soil of some areas of former farm fields will continue to improve plant and wildlife diversity. We also have plans to install a universally accessible (UA) boardwalk to allow people with mobility limitations to enjoy this wonderful resource.

Our land protection team is also close to finalizing a critical 12-acre addition to this preserve. This land, near the intersection of Glover's Lake and St. Pierre, is grassland habitat used by a variety of birds. Its protection is perhaps most valuable, however, because it will extend



The Arcadia Marsh.

PHOTO BY ANGIE LUCAS

the preserve boundary to the road and prevent as many as five home sites directly alongside the preserve. We will also now have the ability to directly control invasives on this parcel, further improving the overall health of the marsh.

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Overlook Trail

It's open, and it's a hit! After several months of construction funded by dozens of generous donors who strongly believed in this project and our mission, the Overlook Trail at Arcadia Dunes: The C.S. Mott Nature Preserve officially opened in June. The roughly half-mile trail is designed for universal accessibility, meaning

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the entire path is relatively flat and firm to allow easy access for those with mobility issues. These types of trails are greatly

appreciated by people who use walkers or wheelchairs, but they're also wonderful for young children, families with strollers and people of all ages who have difficulty getting around. The trail ends with a breathtaking view of Lake Michigan sure to delight all visitors.

Friends from the Disability Network Northern Michigan joined us for an informal outing in June. They were delighted with the trail and made valuable suggestions for further usability improvements. In addition to opening the trail, we've made considerable improvements to the parking lot to facilitate handicapped parking.



Friends from the Disability Network Northern Michigan test the trail.

PHOTO BY ART BUKOWSKI

Dry Hill Trail

The Dry Hill Trail at Arcadia Dunes: The C.S. Mott Nature Preserve is increasingly popular with cyclists from around the state and beyond. This summer, we will connect the trail to Norman Road, allowing cyclists in Arcadia to access the trail without climbing the steep hill along M-22 or loading their bikes onto a vehicle and driving to a trailhead. This connector is scheduled to be completed by fall.



Misty Acres: The Borwell Preserve

There are plenty of exciting goings-on at Misty Acres farm and natural area. Naomi Borwell's wish was to see the farm used as a place of teaching, and we are working hard to develop a public access plan that will allow people to come at any time and learn about the various sustainable practices being modeled there. We are working with experts and hope to create the most engaging experience possible, likely with the use of volunteer docents. In the meantime, partner organizations continue to use both the farm and natural area as a classroom.

In other news, the farm also recently received cropping, farmstead and livestock system verification from the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP). MAEAP is an innovative, proactive program that helps farms of all sizes voluntarily prevent or minimize agricultural pollution risks. MAEAP's mission is to run a program that ensures Michigan farms are engaging in cost-effective pollution prevention practices and working to comply with state and federal environmental regulations.

In the beautiful natural area, our stewardship crews and dedicated volunteers continue to work to remove invasive species, and we have recently completed a detailed natural features inventory.

Private Land Protection

Multiple owners of several critical parcels in Benzie and Manistee counties have reached out to the Conservancy seeking to permanently protect their land. Highlights include a highly visible 80-acre cherry farm in Benzie County south of Elberta, a 15-acre parcel with a full quarter mile of Betsie River frontage and a 150-acre parcel with premium coastal forest near Pierport in Manistee County. In addition, we are receiving the gift of a conservation easement on a key 40-acre parcel in Manistee County that's surrounded on three sides by the Huron-Manistee National Forest, and on the fourth side by a large, undeveloped and forested parcel.

It is also important that we develop relationships with landowners who might not know about our services, and that's why we have begun outreach to owners of land in the latest version of our Priority Land Atlas (PLA). The PLA is our scientifically-based priority list for protecting the most important remaining land in the region. Using carefully selected scoring criteria (size, adjacency to protected land, length of shoreline, habitat rarity and more) we have examined all the land in our five-county service areas to identify properties with the highest conservation values.

We have sent letters to priority landowners throughout the Bear Creek watershed and will continue to do so with other landowners throughout Benzie and Manistee counties. These letters explain the ecological and potential financial benefits of protecting land, along with our willingness to help should the landowner decide to take action.

