

Heron Tracks

CWC

CHIPPewa
WATERSHED
CONSERVANCY



The Official Newsletter of the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy

Volume 19, No.1

Bakers Donate Easement

Walking a footpath along a hogback ridge on 40 acres of family land 2 miles east of Big Rapids, Carol Baker paused and pointed down toward a swamp at the base of the ridge.



Jacobsen Easement habitat

years later that I discovered my grandfather had constructed a corduroy path through the swamp."

"But the horse knew, and the deer knew that trail was there," said her husband, Ken Baker. A few years ago, he reconstructed the original corduroy path.

On December 15, 2011, Carol and Ken Baker donated a permanent conservation easement on 36.5 acres of the land to the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy (CWC), excluding only the house and a small surrounding area, and thereby protecting the land and preserving a family legacy in perpetuity.

CWC President John Mitchell said, "We thank the Bakers now and for those to come for their vision and generosity. It is an honor for us to be able to partner with them"

While the land is not open for public access, the easement, known as the Kenneth and Lois (Martz) Jacobson Easement in honor of Carol's parents, provides a substantial public benefit by protecting the ridgeline, swamp and floodplain acreage forming a buffer along a 1,600-foot stretch of Ryan Creek. This easement, and the nearby 92-acre Emma and John Bush Conservation Easement created in 2010, provides enhanced water quality for Ryan Creek, a designated trout stream, as well as important habitat for native plants and animals.

Carol Baker said, "As I was growing up, this land provided a closeness to nature that has shaped my life. I'm so very pleased to know that it will be preserved in its natural condition for the benefit of future generations.

Stan Lilley, CWC Executive Director, said, "This is what we exist for. Helping families to protect legacies benefits all of us. It's inspirational to see how deeply people love the land."

"There's a ground water spring right down there," she said. "Back in the 1930's my grandfather put a tin cup there for people to get a drink. Not many years back, we re-found it."

"I'm proud to be a third generation owner of this land. In 1954, my parents bought it from my grandparents. Dad planted the pine trees that are here, and created terraces along the slopes, and a pond west of the house. As a young girl I rode my horse all through here. I loved the swamp and often wondered how I could ride the horse without getting stuck. It wasn't until many



John Mitchell, Carol Baker and Stan Lilley

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Random Notes

Future Conservation Leaders. I recently had breakfast with CWC board member Tom Stewart and a group of his Central Michigan University Environmental Management 310 students. Tom provided me a list of questions from the students in advance, which was helpful to begin our discussion. It was an interesting morning. Here was a group of students who met outside regular class hours to discuss issues with a local nonprofit. I was impressed by their questions and by their level of interest. I answered questions about the mechanics of conservation easements and how we ensure the terms of easements are being followed, about what we are doing to ensure that we are able to keep our promises to landowners to defend their easements, about the challenges of operating a nonprofit in a down economy. I came away from the meeting encouraged that we still have young people planning careers in environmental management and land and water conservation. It is more important than ever that we have well-trained future conservation leaders who can help us to continue to grow on a regionally and nationally level in a responsible way that minimizes unintended consequences of development.



17th Annual Spring Banquet. Mark your calendars for Thursday, April 26, 2012. There is a brief story here about the banquet and details will follow shortly in a separate mailing. We are aiming to set a new attendance record again this year.

Water Trail Project Update. Most of the work on the Chippewa River Water Trail is complete. We have distributed a hard copy map of the river that shows put-in and take-out points, city and county parks along the river, some historical tidbits and safety reminders. Check with your local parks offices, canoe liveries, the Chippewa Nature Center, or the Mt. Pleasant Convention & Visitors Bureau for copies. Signage promoting the safe and wise use of the river has been distributed for installation at 10 locations along the route. We have produced and will install signs in the spring at every road crossing, visible from the upstream side of the river, that will help users determine their progress, as well as help first responders to more quickly locate people in need of help. There will be volunteer opportunities to help install them, so please get in touch with us if you can help. The web-based version of the map is nearly ready to go live. I've just seen a demonstration of the map that has been put together by Tim Nieporte of the Isabella County Community Development Department, and it looks great. Look for announcements soon about how to find it. Thanks again to our grant funders at the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network and the Bay Area Community Foundation for making these tools possible.

Hall's Lake Natural Area. You will see stories in this newsletter about two new challenge grants we have been awarded to help with our Hall's Lake land acquisition project. Thank you to those who have already contributed. If you haven't yet, now is your chance to get double and triple the value for your contribution thanks to The Carls Foundation and the J. A. Woollam Foundation. The residents of Hall's Lake are planning a community garage sale on Friday, May 11, 2012, with the proceeds going to the project, so mark your calendars and plan to see some great bargains while you help the project.

Please don't forget to check out the completely new CWC web site, at the same location, www.ChippewaWatershedConservancy.org. Take the interest survey. Stay up to date on planned events and activities. Give us some feedback about the site.

