



Leelanau Conservancy

Conservation Easement Landowner Newsletter

February 2015

"I think having land and not ruining it is the most beautiful art that anybody could ever want."

— Andy Warhol

You are our biggest donors and supporters. Thank you for caring about your land forever. We hope that you will find this newsletter interesting and helpful as you think about spring projects on your land. Please do not hesitate to call or email as we hope to connect with many of you over the next year. Look for special events, such as a conservation easement landowner party this Summer!



Protected Land (Charter Sanctuary) in Leelanau Township

Inside this Newsletter:

- Note from Founding Director, Brian Price
 - Landowner Profile: Ben and Cynthia Weese
 - Note from Executive Director, Thomas Nelson
 - Emerald Ash Borer and Our Changing Forests
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Leelanau Conservancy
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A MESSAGE FROM BRIAN PRICE

Conservation Easement Landowner and Founding Director of the Leelanau Conservancy

For several years the Conservancy has published a letter of very limited circulation, with news of interest to a very select group. This newsletter reaches only owners of land with a conservation easement. That means that you have a unique relationship with the Leelanau Conservancy. Of all of our many constituent groups, our relationship with you is most special and most important.

Many of you know of my long tenure with the Conservancy. When I started no one on our board or staff had ever heard of a conservation easement. While not completely new as a legal construct, there were only a handful of conservation easements in Michigan in the late 1980s. I had the privilege of learning on the job, negotiating and completing the Conservancy's first conservation easement when the Lingle family protected precious land with nearly ½ mile of frontage on Cedar Lake just a couple of years after we opened our doors. For years I personally worked with landowners, negotiating conservation easements, then monitoring them each year. Over time, virtually all of those responsibilities were assigned to our very capable staff.

What you may not know is that Susan and I are also conservation easement donors, and we also have the unique perspective that you have. Like you, we wanted to make sure that our land was permanently protected. In our case, the donation was made to the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy (GTRLC), since we could not donate to Leelanau, given our management of the program. Vic Lane has been our conservation easement manager with GTRLC since the donation was made in 2007.

I appreciate from Vic and GTRLC the same things that you value in your dealings with us: prompt response to questions or inquiries; a cooperative attitude of partnership in helping us sort through the management choices we make on our land; access to information and advice that is customized to our

personal goals for our land. Vic is all those things and more. He always tries to arrange a time when I can join him in our annual easement monitoring. He goes the extra mile to dig up information and contacts that might be helpful to me. He makes suggestions based on what I want to accomplish, and he interprets the conservation easement fairly when interpretation is required.

Conservation easements comprise about 80% of all the land preserved with the Leelanau Conservancy. These preserved lands are a true conservation legacy, among the most important pieces of a healthy landscape. We all benefit by your willingness to demonstrate land stewardship in the choices you have made and continue to make to help protect this lovely peninsula.



Brian Price's last day serving as Executive Director was December 31, 2014. He will still be in the area and actively involved with the Conservancy.

THE CONSERVANCY WELCOMES THOMAS NELSON

Our New Executive Director

In October we announced that our Board of Directors had chosen a new director to replace Brian Price, who retired at the end of the 2014. Tom Nelson, who has been with the Conservancy since 2004, and has served as Director of Farm Programs since 2008, emerged as a clear choice. He competed with a field of impressive and highly qualified candidates from across the country.

Tom holds a BA from the College of Wooster and earned a law degree at Vermont Law School, specializing in Environmental Law and Policy. He and his wife, Stephanie, three stepdaughters and their eight-month-old baby girl live in Centerville Township. They are deeply involved and invested in the Leelanau community.

"I'm absolutely delighted that Tom will take over the helm," says Brian Price. "I have worked with him for the last 11 years and have the utmost confidence in his ability to lead our experienced and knowledgeable staff as well as our committed volunteers and supporters."

Tom says, "I can't adequately express the depth of my gratitude and sense of humility to be handed the baton of leadership at our Conservancy. Because of so many people, this organization matters profoundly. I am looking forward to deepening the relationship the Conservancy has with landowners, our members and the community as a whole in the months and years ahead."

Tom has a specific message for our conservation easement landowners as well. In his words: The question people keep asking me is, "What's your vision for the Conservancy?" It's a fair question. The thing is, we already have a vision for the Conservancy. It's a shared vision—the one our organization crafted 5 years ago.

The Conservancy is a trusted partner in our

community. We are fully engaged in enduring actions that conserve the land, water, and scenic character of Leelanau County and build ever stronger links connecting people and the land.