As always, we will continue to diligently pursue quality land protection opportunities with willing landowners in Benzie and Manistee, as well as throughout our service area.

BENZIE & MANISTEE COUNTIES

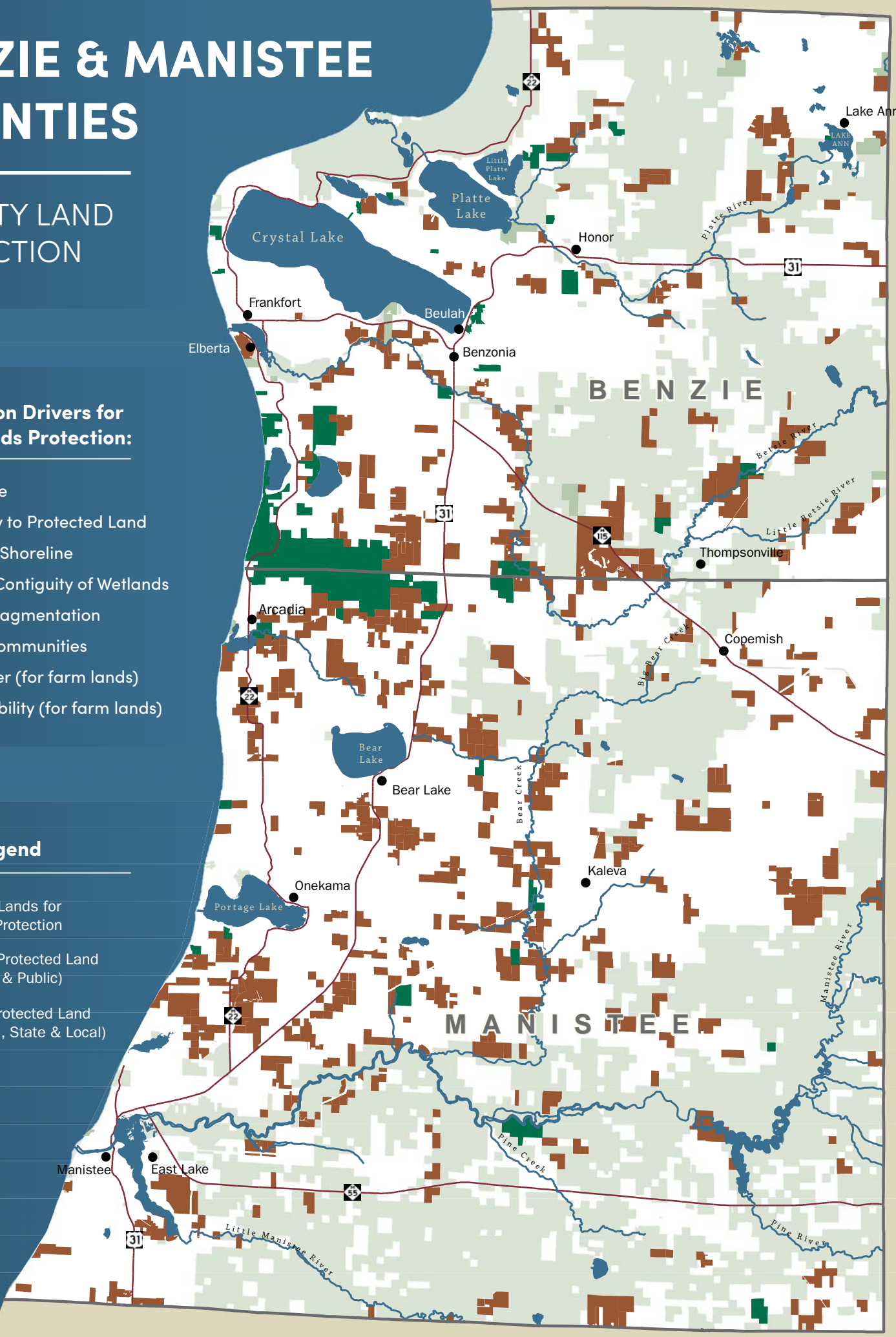
PRIORITY LAND PROTECTION

Conservation Drivers for Priority Lands Protection:

