Spring 2016 • Vol. 25, No.1

Landscapes

Kalamazoo River Floodplain Forest

Protected Forever

There are few places left in southern Michigan where you can paddle a river for more than two miles without encountering a bridge, house, or evidence of humans — few places where a mink could bound and scurry along a river its whole life in the safe cover of uninterrupted forest. The floodplain forest along the Kalamazoo River near Augusta is one of those rare places.

Ensuring the conservation of this expanse of nearby wilderness didn't happen by chance. It was the result of partners working hard to identify and prioritize the most important natural areas along the Kalamazoo River. The Kalamazoo River Land Conservation Plan was completed in 2015 through a collaboration of many private and public partners. Just months later we were able to conserve one of the top-ten highest ranked properties in the Kalamazoo River Watershed — the 290-acre **Robert and Rosalie Emmons Augusta Floodplain Forest Preserve.**

The Emmons family demonstrated great generosity and conservation ethic through their eagerness to work with SWMLC and Ducks Unlimited (DU) to protect their property. The Emmons property was a key component of a $1 million North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant led by DU. NAWCA grants are nationally-competitive grants to conserve high quality wetland and waterfowl habitat. "The establishment of the **Robert and Rosalie Emmons Augusta Floodplain Forest Preserve** is a quintessential example of how conservation partners can pool their local resources to leverage federal dollars for conservation", says Dane Cramer, Regional Biologist for Ducks Unlimited. "Once completed, this grant will protect, restore, or enhance over 2,000 acres of wetland and associated upland habitats important to wildlife and humans throughout western and southwestern Michigan."

continued on page 2

Photo by Steve Allen, Geum Services

Kalamazoo River Floodplain Forest, *(continued from front page)*

The Augusta Floodplain Forest fit perfectly with NAWCA's grant objectives and we were thrilled to receive the funding to conserve it forever. With this grant, SWMLC purchased 223 acres of floodplain forest from the Emmons under a bargain sale in which the property is sold below appraised value and the landowner donates the difference. This purchase complemented the transfer to SWMLC of an adjacent 68 acres owned by The Nature Conservancy (TNC). This brings the **Robert and Rosalie Emmons Augusta Floodplain Forest Preserve** complex to almost 300 acres, conserving nearly two miles of frontage along the Kalamazoo River.

This preserve is nearly pristine, with one of the highest-quality, intact floodplain forests in the State, across the river from over 10,000 acres conserved by the Fort Custer Recreation Area and Training Center. Walter Meagher and Stephen Tonsor of the Kellogg Biological Station documented the former TNC portion of the property's "substantial diversity," identifying an impressive 287 species of plants (published in Michigan Botanist, vol. 31, 1992) and noted, "There are few undisturbed sites in Michigan where such an assemblage of plant communities can be examined."

This stretch of the river is known for its wildness, providing habitat for mink, beaver, and a wealth of other sensitive wildlife. Volunteers conducting bird census know the area for its density of nesting Prothonotary warblers, also known as "golden swamp warblers" — rare in Michigan. Birders in the Fort Custer region have identified over 200 different species including an incredible 20 bird species that are state-listed for protection.

With the conservation of this new preserve we ensure that this beautiful and pristine floodplain forest forever remains intact and natural. This ecosystem continues to filter nutrients, and provide floodwater storage, wildlife habitat and natural banks for the Kalamazoo River. How better to ensure the long term health of the Kalamazoo River than to conserve the land along its banks?

"This new addition protects one of the largest undisturbed floodplain forest sites along the Kalamazoo River," stated Dr. Stephen Hamilton, Professor of Ecosystem Ecology and Biogeochemistry at the Michigan State University Kellogg Biological Station. Dr. Hamilton has been a strong proponent of this project and emphasizes that, "This tract is arguably one of the most remote locations one can find in southwest Michigan." He noted that, "Historically, river floodplains throughout the country have been filled in, diked off from the rivers, and turned into farmland, industrial sites, dumps, or subdivisions, or permanently drowned by reservoirs behind dams. But the Augusta Floodplain Forest is well-buffered by undeveloped lands and has remained untouched by most human visitors due to its combination of swampy soils, dense vegetation, mosquitoes, and stinging nettles. Yet there are great rewards for those who brave these rare floodplain forests and appreciate their unique and diverse flora and fauna," says Hamilton.