What we do to protect this place is meaningful and lasting. And everything we do, we do with integrity. Always, and no exceptions. And you, our conservation easement landowners are the bodily manifestation of this vision. You have created a legacy that is an enduring gift to us now and for future generations. You already know this. But if you haven't yet imagined families in 50, 100, or 200 years from now—whether they be nourished by the visual, ecological and/or agricultural bounty of your land—saying a silent prayer of thanks for your wisdom, courage and generosity, well, you should. Because they will be. Just as we are today. Thank you.



RICK HALBERT RETIRES

Conservation Easement Monitor, Botanist and ‘trend setter’ has retired after 10 years of monitoring conservation easements. The Conservancy staff and board toasted Rick and his wife, Chris, in October 2014. Many of our conservation easement landowners have met Rick and probably have fond memories to share. He would often show up in 5-finger shoes, GPS on his hip, iphone in his hand, and a sharp rain jacket. Rick shared his knowledge of plants in the forest with those who joined him. He has probably put in more miles on our conservation easement and natural areas and preserves than anyone else on staff. We are sad to see Rick go, but he leaves us with many great stories and with much to live up to as we continue to steward our conservation easement properties and landowners. Rick stays involved with the Conservancy by volunteering on our stewardship committee as a community member.



Protected land in Leelanau Township

“Keep close to Nature’s heart . . . and break clear away, once in awhile, and climb a mountain or spend a week in the woods. Wash your spirit clean.” — John Muir

DID YOU KNOW?

- Coarse woody debris (i.e., dead trees and the remains of branches on the forest floor) and snags (i.e., standing dead trees) are one indicator of forest health. They are both critical components of our northern forest ecosystems. Naturally “messy,” forest systems are frequently subject to disturbances like weather (e.g., wind and ice storms) and disease that can weaken trees or damage old trees, creating standing and fallen dead wood.
- Dead wood, in the form of snags and fallen coarse woody debris, provides habitat forage for insects in snags; salamanders, small mammals, and invertebrates hide under fallen trees; and owls nest in snag cavities. As they decompose, snags and coarse woody debris recycle energy and nutrients into forest systems. Finally, dead wood—both standing and fallen—helps to stabilize soil and regulate water flow.
- Many of our conservation easements allow for the collection of dead or downed wood for firewood and other personal use. Please be mindful when exercising this right and make sure you leave adequate coarse woody debris for the health of the forest. Also, if you plan to remove dangerous or diseased trees, try to leave a few snags and debris on the forest floor when possible. This will provide much needed habitat and contribute to the health of your forest ecosystem.

(Information from *Forest Health Resource Brief*: http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/netn/Education/Resource%20Briefs/NETN_RB_CWDSnags_FINAL.pdf)



Protected Farmland in Suttons Bay Township

EMERALD ASH BORER AND OUR CHANGING FORESTS

By Kama Ross, District Forester, and Yarrow Brown

A real concern for foresters and forestland owners is Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), induced ash mortality, and subsequent gap formation in our beautiful northern hardwood stands. The gaps in our forests will facilitate an unprecedented expansion of invasive plant species, displacing native species, and causing a cascade of changes in forest biodiversity.

With further spread unlikely to be halted, the impact of EAB will be similar to that of the chestnut blight and Dutch elm disease pathogens on their respective hosts. The difference with the EAB invasion is that increased landscape fragmentation, loss of native biodiversity, and unfortunate landscaping practices have generated an abundance of invasive plants poised to exploit resources made available by EAB-induced gap formation.

Also, ash trees with one-inch diameters at breast height have been confirmed as infested with EAB, so they are likely to be killed before reaching reproductive age. Ash seeds do not persist on the forest floor for more than 3 years and following mortality of mature trees, the reproduction by seed is eliminated. Traps placed in study sites found EAB was still present in low numbers even when the mortality of ash trees was almost 100%.

What species (native vs invasive) will colonize the resulting gaps? What will the forest look like in future years given different management options? There isn’t a lot of research or specific information coming out that helps foresters/landowners make future management decisions.

In southeastern Michigan, where blue ash is native, it was found to be less vulnerable to EAB infestation, with up to 60 % of blue ash trees surviving in stands where nearly no white, black, or green ash had been killed by EAB. Research is underway to genetically combine the three native ash species with blue ash, but forestry is a long term endeavor and we may lose most

of the ash from our forests before the cultivars are successfully on the market.