- Parcel Size
- Adjacency to Protected Land
- Length of Shoreline
- Size and Contiguity of Wetlands
- Habitat Fragmentation
- Natural Communities
- Crop Cover (for farm lands)
- Soil Capability (for farm lands)

Legend

-  Priority Lands for Future Protection
-  GTRLC Protected Land (Private & Public)
-  Other Protected Land (Federal, State & Local)



Trapp Farm

Trapp is an interesting story of nature correcting itself. The area that comprises this preserve once was a wetland of Crystal Lake. The lake level dropped nearly 20 feet in 1873 after a failed attempt to connect the lake with the nearby Betsie River, leaving these wetland soils high, dry and perfect for growing celery and onions, as the Trapp family did for many decades in the 20th century. However, those great growing soils have been in a slow state of decomposition ever since the natural hydrology changed.

As the soil decomposes, it shrinks in volume, a phenomenon that has caused several large stands of trees to topple over as the soil shrinks beneath them. In 50-75 years, Trapp will once again be a large wetland area. It's our job to manage invasive plant species as the land continues along in this process.

This year we will again treat phragmites, a large and prolific invasive plant common in wetland areas.

Hiking the boardwalk at Trapp Farm. PHOTO BY JAKE BOURNAY



Additionally, there is a newly completed parking area along Eldridge Road. This parking area will connect to the boardwalk through the cedar swamp, and we will build a small wooden landing along a stream on the property. This work is all designed to improve access and better engage people with this property, which until recently we discouraged the public from visiting due to infrastructure and invasive species concerns.

None of this work would be possible without those who donated generously in memory of former GTRLC board member and dedicated Trapp Farm enthusiast Charlie Kehr, who died last year. *To learn more about Charlie and his love of Trapp, check out our summer 2017 Landscript, available on our website at www.gtrlc.org*



Homestead Township Platte River Property

At the urging of the Honor Area Restoration Project (HARP), we recently secured a purchase option on a beautiful 52-acre parcel with 1,500 feet of frontage on the Platte River in Benzie County's Homestead Township. Now, we're supporting the township's application for a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant to acquire the property and use it for a public park.

HARP is a citizen-led group that hopes to turn Honor into a destination rather than another place to pass through on the way to Beulah or Frankfort. A big part of HARP's plan is to showcase the beautiful Platte, an excellent fishing stream. Because there is relatively little public access to the Platte in the immediate area right now, this particular property would provide a big boost to these efforts.

This is an excellent example of a community conservation project in which our expertise can help local communities achieve their outdoor conservation and recreation goals.



The Platte River property seen in winter. PHOTO BY CHRIS SULLIVAN

The Trust Fund will
make a decision on
this and other projects
in December.



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Pollinator Power

Since the dawn of agriculture, pollinators have played arguably the most important role in the production of the most widely consumed fruits and vegetables. Many of these plants wouldn't exist without pollinators, which carry pollen from one plant to another as they feed on flowers. Unfortunately, pollinators are increasingly at risk throughout the nation and world. Among several factors, changes in agricultural practices – particularly a move towards large-scale monocultures and heavier use of pesticides – has led to sharp declines of natural pollination services in some areas.

GTRLC is teaming up with the American Farmland Trust in a groundbreaking partnership that will increase plantings of so-called “pollinator strips” on protected lands throughout our region, including Benzie and Manistee counties. After receiving a USDA Conservation Innovation Grant, the AFT contracted with GTRLC to coordinate the planting of native species known to sustain pollinators.

Under the agreement, GTRLC reached out to owners of protected lands to see if they are interested in having a planting for pollinators. GTRLC and AFT worked with Michigan State University to create a “customized” northwest Michigan seed mix. More than 20 landowners expressed interest, and we will soon review applications and select 12-20 sites ranging from 2-5 acres in size.

The situation should be a win-win for everyone involved. Farmers will receive a small payment for hosting the plantings, and they'll also be able to make use of land that would likely otherwise be fallow. And of course they'll receive the benefits from having pollinators nearby. *For more information, contact Vic Lane at (231) 929-7911 or vlane@gtrlc.org*



PHOTO BY ANGIE LUCAS