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?
- **Water Trail Sign Installation.** Do you have a canoe or kayak and some free time this spring? We are looking for volunteers to help us install 1 square foot Chippewa River Water Trail signs on bridges at every road crossing over the Chippewa River.

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



2012 will be remembered as the Big Year for your Chippewa Watershed Conservancy. Sitting, perhaps too long, in this position as president, I can almost feel the pulse of this organization. Over the years it has slowly built. Oh, it has waxed and waned at times. But it has grown through years of protecting special places all over our five counties. That pulse has grown as people, like you, have each done what they could to help. I'll leave out the names, but you know who you are. You've donated land and donated conservation easements. You've donated of your time and from your wallet. You've attended events and you've helped steward our lands. You are the CWC.

But, somehow right now is different.

The challenges are greater than ever before. We are facing accreditation and all the demands that go with it to ensure that we run this organization in a responsible manner. We are facing the most significant fundraising challenges the CWC has ever faced with needs for land acquisition, land protection, stewardship, and operations all crying out for priority. And we are committed to the most daunting land protection project we have ever contemplated. How can we ever accomplish all these things? How can we?

The answer is clear. All around us I see the signs, I feel the pulse quicken. I see members reach deep within their hearts and ask themselves what they can do. When I see members donate land or other personal property to be sold to raise funds for the CWC, I know we will succeed. When I see members offer to send letters to friends on behalf of the CWC, I know we will succeed. When I see members reach deep inside and make a special contribution just because they want to do their part, I know we will succeed. All around us members are asking what they can do. We will succeed. This will be remembered as the Big Year, the year we did something very special. Thank you for all you are doing to make it happen.

Share Your Story

Do you have a picture or a story from within the Isabella, Clare, Gratiot, Montcalm or Mecosta County area that you would like to share with others? Perhaps it's a beautiful scenic picture or a shot of a child or grandchild interacting with nature. Would like to tell us why you believe it is important to preserve wildlife habitat or water quality? Why do you support the activities of the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy?

We would like to share your pictures and stories with our many supporters and there are several ways for you to help. First, there is the "In Your Words" link at the web site. Facebook users can share their stories directly via our Facebook group page. Finally, you can mail a story or pictures to CWC, P.O. Box 896, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48804-0896.



We are pleased to present this picture from Dan and Sharon Milan, who told us of a recent winter camping and canoeing trip on the Chippewa River. A single picture can sometimes tell an eloquent story, and this one by Sharon Milan speaks clearly to the beauty of the river during a time of year when many never see it.



We are excited to announce that the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy has received a grant from the J. A. Woollam Foundation designed to help increase our membership and to help with the next stage of our plans to acquire 161 acres of land at Hall's Lake.

The Woollam Foundation, a private philanthropic foundation based in Lincoln, Nebraska, has awarded a dollar-for-dollar matching grant up to \$60,000, tied to the following eligibility criteria:

All new memberships in the CWC in 2012

All lapsed memberships that are renewed in 2012

Any increased membership levels, for example, an existing member who increases a donation from \$25 in 2011 to \$50 in 2012 - the \$25 increase will be matched

Any donation greater than \$500 in 2012

This is an opportunity to build on our fundraising through new memberships and renewals while also helping the Hall's Lake Natural Area acquisition project. Funds raised from membership contributions will be designated to support the CWC operating budget or for stewardship. The matching funds provided by the Woollam Foundation will be designated for additional land purchases at Hall's Lake.

If you know someone who is a lapsed CWC member, or who has never joined, please share this news with them. It is a wonderful opportunity to double the value of their membership. Or, for donations over \$500.00, a contribution may be matched by both foundations, effectively tripling the value of the donation. For additional information, call (989) 644-5045 or refer potential members to the web site at www.ChippewaWatershedConservancy.org. A downloadable membership form is also available on the web site.



View of Hall's Lake from the Kabana tract



In October 2011, The Carls Foundation, a Detroit-based private philanthropic foundation, awarded the CWC a \$60,000, dollar for dollar matching challenge grant to purchase at least 40 acres of land in the next phase of our effort to preserve the east side of Hall's Lake in western Isabella County.

The CWC began the project to permanently preserve the area with the purchase of a 22-acre parcel, called the Neely Preserve, in 2008. Two landowners are holding an additional 139 acres of adjoining land until we are able to acquire funds to purchase it. In the meantime, they have allowed trails, benches and interpretive signage to be extended from the Neely Preserve throughout the adjoining parcels, and permitted public access for nature walks and hiking while the acquisition effort continues. All of the land is collectively called the Hall's Lake Natural Area.

Last year, a series of nature hikes called "4th Thursday at Hall's Lake" brought opportunities to explore the property while being led by experts on trees, natural history, mushrooms and birds. The program was so successful it will be continued throughout the spring and summer of 2012.

We are delighted with this new partnership with the Carls Foundation. With help from The Carls Foundation in 2006, we were able to complete the purchase of the 25-acre Williams-Blackburn Preserve.