Beech, if present, is doing well in the gaps and we hope to have a good black cherry seed year and that mid-tolerant shade species will seed in well. But it is really hard to beat the aggressive brambles! Most conservation easements allow for removal of diseased and/or dying trees, such as ash or beech, with approval and/or documentation by a natural resource specialist. Before you plan to have them removed, check the terms of your conservation easement and work with Yarrow regarding any questions that come up. The Conservancy recommends leaving some standing dead trees and dead/downed wood to keep the forest floor intact and keep the important nutrients on the ground.

WHAT SHOULD I PLANT?

Recommended replacement trees in the new gaps depend on site conditions and the amount of time and energy a landowner wants to invest in a successful planting effort.

The Following Trees are Native to Michigan:

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| • White pine | • Yellow birch |
| • Red maple | • Sugar maple |
| • Tamarack | • Basswood |
| • White cedar | • Bur oak |
| • Balsam fir | • Northern red oak |
| • Black spruce | • White oak |
| • White spruce | • Big-toothed aspen |
| • Eastern Hemlock | • Quaking aspen |
| • Balsam poplar | • Paper birch |



Contact Kama Ross at the Leelanau Conservation District for more information: 231-256-9669.

LANDOWNER PROFILE**Community Minded Conservationists:
Ben and Cynthia Weese**

(Look for a longer version of this story coming soon in our summer newsletter and on our website.)

The Weese Family has strong conservation interests, which have resulted in ecological restoration of a two-acre parcel across from their home—preserved with a donated conservation easement to the Leelanau Conservancy in 1988. Ben describes the land, which adjoins the Johnson Park donated parcel, as “a window to downtown Empire.”



The Weeses have started a restoration project on their property, which began with the removal of a colony of invasive black locust trees. They hired a SEEDS crew to harvest and mill the trees into lumber. An interesting aside: some of this weather-resistant locust was used to build the beautiful boardwalk at Swanson Preserve. Removing the locust has made way for native species to thrive in the area. Phase two of the project entailed hiring restoration ecologist Michael Ulrich.

Decades of storm water runoff has covered a gravel

stream bed present on the property with sediment and grasses. Plans call for halting further sedimentation and excavating to expose the existing gravel bed, so that the stream may flow more freely into nearby South Bar Lake. Native wildflowers were planted along the stream bank last year and more will go in this spring.

Michael Ulrich says, “Cynthia and Ben have the patience and long-term vision required to implement something of this scale. Where most people see the current grassy swale, they see a pristine wetland.” Ulrich, also an Empire resident, adds, “What has long been an overlooked asset in the heart of town will be a gorgeous landscape with great biodiversity and ecological function.”

As always, the Weeses have the community in mind. “When people go down to the beach they should enjoy a nice view as they go by,” says Cynthia. “We want people to see something that is restful and serene and lovely.”



Restoration area on the private Weese property

**Plans for Ecological Restoration and
Invasive Species Management**

Why do some conservation easement require these plans? Many of our conservation easements require a plan for managing invasive species or conducting a restoration project such as improving wildlife habitat or restoring a stream bank. Sometimes the plan is required to be completed by a natural resource professional. Some plans can be written by you, the landowner, and approved by the Conservancy. The reason for a plan is to ensure that landowners are removing invasive species and not native species and to make sure the conservation values we are protecting on the property are maintained.

Why should you consider developing a plan for your property? These plans are helpful to guide your decision making and look to the future as many of these projects are completed in different stages over many years. These plans also help the landowner set management goals and think about all aspects of the project instead of making decisions on a case by case basis.

How can the Conservancy help guide conservation easement landowners? Conservancy staff has some experience working with invasive species removal and can help direct you towards resources that will help in creating a plan. Yarrow is available to let you know what would be required for our records and what is required per the terms of your conservation easement. She can also help you determine where on your property to focus your efforts. We do have a list of resources for invasive species removal that we can provide, and staff can help identify invasive species if needed. If you would like us to identify areas on your property where we notice invasive species during our annual monitoring visit, please let us know and we will make time to do this. We are also happy to share our practices and goals for managing invasive species on properties we own and manage. Please call the office and talk to our stewardship staff.

Resources for Invasive Species or Ecological Management Plans: There are a few consulting firms and other organizations that offer resources. See the list (to the right) of organizations or consultants we know can offer this service.

(Please note this is not a complete list and we do not promote one company over another.)