Public access to this preserve is limited due to restricted access across a railroad corridor. But if you would like the opportunity to visit this spectacular property, join us for a guided hike on May 7, in coordination with the Kalamazoo Area Chapter of Wild Ones. Please visit www.swmlc.org or http://www.kalamazoowildones.org/ for field trip details.

— Emily Wilke

EXTRAORDINARY DIVERSITY!

287 PLANT SPECIES • 208 BIRD SPECIES

20 + STATE-LISTED ANIMAL SPECIES

LARGEST BLOCK OF KALAMAZOO RIVER FOREST, EAST OF THE CITY OF KALAMAZOO

2015 Kalamazoo River Watershed Conservation Plan

PARTNERS • Kalamazoo River Watershed Council, University of Michigan School of Natural Resources, Kalamazoo Community Foundation, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy.

PLANNING • Prioritize most important parcels to protect within the 2,020 square mile the watershed.

GOALS • Identify and protect key parcels within the Kalamazoo River Watershed.

You Think YOU Have

Spring Fever?

The brief warm spell in February got many of us anxious for those first warm spring rains and the songs that come with them. Remember that flush, the spring fever, you get from driving with the windows down on the first warm night? The heady scent of soil thawing in the mists while you listen to the distinctive rhythms of spring peepers calling from the roadside wetlands?

Those who venture into preserves are greeted by more variety: wood frogs join the chorus, barking from buttonbush swamps in Black River Preserve near South Haven and western chorus frogs creak from the floodplains of Kesling Nature Preserve in Three Oaks. The northern leopard frogs lend their snore-like songs from the restored wetlands of Sora Meadows outside Paw Paw, while the gray tree frogs burst with short trills from the pools at Bow in the Clouds. As the season warms, the American toads add long melodious trilling in the shallows, while the green frogs twang away from the deeper waters of Hidden Marsh Preserve in Three Rivers.

All 11 species of frogs and toads known from the Lower Peninsula can be found on SWMLC preserves — from the robust bullfrogs that have colonized the restored pond at Hidden Pond Preserve in Barry County to the diminutive Blanchard's cricket frogs (state threatened) hiding along the shores of Jeptha Lake Fen in Van Buren County.

Blue-spotted Salamander, *Ambystoma laterale* | Photo by Mitch Lettow

You think you have spring fever? Put yourself in the tiny imaginary shoes of a blue-spotted salamander! They have been hibernating for months and are waking up with empty bellies and revved up libidos. They will join a parade of other salamanders, such as yellow-spotted and tiger, to the nearest forest pools to start the next generation. The little 4" salamander pictured here was found at Spirit Springs Sanctuary on the border of Cass and St. Joseph counties this past fall, shortly before it burrowed down for the winter.

Other kinds of salamanders, such as red-backed and four-toed, live in SWMLC preserves, hidden from all but the most inquisitive of visitors. 5 of the 8 species known to live in southern Michigan have been documented so far . . . we would love for people to help us find more!

Throughout southwest Michigan, the spring chorus is tuning up for another season of amorous amphibians. It is as much a part of spring as robins pulling worms from our front yards. We are thankful that we still have places left for the frogs and salamanders to continue their lives. Get out there and savor them!

— Nate Fuller

Black River A Preserve on the Rise

An exciting point has been reached in the property's development.

Beautiful Black River Preserve is 120 acres of heavily rolling floodplain forest with pockets of wet meadow and fallow upland fields that were once farmed. It features over 3.5 miles of marked hiking trails, one mile of frontage along the Black River, and another combined mile of frontage on three tributaries streams.

A 15-car parking lot was constructed in 2015. The gravel lot was well used by kayakers during the September paddle event.

For a Boy Scout service project, some local, community-minded, young men hauled a discarded refrigerator up a steep ravine and out of the preserve!

