

Heron Tracks

CWC

CHIPPewa
WATERSHED
CONSERVANCY



The Official Newsletter of the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy

Volume 17, No.3

Hiawatha Hills Preserve Grows

Thanks to Terry and Marcia Stacy, the size of the Hiawatha Hills Preserve on Cedar Court in the Hiawatha Hills subdivision west of Mount Pleasant has grown to four acres. The Stacys penned a deed transferring three lots to the CWC on September 16, 2010, adding another 347 feet of Chippewa River frontage to the Hiawatha Hills Preserve. This preserve now provides a permanently protected scenic viewscape along 525 feet of the south side of the Chippewa River and serves as a natural wildlife resting and



Terry and Marcia Stacy pass the deed to three undeveloped lots to Keith Frame for incorporation into the Hiawatha Hills Preserve.

holding area on the southern edge of the Hiawatha Hills subdivision. This now means that nearly all of the Cedar Court cul-de-sac within the subdivision will remain as natural space for the enjoyment of the local residents and others. The CWC has two additional preserves, the Neyer Preserve and the Meridian Road Preserve, within ½ mile of the Hiawatha Hills Preserve, the Neyer Preserve to the WNW, and the Meridian Road Preserve to the East.

In transferring the property to the CWC, Terry Stacy said, "We've been holding on to these parcels since 1989 to ensure that there is some natural space in the area, and now was the right time to pass them on to the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy to be sure the land always stays natural. We've enjoyed seeing Pileated Woodpeckers and other bird species use the area."

Marcia Stacy added, "There just isn't a lot of undeveloped land left along this stretch of the river and we feel it is important to provide natural space for wildlife as well as to preserve the scenic beauty of the river's edge."

Treasurer Keith Frame accepted the deed on behalf of the CWC and said, "This is a very generous donation on the part of the Stacys. We are very pleased to be able to incorporate these parcels into the Hiawatha Hills Preserve and we hope there may be a chance to add a little more acreage over time, as others see the benefits of natural space in the neighborhood."

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Match Day in Mecosta County. On Thursday, September 23, 2010 the Mecosta County Community Foundation (MCCF) sponsored a fabulous one-day only event to benefit area nonprofits. Using pledges from businesses and individuals, the MCCF made available at least \$50,000 in matching funds. Matches were made up to \$0.50 on the dollar, for contributions to local nonprofits brought in to event headquarters, the Holiday Inn in Big Rapids, between 7 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. This was an exciting way to raise funds for the benefit of local nonprofits amid a spirit of friendly competition. In order to count, contributions had to be made at the event, the earlier the better, because matches were made on a first come, first served basis until all available matching funds were gone. The event took place too close to press time for us to report how the CWC's supporters did, but two Mecosta County families had made their plans known to us. We made the decision to deposit the contributions and qualifying matches in our endowment fund at the MCCF to help us meet our stewardship obligations at the Alyce J. Peterson Natural Area, our preserve open to the public north of Stanwood, and to fulfill our promises to annually monitor our Mecosta County conservation easements. Our supporters not only helped the CWC, but helped themselves by taking advantage of the special State tax credit for contributions made through community foundations.



Watershed Management Planning. For the past year or so the CWC has been part of an ad hoc group of government, tribal and nongovernmental organizations meeting to discuss issues of interest along the Chippewa River, and how to document these concerns in a comprehensive management plan for the watershed that would identify stakeholder priorities, visions for future use, and measures necessary to protect the most significant natural feature in Isabella County. With a watershed management plan in place that meets required federal and state guidance, the door would be open to funding opportunities to implement the plan. Among the topics that a plan might address are water quality issues such as pollution, sedimentation and erosion control, future uses such as a blue-way, or water trail with signage, maps of put-in and take-out points and important historical features identified, public education about river safety, wise use of the resource and keeping trash out of the river, and ways to ensure the preservation of a scenic corridor along the river such as through conservation easements. If you would like to know more, or want to be a part of this process, contact the office at (989) 644-5045 or info@ChippewaWatershedConservancy.org.