This is a major step forward in our plans to preserve a substantial block of land at Hall's Lake as natural and scenic space for public recreation and education. This 161-acre tract will be a tremendous resource for people looking to enjoy nature and for its natural science educational opportunities in an area where there is not a lot of public land available.

We need to raise about \$300,000 to finish the acquisition of these two additional parcels. Successful completion of the Carls Foundation challenge grant and the Woollam Foundation challenge grant reported elsewhere in this newsletter will bring us \$180,000 closer to that goal by the end of 2012.



Hall's Lake Natural Area offers educational opportunities such as the 4th Thursday nature walks

Socha and Bechtold Donate Land

There are many ways our members and supporters help the CWC. In December, 2011 Don Socha and Brigitte Bechtold chose to donate land, not as a preserve, but as trade land. Knowing the multiple needs of the CWC, from operating funds to land acquisition, to conservation defense, to endowment, and wanting to help in a unique way, Don and Brigitte chose to make an unrestricted donation of their 10.5 acre parcel of land in Isabella County's Deerfield Township. Trade land is property that does not fit our current conservation priorities or project selection criteria, but nevertheless has value. It is donated and received with the understanding that we will sell it and use the proceeds to otherwise advance our mission. This is a very effective way for supporters who either don't have, or prefer not to donate a large sum of cash to contribute to the conservancy. It is possible to donate land and, with a qualified appraisal, claim a charitable contribute benefit for tax purposes.

We are grateful to Don and Brigitte for their generosity and encourage others to consider this option. If you would like to discuss the possibility of a trade land donation or making a legacy donation through a will, designation of life insurance, IRA or 401(k), gift of stocks or bonds, or life estate, please discuss it with your estate planner, attorney or accountant and let us know about your intentions.



Stan Lilley, Don Socha and Brigitte Bechtold



Our 17th Annual Spring Banquet will be Thursday, April 26, 2012, at the beautiful Buck's Run Golf Course east of Mount Pleasant. We hope you will join us in a spirit of celebration and giving to support the activities of the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy.

The evening offers a fun, fast-paced slate of activities that include raffles, a large silent auction, an interesting guest speaker, and a delicious meal featuring Autumnberry Chicken and Norwegian Salmon with all the trimmings (alternative vegetarian or gluten free options will be available).

The social hour begins at 5:30 pm. You can greet old friends and take advantage of an early opportunity to cruise the silent auction tables and start the bidding; check out the highlights of the past year's activities as shown in a continuously running slide show, or talk with members of the board of directors or staff about topics of interest to you.



Silent auction bidders at last year's Spring Banquet

This year's guest speaker, local botany enthusiast and photographer Cathy Murray, will present a program showcasing spring wildflowers, trees and shrubs of the Chippewa River Watershed.

There will be a brief update on the upcoming activities of the CWC and a presentation of the Bob Ball Award to an individual who has made significant contributions to the success of the CWC, followed by drawings for the winner of two raffles, a 50/50 raffle, with a guaranteed minimum prize award of \$500.00 (last year's winner received \$1,090.00), and a Sea Eagle inflatable kayak and accessories with a retail value of \$568.00.

Tickets for the event are \$35 per person in advance, or \$40 per person at the door. For a few dollars extra and a guarantee that you'll be seated with dinner mates of your choice, you can reserve an entire table (8 places with dinner), and we'll acknowledge your extra generosity. This is a great way for a business to receive special recognition.

So, be sure to mark April 26th on your calendar and prepare to have a good time all in the interest of preserving important open space and wildlife habitat for the benefit of all. We will be sending a flyer with all the details and a reservation form in a mailing closer to the event date.

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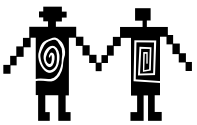
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CWC Land Protection Successes	
27 Easements-	3,185 acres
14 Preserves -	309 acres
Total - 3,494 acres	
County	Acres
Clare	1,966
Gratiot	147
Isabella	442
Mecosta	428
Montcalm	511



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Mike Brockman for production of Heron Tracks **Donna Buckley** for preserve monitoring
CWC Banquet Committee (Sue Ann Koppmeyer, Tim Odykirk, Marilyn Fosburg and Dave Prawdzyk) for event planning
Marilyn Fosburg for fundraising event support and preserve monitoring **Keith Frame** for preserve monitoring
Hall's Lake Natural Area Garage Sale Planning Committee
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Mike and Diane Morey for stewardship at Sylvan Solace Preserve and for fundraising support
Lori Rogers for grant writing support **Larry Schaftenaar** for Hall's Lake Natural Area stewardship
Tom Stewart for stewardship at Sylvan Solace Preserve and easement monitoring
Don & Karen Stearns and Dianne Wilson for sign dedication support at Marl Lake
Doug Valek for leading nature walks at Hall's Lake Natural Area

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



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