Workday huddle up: Geoff Cripe, Ronnee Harrell, Don Harrell, John Mitchell, Mary Moore, and Chuck Moore

New signage welcomes visitors to the preserve while ensuring that the integrity of the land is preserved.

In 2015, volunteers John Mitchell (pictured) and Chuck Moore gave SWMLC a great Christmas gift, an expertly constructed bridge! The northern and southern portions of the property are now connected across an intermittent stream in a wooded ravine, affectionately called the "quiet spot."

2012

Black River Preserve Master Plan is created in order to guide future ecological management. SWMLC staff take time to assess property and plan future use.

2014

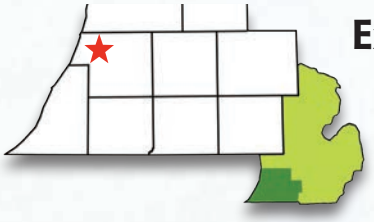
'Phase I', the first mile and a half of trails are created, blazed, and maintained — largely by volunteers.

2015

- A 15-car parking lot is created, complete with entry signage, black locust log barriers and entry gate, and preserve and road signage.
- Black locust trailhead signage designed and installed
- Bridge completed across stream crossing through "quiet spot".
- 'Phase II' trails completed, creating 3+ miles of hiking trails on the property.
- "Soft opening" of the preserve.

SWMLC would like to thank the Black River Steering Committee and other volunteers:

- Dick Curtis
- Sam Ewbank
- Kevin Haight
- Don Harrell
- Ronnie Harrell
- Paul MacNellis, aka "PMac"
- Ken Nesbitt, aka "Kayak Ken"
- Tom Mears
- John Mitchell
- Chuck Moore
- Janice Varney
- The Wednesday Warriors
- Nancy Whaley



Experience Black River Preserve for yourself!

For directions, go to http://swmlc.org/content/black-river-preserve

A tremendous amount of time and energy has gone into moving this property toward public access, by volunteers and staff alike. This timeline is a tribute to those commited, tireless volunteers whose flow of generosity is as constant as the flow of Black River itself, **and for that we thank you!!**

2011

With a generous bargain sale from land owner Dan Garvey, SWMLC purchases the Black River Preserve through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative's Joint Venture Fund.

2013

Black River Steering Committee, a hard-working and upbeat group of volunteers, is assembled. **They prove to be accomplished movers and shakers!** Demolition work begins to clear and scrap nine buildings and other aging infrastructure.

SWMLC staff Bruce Howe, Mitch Lettow, Nate Fuller, and Devin Wild glow with pride after completing parking lot fencing, trail entrances, and gate installation — all using naturally rot-resistant black locust logs.

Volunteers have taken apart nine structures on the property that needed removal.

Volunteers Ken Nesbitt and John Mitchell enjoying a cookout during the 2015 Annual Black River Paddle.

In honor and memory of their mother, Jane Sanford, Todd and Kurt Sanford's generous donations have made possible the creation of public access at Black River Preserve.

2016

- Floodplain restoration and public stream crossing project to be completed — funded by Entergy Corporation.
- Additional signage and trail work will provide the public with over 3 miles of self-guided hiking.

Public grand opening of preserve in fall 2016!

Volunteer Kevin Haight scouts the Black River trail system from the perspective of cross country skis, anticipated to be a popular activity at the preserve.

Volunteer Paul MacNellis spent hours building these beautiful trailhead signs, combining milled lumber and natural logs to create a unique rustic design. Invasive black locust trees were harvested from SWMLC preserves to create these signs.

SWMLC

Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy

2016

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

SPRING IN THE PRESERVES!

by SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN LAND CONSERVANCY

April

8 Spring into the Streets
WMU student volunteers will show their community spirit with a workday at Bow in the Clouds Preserve.

22 Earth Day Workday at KL Avenue Nature Preserve
Share the global conservation spirit with other like-minded folks while helping the community and local ecosystems.

30 Saturday Workday at Pilgrim Haven Natural Area
Help improve habitat with a day of Weed & Seed. We'll yank out spotted knapweed and plant native wildflowers.