End of year philanthropy. As we enter the last quarter of 2010, now is a great time to be thinking about your end of year giving plans. There are many ways to give. If you haven't joined the CWC or renewed your membership, please do that. You may consider a memorial donation or an honorarium. There may be tax advantages you wish to receive such as the state tax credit for donations to one of our endowment funds, either the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy Fund or the William Brehm/Chippewa Watershed Conservancy Stewardship Fund at the Mount Pleasant Area Community Foundation, or the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy Endowment Fund at the Mecosta County Community Foundation. You can contribute to the CWC Endowment Fund that we administer ourselves, or donate to land acquisition or to the general fund. We are entering the most active time of year for business giving. If your employer has a matching gift program, consider making a contribution to the CWC and ask your employer to match it. Any of these ways to give help us to protect land and conservation values important to us all. And if you've been considering donating land or a conservation easement to the CWC, why not make a resolution to be sure it happens in 2011.

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CWC Land Protection Successes

26 Easements- 3,148 acres
 14 Preserves - 308 acres
 Total - 3,456 acres

County	Acres
Clare	1,966
Gratiot	147
Isabella	441
Mecosta	391
Montcalm	511



President's Message

Remember

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Do you have a loved one whom you would like to have remembered in the community? Would you like to have a place that you, and your relatives, can go to be with that person's spirit? Yet you don't really want to own the land and pay tax on it and need to take care of upkeep.

The CWC has several preserves named by donors in memory of parents or other loved ones. In most cases the tax-deductible funds provided by the donors did not fully cover the cost of the preserve, but made a significant contribution toward the purchase.

The families of Olga and Gene Neely, of Forrest and Berniece Williams, of George Blackburn, and of Clayton and MaryLee Stearns all provided much, or all, of the funds to purchase those preserves. They know that the CWC will forever maintain these special places in memory of their loved ones.

You can have that same satisfaction.

We almost always have projects in mind that could happen - if only. You can save a stretch of the river, a wildflower woods, or other wildlife habitat. Indeed, it may not happen if you don't.

Smaller contributions, without naming rights, can be designated for the Acquisition Fund or the Endowment Fund at the donor's discretion and acknowledged in future newsletters by name or anonymously. You will have the satisfaction of knowing that when those opportunities to save wildlife habitat occur, the CWC will have the resources to make it happen. After all, the preserve doesn't need to actually be named in memory of Aunt Alice for you to think of her when you walk there.

Call Stan at the CWC office today. (989) 644-5045
You'll be glad you did.

John Mitchell

Farewell to a friend

The land conservation movement in Michigan lost another great supporter with the death of Delos F. "Fred" Hamlin, Jr., on April 26, 2010. Fred's conservation easement on 1,648 acres of his land in Clare County in 1998 was the largest private easement in Michigan and was a defining moment in the growth of the CWC. He continued to advocate for land conservation among neighbors and peers in the years since. He will be very much missed, but his legacy will live on in the Hamlin Ranch conservation easement.



In Memoriam. Delos F. "Fred" Hamlin Jr. March 21, 1928 – April 26, 2010



What is it that you love about central Michigan? Is it drifting down a river, watching the dragonflies cruise the water's edge or seeing an otter family playing hide-and-seek as you quietly float by? Is it driving through the fall countryside and seeing farm fields lying at rest as the slanting rays of sunlight on the maple and oak leaves bring glorious color to a new morning? Do you remember the open spaces and natural habitat near one of our college campuses when you were a student? Wasn't it wonderful to escape the pressures of student life for a little while with a short trip to the country? Do you enjoy annual treks to hunting camp or the family cabin, reliving traditions while creating new memories? Is it important to you that our natural spaces are home to many species of animals and plants, both common and endangered? Should we be concerned about making sure that all of these important conservation values that help to make our part of the world special and unique can be experienced by generations to come as well as by those of us here now? There's that term, "conservation values." What are conservation values?

Conservation values are biological, ecological, scenic, agricultural, historic or open space characteristics that make a parcel of land important for preservation. Here are some examples of conservation values and what they mean.