Schillinger Forestry (Daniel Schillinger)
Phone: (231) 633-8733
Email: schillingerforestry@gmail

Inner-Coastal Ecological Services (ICES)
Michael Ulrich, P.O. Box 374, Glen Arbor, MI 49636
Phone: (231) 342-6551
Website: <http://innercoastal.com/>

Vicki Smith at Wetland and Wildland Solutions
2517 Holland Circle, Traverse City, MI 49684
Phone: (231) 943-0762
Email: wildlife@wildlifewetlands.com,

Christopher Grobbel, Ph.D.
Grobbel Environmental & Planning Associates
P.O. Box 58, Lake Leelanau, MI 49653
Phone: 231-499-7165
Email: cgrobbel@grobbelenvironmental.com

Borealis Consulting, Liana N. May, Consultant
Phone: (231) 835-0636
Email: borealisbotanicals@gmail.com
Website: borealisbotanicals.com

Saving Birds Thru Habitat has a land certification program that may be of interest to conservation easement landowners who want to improve migratory bird habitat.
Phone: (231) 271-3738
Website: <http://savingbirds.org/index.html>

SEEDS Youth Conservation Corps
Ecological restoration planning, invasive species management, native tree/shrub planting, wildlife habitat management, trail clearing, and black locust boardwalks.
Jenee Rowe, Director of Ecological Restoration
934 E. Eighth St, T.C., MI 49686
Phone: (231) 947-0312
Website: <http://www.ecoseeds.org/>

If you want to work on your own invasive species removal plan, with Conservancy approval, we recommend you visit the **Michigan Invasive Species Coalition** website to get information on how to identify invasive species and learn about the best management practices to remove these species: <http://www.michiganinvasives.org/>

The **Michigan Natural Features Inventory** has a free publication in invasive species. Website: <http://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/invasive-species/invasivePlantsFieldGuide.pdf>

**Do you have your conservation easement property on the market or are you planning to sell in the near future?
Do you know someone who is looking for protected land to purchase in Leelanau County?**

We have a conservation buyer website where you can list your protected property or search for protected properties for sale. We will work with you and your realtor to help potential buyers understand the conservation easement restrictions.

Call Yarrow or visit the site to learn more: <http://leelanauconservancy.org/land-protection-and-stewardship/conservation-buyers/>

Upcoming Events and Workshops

February 16th, 2015 at 10:00am, Hike the Kehl Lake Natural Area: Join docents Peter Wolcott and Ann McInnis for a snowshoe hike over the ice and through the woods amongst the tracks of Leelanau's mammals.

February 21st, 2015, Blues at the Blue Bird: John Studebaker and the Hawks. Dinner from 6:00-7:00; music and dancing from 7:30-10:30. Call Gayle at the Conservancy to purchase tickets: 231-256-9665.

February 26th, 2015 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. FREE! Water Smart Workshop: presented by Leelanau Clean Water. Call 256-9812 to register and reserve a lunch (Cost \$8)

Michigan's Soil History and Plant Geography: Friday, March 6th, 6:30-8:00 at the Boardman River Nature Center, Traverse City, #231-941-0960
Cost: \$5 pre-registration, \$10 at the door

Saturday, March 21 at 10:00 am, Black Bears in Leelanau, Indoor Program: Learn more about black bears from docent Ann McInnis who will share a power-point program developed by the Wildlife Research Institute in Minnesota. Meet in the Conservancy Office, in the back community room. Families with children welcome!

March 28th, 2015 at 1:00pm, Hike the Clay Cliffs Natural Area: Walk up the new trail at beautiful Clay Cliffs with docents Janet Ward and Mary Petterson.

Saturday, April 18th, 2015, Healthy Forests: Caring for our Trees. Grand Traverse Conservation District from 9-12:30 p.m. For more information call: Kama Ross, District Forester, Leelanau, Grand Traverse and Benzie Conservation Districts at 231-256-9783, ext. 15 or kama.ross@macd.org

For more details on Conservancy led hikes, call the office or visit our website. Dress for the weather!

Please call us if:

You would like to set up a specific time for us to monitor your property OR if you want us to look for invasive species or specific features while monitoring. Our monitoring staff has various skills and we are eager to help you learn more about your conservation easement property.

You are selling your property. We can help explain the terms of the conservation easement to potential buyers and help the Realtors with maps or language that describes the features of your protected property. Also, we have a Conservation Buyer Program where we list protected land that is for sale. <http://leelanauconservancy.org/land-protection-and-stewardship/conservation-buyers/>

You plan to exercise one of your reserved rights in your conservation easement.

You have a question about your conservation easement or would like a copy of your conservation easement.



Protected land near Omena



Protected farm near M22 and Jelinek Road