May

7 Nature Hike at a New Preserve!
Come explore the new Robert and Rosalie Emmons Augusta Floodplain Forest Preserve with Nate Fuller and members of Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones.

8 Mother's Day Birdwalk at Hickory Creek Preserve
Your mom loves nature and so do you . . . enjoy it together at our Annual Mother's Day Bird Walk.

13 Birdwalk with Audubon Society of Kalamazoo
The public is invited to join SWMLC's Stewardship Specialist Mitch Lettow and ASK for a guided bird-walk at Myers Nature Preserve.

14 Spring Soundwalk
Join Soundscape Ecologist, Sharon Gill, for a lively audio tour of spring at Black River Preserve.

15 Spring Storybook Hike: the Classic "Miss Rumphius"
A fun, unique way for kids to experience literature *and* Chipman Preserve's spectacular lupines.

17 Chipman Office Open House
See our new digs and join us in celebrating this wonderful gift from the Chipman Family!

21 Saturday Workday at Bow in the Clouds Preserve
Harken ye Noble Weed Warriors: community garlic mustard pull . . . 25 bags for 25 years!

28 Wild Ones 3rd Annual Plant Sale at People's Food Co-Op
Make a difference! Support wildlife by selecting beautiful native plants for your yard and garden.

June

4 KL Avenue Grand Opening & Naming Contest Launch
Come visit our newest Kalamazoo preserve in Oshtemo Township and help us decide on a name for this beautiful property!

11 Saturday Workday at Chipman Preserve
Please join us for some wholesome, hearty outdoor work: trail improvement and native plant rescue.

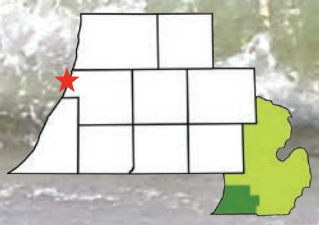
18 Botanical Nature Walk
Join members of Michigan Botanical Club and SWMLC's Stewardship Specialist, Mitch Lettow, for a 'plant's eye' view of KL Avenue Preserve.

25 Yoga on the Preserve
The benefits of yoga *and* nature at Bow in the Clouds Preserve: twice the health, twice the fun!

CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR EVENT DETAILS! • WWW.SWMLC.ORG

SWMLC PULL-OUT CALENDAR POSTER

The Friends of Pilgrim Haven ROCK!



You did it! SWMLC's 2015 Year End Appeal challenged all of you to help us meet an ambitious $50,000 goal to create public access at Pilgrim Haven, and you blew it out of the water! Our deepest thanks to all of you who participated and made a gift to support the Friends of Pilgrim Haven. And as always, many thanks to all of you who broadly support SWMLC and allow us to do this important work together.

Your gifts enable us to meet the matching requirements of our Michigan Natural Trust Fund grant as well as those for a federal funds proposal we submitted in December. Altogether these funds will provide most of the necessary monies to undertake the first phase of work to open Pilgrim Haven to the public and create barrier-free access to the beach.

In partnership with the South Haven Area Recreation Authority (SHARA), we expect to begin improvements in early summer. SHARA will assume management and maintenance of the preserve, while SWMLC maintains responsibility for improving the natural area.

And although the preserve will be undergoing construction of a parking lot and walkway, we will still be holding several workdays to help restore Pilgrim Haven's natural areas, as well as community events for you to come and enjoy.

— C. Miko Dargitz

THANK YOU FOR BEING A FRIEND OF PILGRIM HAVEN!

PATRON GIFTS

Approved Protection Systems' Employees
Donald and Dorothy Ayer
Sherwood and Sharon Boudeman
Cottage Home
Christopher M. Flynn
Thomas and Barbara Gelehrter
Dana Getman
Barbara and John Guinness
John and Maureen Lewandowski
Martha G. Parfet
William U. and Barbara A. Parfet
Mark and Carolyn Speese
Richard and Julie Wyrwa