Open space and scenic: A scenic landscape and natural character visible to the public from publicly accessible sites which would be adversely affected by modifications of the natural habitat. Open space and scenic values inherent in an area encourage both tourism and growth.

Wildlife value: The property provides vital corridor wetlands and upland wildlife habitats which serve as a connection for wildlife movement and create a natural "greenway."

Ecological/habitat: The property contains significant natural habitat in which fish, wildlife, plants, or the ecosystems which support them, thrive in a natural state. This may include habitat for rare, endangered, or threatened species of animal, fish, plants, or fungi, or it may address a wide range of more commonly occurring species that make up an ecosystem.

Watershed Protection: The property provides important natural land within the watershed that helps to ensure the quality and quantity of water resources for the area, prevents erosion, sedimentation or chemical pollution, or recharges the aquifer.

Historic: The property includes features that constitute part of the important cultural and historic heritage of the area.

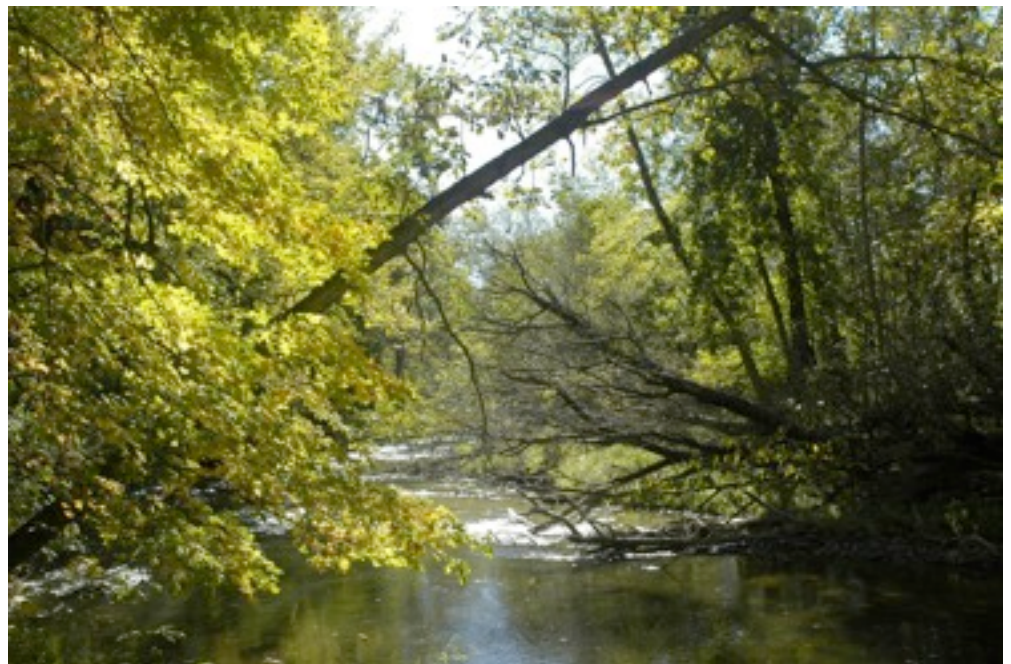
Farmland: The property contains valuable, fertile soils that are necessary for the production of food. Permanent protection of farmland ensures its availability for future farming activities and also ensures the preservation of an area's rural character, scenic and open space.

The Chippewa Watershed Conservancy and organizations like ours are working to ensure that lands that include these critical characteristics that give us our uniqueness and constitute a "sense of place" remain as a testament to who we are, as individuals, as families, as citizens. So we ask again, what is it that you love about central Michigan? What can you do to protect what you love? A call to the office or an email can get you answers to many ways to help protect what you love.

(989) 644-5045

or

www.info@ChippewaWatershedConservancy.org



The Williams-Blackburn Preserve protects scenic, wildlife habitat and water quality values



Mid-Michigan Community College student Arron Gottsfu recently undertook a one-man cleanup effort at the Williams-Blackburn Preserve. As part of his community service credit, Gotts bagged up and removed bottles, cans, and golf balls from the preserve. He also literally dug out a dozen tires buried to varying degrees in the sediment along the Chippewa River shoreline and removed them from the preserve for proper disposal. Thanks to two dedicated days of work by Gotts, the preserve and the river are substantially cleaner and healthier.

"I was glad to participate in this project," said Gotts. "I had not heard about the CWC before volunteering for this project, so I learned something about the Conservancy as well as helping my community."

We also thank the good folks at Olson Tire Service in Mount Pleasant for accepting the tires for disposal at no cost.



Arron Gotts with one of the many tires pulled from the Williams-Blackburn Preserve for proper disposal.

Neely Preserve Stewardship



On September 14, 2010, a hard working group of volunteers fought another successful battle in the Autumn Olive control campaign at the Neely Preserve. Thanks to (left to right) Bob Kohrman, Larry Schaftenaar, Carol Kennedy, Adonna Kennedy, Lorenza Worden and Donna Stensrud for your stewardship support.

Pretty is as Pretty Does

We are seeing the presence in our five-county service area of invasive wetland plant species that have been a problem elsewhere for a long time, but are only now becoming a serious concern here. Two of these are Purple Loosestrife and Phragmites, also called Common Reed.

People often think of these species as beautiful. The spiky, bright purple flowers of the loosestrife are seen in drainage ditches and along river and stream banks. Thought to have been introduced to the United States in the early 1800's as contaminants in ship ballast, the plant has spread across the continent, and has become an especially serious invasive species in the Atlantic Coast states. It is not uncommon for people who find these plants growing in ditches on their property to try to encourage their growth rather than remove them. The problem is that the plant tends to take over the available space, forming a monotypic plant community that can result in not only the suppression of the resident plants, but the eventual alteration of the wetland's structure and function. Large monotypic stands of Purple Loosestrife jeopardize various threatened and endangered native wetland plants and wildlife by eliminating natural foods and cover. Dense plant establishments in irrigation systems have even been known to impede the flow of water.

Common Reed reaches heights of 15 feet. Showing a shock of tawny spikelets of silky flower heads, it towers above everything else in a marsh. It grows in very densely packed patches and reproduces partly by seeds, but primarily by tough rhizomes that spread horizontally underground and produce shoots that develop into new plants. The dense growth not only crowds out our common and more fragile native plant and animal species, including native cattails, but it mars views and makes access to water for fishing and recreation difficult.

Typical methods to control these species involve repeated herbicide treatment, mowing and burning and in most circumstances permits from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) are required. You should check with the DNRE before undertaking these control methods. Biological control agents (species of beetles known to be natural predators of the plant in Europe) have been used with some success to control Purple Loosestrife. Small stands of new growth, especially of Purple Loosestrife, may be pulled by hand, and the vegetative matter bagged and removed from the area.

So despite outward appearances, neither of these plants is "pretty," by virtue of the harm they do to the natural habitat. Please help us eliminate these problem species now by hand pulling them where possible, before they become established to the point of requiring more severe and damaging removal techniques.





On Saturday, June 12, 2010, the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy (CWC) dedicated its 14-acre preserve near Riverdale to the memory of former local residents, the late Clayton and MaryLee Stearns. More than thirty people, mostly family members, gathered at the property to acknowledge the occasion and talk about their memories of Clayton and MaryLee.

The preserve was created by combining a 1-acre parcel purchased by the CWC in 2008 with an adjoining 13-acre parcel previously owned by the State of Michigan. Acquisition of the 13-acre piece was made possible by a complex cooperative land swap involving the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE), two land conservancies, and long-time CWC supporters Don and Karen Stearns.



Pine river at the Stearns Preserve

For the past several years the DNRE has been conducting a land consolidation effort designed to eliminate lands that offer little or no public access. The program has also permitted the swapping of lands of equal or greater value to eliminate scattered parcels that the DNRE cannot effectively manage in exchange for parcels that adjoin existing public land. A detailed review of DNRE holdings identified parcels across the State that could be disposed of, with priority going to interested local government entities or nonprofit conservation groups in the case of lands with important natural features.