PARTNER GIFTS

Elaine F. Adams
Amy Anderson
Ned and Neva Asplundh
Phyllis J. Barents
Robert Beemer
Korie and Jeff Blyveis
Dick and Lois Brunvand
Dana Buoscio and John Szewezyk
Mr. Jewell D. Burdette
Jo Beth Bridleman
Nick and Kathy Carter
Hannah Case
Charles and Janet Christianson
Matthew Clysdale
Harry and Mary Ellen Cotterill
David and Erika Cripe
Theodore Cummins
Michele Cudahy and Dave DeBack
Mike and Martha DeGrandchamp
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Pamela R. Dewey
Marilyn H. Dopp
Tacie and Martin Draznin
Steve and Cindy Ellis
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Karen A Fausch
Kathy Fenton-Miller
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Ann and John Fraser
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Jim and Carol Gonzalez
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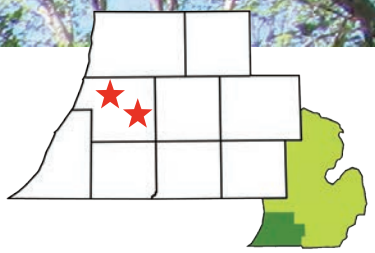
Humble Ambassadors

SWMLC honored to be "next trustee"



There's an old Mennonite adage, "If you've collected anything in excess of your actual need, you will act only as its trustee for someone else to use it." For both Joann Dehring and Helen Labs Rands, who passed away in recent years, the beneficiary of the lands they acquired was always the wildlife, and they pass "caretakers privileges" along to SWMLC through their estates.

Both women came to own highly-prioritized properties for conservation outreach in their respective watersheds, the Paw Paw and Black Rivers. Upon completion of conservation plans for those watersheds in 2007 and 2009, SWMLC staff reached out to both women, among dozens of other priority land "trustees" to introduce our organization and share with them options available for conserving their ecologically important properties. Often, as was then, the initial response is meager, so we convince ourselves to maintain optimism that our letters may at least plant a seed for eventual consideration when land decisions enter the estate planning discussion. And sometimes you eventually leave that effort for lost only to discover, years later and elated, that your seed has sprouted into a sturdy, healthy oak.

Such was the case with Phyllis Joann Dehring of Portage and Helen Labs Rands of Paw Paw, who received our seed letters years and years ago, and without any further contact with us and without our knowledge, devised their cherished land to SWMLC to protect forever. Their generous donations place them both in the esteemed ranks of SWMLC's Oak Legacy Program. Whether its gifts of land or stock or other giving through an estate, the program is available for people who wish to leave a legacy that can be sustained long after they are gone.

Mrs. Dehring and Mrs. Rands did not know one another, but both were known to be humble about their good work and both took self-effacing actions to leave the world better than they found it. Mrs. Dehring, who went by her middle name, Joann, was an incredibly multi-talented individual. She was an accomplished musician early on, writing five full orchestral arrangements to perform with the Chicago Orchestra at age 16. Joann later led a distinguished career, teaching elementary school in Portage and serving on the Michigan Task Force for children's issues among numerous volunteer activities. In the 1990's, she acquired 60 acres with a half mile of frontage along the Paw Paw River, just east of 341 acres of the widest, wildest southern floodplain forest in Southwest Michigan, protected by SWMLC in 2011. Her gift extends the protected area along this wild river stretch to 400 acres.

The other land donor, Helen Labs Rands, was a career employee of Upjohn and made her home in Paw Paw, and later near Bangor where she inherited nearly 200 acres from her parents. A fierce protector of everything wild, she reveled in the marvels of the natural world, riding horses and identifying the abundant plants and trees on her family property. With deep hemlock ravines giving way to the tirelessly serpentine and gravel-bottomed Eastman Creek, the property is a sight to behold and the wildlife agrees. The owls, woodland foragers and fish are plentiful, and thanks to Helen their home is conserved for all of time.

— Geoffrey Cripe

Paw Paw River | Photo by Geoffrey Cripe

Thank You. We couldn't do it without you!

Welcome and Thank You to Our New Members and Supporters: November 1, 2015 - February 15, 2016

Thanks also to all who renewed their membership, supported us through their United Way program, or contributed to our annual campaign, year-end appeal, and other fund raisers. Our sincere apologies for any omissions.

New Members

Phil Albain
Joan Allen
Tom Almer
Sally DeCardy
Dr. Joshua David Fisher
Mr. Ryan Fouty
Ms. Artis Freye
Thomas and Nancy Georgoff
Barbara and John Guinness
Ms. Jamie McCarthy
Donna Marie Parr
Thomas Riker
Cybelle Shattuck
Mr. John J. Tucci
Mr. Tim Winslow

Matching Gifts

The organizations listed below made matching gifts on behalf of SWMLC members.

ExxonMobil Foundation
The Merck Foundation
Pfizer Foundation Matching Gifts Program
Pfizer Foundation Volunteer Program

United Way Agencies

Pfizer Foundation United Way

In-Kind Donations

Lake Village Homestead Farm/ Roger and Carole Ulrich:
$100 gift certificate to Lake Village Homestead farm coop.

Old Chicago Pizza & Taproom, Westnedge Avenue, Portage:
Pizza for Annual Holiday Volunteer Recognition Event.

Michael and Linda Winkel:
220 cubic yards of 22-A gravel, donated to Pilgrim Haven.

Gift Memberships were given to:

Bill and Karen McNulty
Anne May
Jim and Terry Novaria
Michael and LuAnn Stampflor
by Anonymous

Max Rappaport
Woolley Builders & Cabinetry Inc.
by Larry Case

Joann and Brian McMahon
Bill and Gerry Schma
Dale and Tori Wentela
by Robert and Donna Keller

Donations were made in honor of:

Jeanne Anderson
by Christopher Bunch

Woody Boudeman for Christmas
by Judy Baldwin

Woody and Sharon Boudeman
by Robert and Melicent Van Peenan

Rob and Julie DelSignore
by Bruce and Jean Williams

Nate Fuller and Kleinstuck Preserve
by George Opdyke

Nate Fuller for his presentation on January 27, 2016
by Wild Ones, Kalamazoo Area Chapter

Nate Fuller, *"Superstar steward, tour guide extraordinaire and beloved cousin."*
by Rachel Woodard

Robert and Joyce Leppard as a Christmas gift
by Brian Leppard

Charlotte Mittler
by Katya Hokanson

In gratitude to Pete and Geoff for all their help with the Tower Hill Camp CE Project
by Barbara and John Guinness

Todd Sanford
by Lori Bumgart

Thomas Seiler
by MaryEllen Hains

Win and Judy Shaughnessy
by Sue Kolanowski

Travis and Sarah Simmons
by Bruce and Jean Williams

Thomas Small and Ruth Haring Small
by MaryEllen Hains

Glenn Sperry
by Sylvia Sperry

Memorial Contributions

The following gifts were made in memory or remembrance of:

Ezekiel James Chapman-Larson, for Bow in the Clouds Preserve by:
Edith Parker

Les Dodson by:
Elizabeth Bennett

Gunther Fonken by:
MaryEllen Hains

Deborah Langeland by:
2015 JPSM/MPSM PhD Seminar
Janice Evenhouse
Constance Houts
Minka Law Office, PLC
The Office of the United States Trustee in Grand Rapids, Michigan

Helen Lincoln by:
Fred & Connie Hubbell

Larry Syndergaard by:
MaryEllen Hains
Merle & Mary Wovcha

Business Supporters

Connecting Lakes Preservation Coalition
Geum Services, Inc.
Oldenburg Nursery

SWMLC would like to thank the Kellogg Company for their most generous contribution of office furniture for our new office at the Chipman Home. Thank you to **Leslie Savio-Ullrich** for her foresight, and to **Mary Oldham, Troy Kiessling, the Porter St. building facilities staff, and Two Men and a Truck** for their availability and help in organizing the sorting, pulling and transport of the wonderful pieces now helping the staff at SWMLC do what they do best! A special thanks also to board member extraordinaire **Larry Case** for his assistance in coordinating this donation and his time and effort in ensuring all our parts and pieces fit together.

Together with your donation, SWMLC can preserve wild and scenic places for today — and keep them healthy for tomorrow.