Don and Karen Stearns, who are also strong supporters of the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail, became aware of the 13-acre parcel of DNRE land near Riverdale, in Gratiot County, that straddled the Pine River and the Heartland Trail, while also abutting a 1-acre parcel already owned by the CWC that was protecting 410 feet of the Pine river just to the north.

In an effort that took more than two years to complete, the Stearns purchased a 30-acre orchid bog in the Upper Peninsula's Chippewa County that abuts State-owned land. The Little Traverse Conservancy temporarily held the parcel while the Stearns worked with the DNRE, on behalf of the CWC, to exchange it for the 13-acre parcel near Riverdale.

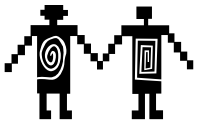
Once the swap was completed, the parcel could be combined with the other CWC property there to become the 14-acre Clayton and MaryLee Stearns Preserve. While primarily wildlife habitat in the Pine River floodplain, the preserve is now easily accessible from the Heartland Trail parking lot at the north edge of Riverdale and will be enjoyed by rail trail users and other public visitors.

CWC Executive Director Stan Lilley said, "We are deeply indebted to Don and Karen Stearns for their generosity and their perseverance in making this project a reality. It's a win-win for the people of Michigan because the DNRE gets a gorgeous tract in the U.P. that adjoins other public land while the land in Gratiot County remains protected as well."

Greg Stauffer of Mt. Pleasant, grandson of Clayton and MaryLee Stearns, said, "My grandma was a strong, determined woman who cared deeply about this area. I can't think of a more fitting way to remember her and my grandpa than to have a piece of land protected forever in their names."

Don Stearns offered a simple, yet poignant observation about his parents that is reflected in signage at the preserve: "Long-time residents of the Riverdale area, they loved their land. They were good neighbors."

The CWC is a nonprofit conservation group working in five central Michigan counties to preserve open space and wildlife habitat. Additional information is available by calling the office at (989) 644-5045, or on-line at www.ChippewaWatershedConservancy.org.



Membership Renewals and Contributors June - September 2010
Thank You for Your Support

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Thank You Volunteers

Mike Brockman for
production of Heron Tracks

Marilyn & Gordon Fosburg for
stewardship at the Hiawatha Hills and Neyer Preserves

Arron Gotts for stewardship at the Williams-Blackburn Preserve

Sister Marie Kopin for mushroom foray and education at the Sylvan Solace Preserve

Richard & Diana Moreau for stewardship at the Kjolhede's Kove Preserve

Mike & Dianne Morey for stewardship at the Sylvan Solace Preserve

Cathy Murray for stewardship at the Neyer Preserve

Larry & Judy Schaftenaar, Bob Kohrman, Carol Kennedy, Adonna Kennedy, Lorenza Worden and Donna Stensrud for stewardship at the Neely Preserve

We get so much more done because of our volunteers who generously give their time and energy.

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Don & Karen Stearns

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Volunteer Opportunities

We need help from interested volunteers in the following areas:

Education and outreach. Would you like to lead a field trip or find a field trip leader for an activity on one of our preserves? Want to lead a workshop about river ecology or invasive species control? Have a new idea?

Fundraising. Do you have experience raising funds for deserving nonprofits? Would you like to help raise operating, endowment or acquisition funds for the CWC? Do you have an idea for a new event or do you know an individual, business or foundation that might be willing to support the CWC?

Call the office at (989) 644-5045 to volunteer or discuss details.

Yes! I want to support the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy.



Here is my tax deductible contribution to help sustain operations:

\$25 (Regular) \$50(Supporter) \$100(Defender) \$250(Guardian) \$500(Sustainer) \$1,000(Benefactor) \$_____ Other

Donations of \$250 or more will receive a CWC Mug Don't send the mug I wish to remain anonymous I wish to receive the newsletter electronically

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