Home Sweet Home

We're excited to announce that after many months of planning and hard work, we have relocated the Conservancy office from rented space in Portage to the former Chipman residence at 8395 East Main Street in Galesburg, saving us thousands of dollars every year.

We're thrilled to finally be in our new office and we're looking forward to adding some environmentally-friendly touches, including incorporation of native plant species, rain-barrel watering systems, garden composting, energy-efficient fixtures, and more. And most of all, we can't believe how lucky we are to have a wonderful office space that is right next to the Chipman Preserve!

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the Chipman Family who donated their former home to the Conservancy in 2012, and our deepest gratitude to all the individuals whose tireless efforts have made our new office a reality, including: SWMLC Board Members Larry Case and Bob O'Boyle for coordinating all the necessary building modifications and construction; SWMLC Board Member Dave Coleman for funding our long-needed information technology upgrades (Goodbye, Windows XP!) Jason Winters and Handygeek Home Services; Kellogg Company; Kotman Technology; Paul Speedy; Brook Wilke; Two Men and a Truck; architects Rambow Associates; and contractor Woolley Builders.

Please come and join us for our Open House on Tuesday, May 17th at 5:00 pm.

We would love to see you there!

From the president: BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR CONSERVATION

This past December, Congress showed overwhelming bipartisan support for conservation and the work of land trusts by making permanent the enhanced tax incentive for conservation easement donations.

Until now, this incentive has only been available intermittently, but with its new permanence, it is considered to be the most important conservation legislation in 20 years. It allows landowners who place voluntary restrictions on their land for the purpose of protecting important natural, scenic and historic resources, to take federal tax deductions in return for conserving their land.

Over the past several years, the Land Trust Alliance — who provides national leadership on standards and practices, education, training, and advocacy — has worked tirelessly with the support of land trusts throughout the nation and their 5 million supporters to lobby Congress to permanently adopt these enhanced incentives.

In southwest Michigan, SWMLC has protected over 10,000 acres through conservation easement. A majority of these easements were donated to us, allowing the landowner to take a federal tax deduction for the appraised value of the easement. These conserved properties represent 75% of the land that we have protected during the past 25 years — land that we all benefit from.

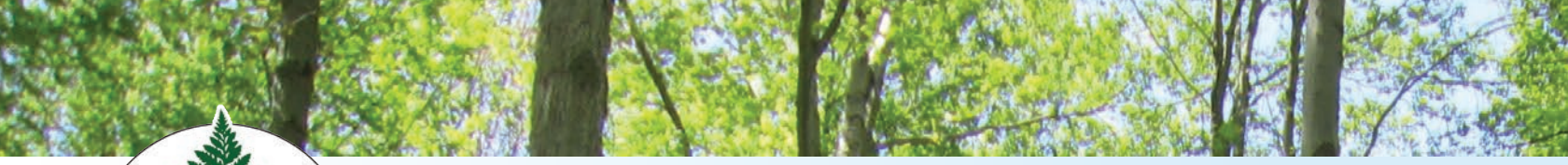
The landowners who work with us to protect their properties do so first and foremost because they care about their land and want to leave a conservation legacy, but making this commitment through a gift can be financially challenging for many. The now-permanent enhanced tax benefits mean that donating a conservation easement is now a financially-viable option for landowners who might otherwise not have been able to afford such a gift.

We, like the Land Trust Alliance and our fellow land trusts, are excited about this new legislation and look forward to continuing to increase the amount of land that we conserve and protect forever.

— Peter D. Ter Louw

KEY FEATURES OF THE NEW PERMANENT ENHANCED TAX INCENTIVE FOR CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

- Raises the deduction a donor can take for donating a conservation easement from 30% of his or her income in any year to 50%.
- Allows qualifying farmers to deduct up to 100% of their income.
- Extends the carry-forward period for a donor to take tax deductions for a donated conservation easement from 5 to 15 years.



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Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation that conserves ecologically important and scenic landscapes that give our region its natural character — now and for generations to come.

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Together, we can preserve wild and scenic places for **today,** and keep them healthy for **tomorrow.**

Photo by Riley Hallett

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