



Leelanau Conservancy

*Conserving the Land, Water and
Scenic Character of Leelanau County*

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Deep Ties to the Northport Bluffs: The Garthe Farm

Sitting around the kitchen table with Kathy and Gene Garthe, learning about the farmland that has been in Gene's family for four generations, what strikes me most is how deliberately the couple speak about history. Gene and Kathy not only have deep reverence for the land on which they live but also for those people who came before them and settled on this beautiful bluff near Northport.

The farm, 200 acres of which will soon be protected by a conservation easement through the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, was originally settled by Gene's great-grandfather, Steiner Garthe, in the late 1880s. Steiner's family made an epic three-month journey from Norway to Northport and homesteaded on a bluff overlooking Lake Michigan because, as the story goes, "it reminded them of home." Steiner was among the first fruit farmers in Leelanau, known for his experiments with apples and cherries and his interest in growing exceptional fruit. Now nearly 150 years later, Gene carries on the tradition of fruit farming, experimentation, and thoughtful land stewardship on the Garthe family homestead.

"Permanent protection of the Garthe farm will help prevent residential conversion of scenic orchards overlooking Lake Michigan and the Manitou Passage," says Matt Heiman, Director of Land Programs. "The property contains a high percentage of "prime and unique farmland" and "farmland

of local importance" as classified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Permanent protection of these soil types is critical to maintaining world class cherry production in Leelanau County."

Even though Gene is a fourth generation Garthe, he didn't inherit the farm. "I grew up in a family of six children down the road from the bluffs. And I knew no one was going to give me a farm," he says. When Gene left for Michigan State University in 1966, his parents were still subsistence farmers with a half-dozen cattle, some hogs, and a three-acre orchard. Gene

earned a degree in social science. But an interest in farming brought him home to Northport where he worked full time on Chuck Kalchik's farm for nearly 15 years.

"When I came back from college, there were no more animals on my parents' farm — or any of the farms around here," Gene explains. It was the era of Earl Butz, Secretary of Agriculture, who is famous for his words to American farmers: Get big or get out. Gene witnessed the changing landscape of farms in

Leelanau first hand. Neighbors starting planting hundreds of acres of cherries and hand picking was replaced by machinery, as the economics and scale of farming shifted.

True to his curious nature, Gene watched this shift and took note of what was required to be a part of the new terrain of fruit farming in Leelanau. The couple bought Gene's parents' farm ("Dad's place") on a land contract and the neighboring



Gene and Kathy Garthe grow 26 varieties of apples on their farm near Northport, which has been in Gene's family for four generations. Two-hundred acres will be protected.

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Message from our Executive Director

I consider myself especially blessed. I have a wonderful wife and four sweet girls. I have my health and a roof above my head. I have a job that nourishes my soul. To be sure, the blessings of family, health, home and good work are ones we all feel. But I feel especially blessed because unlike many in this world, the local landscape in which I walk, live and breathe inspires me every single day. And, that's simply because every day I am surrounded by the sights and sounds of Leelanau. My daily journeys take me past family farms that have been here for four, five or six generations, past deep green forests and blue water. My stroll to lunch, to the shop, to the hardware store courses through quaint villages. At bedtime, I let the dogs out under starry skies where I can stand in my yard and see the Milky Way high above me, often while I hear an owl's hoot echoing in the nearby woods. Whether you spend months, weeks or a few days each year in Leelanau, you know exactly what I mean.

In fact, it is nearly impossible to travel any distance and fail to encounter Leelanau landscapes that the Conservancy has preserved forever during the last 27 years. How rare and wonderful is that? I can tell you this: in addition to the blessings I listed at the outset, there are two more that I never take for granted. The first is how unbelievably lucky I am to share this inspiring place with my wife and kids. The second is that we—you, me and this exceptional organization—are doing this vital and worthy work together. Together, we are ensuring that Leelanau holds onto that sense

of beauty and timelessness you can feel all around you. It is something far greater than any of us as individuals, and it intimately connects us to who we are and who we love in a way nothing else can. Leelanau is not simply a place on the map. It is a living, breathing part of us.



Tom passes the Stanton Farm on his way to work, where 172 acres have been protected for prime fruit growing.

At the Conservancy, we believe this is the way it should always be in Leelanau—that we must find ways to ensure those family farms, the verdant forests and sky-colored waters continue as they are for the generations to come. Our daily work reflects the conviction that we are connected to something incredibly precious, and our children and grandchildren should have the chance to experience that sense of awe and love of this place just as we have. This love of Leelanau is at the core of everything we do and everything we stand for. We know you share this belief—it's why you are such a special part of our Conservancy Family. Not only am I grateful for Leelanau's daily inspiration, I'm grateful for you. Leelanau could not be what it is, and we could not be who we are, without you.

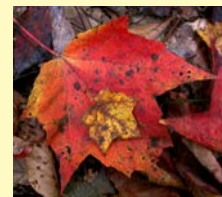
Thomas Nelson
Executive Director

Palmer Woods Challenge Grant: Why They Participated

We're grateful to the folks who offered a Challenge Grant that helped propel us toward our fundraising goal and acquire Palmer Woods. Thank you Brookby Foundation, The Homestead, Cherry Republic and an anonymous donor, who contributed \$265,000 to match private donations dollar for dollar. Challenge grants are critical tools for success. Here's why Brookby Foundation jumped on board:

"The Brookby Foundation has a history of supporting land conservation projects, especially those within the Lake Michigan watershed. This grant-making strategy flows from the Board's deep commitment to protecting our valuable natural resources. Having a personal connection to the region, Board members have witnessed the landscape's remarkable ability to regenerate, purify local waters, offer opportunities for wonder and study, while providing economic benefit for citizens.

The Brookby Foundation is confident in Leelanau Conservancy's ability to manage such a significant site. The leadership demonstrated by Brian Price and Tom Nelson, with the support of an exceptional team, affirms our belief that stewardship of Palmer Woods is in the best hands. The outpouring of support from local community members provides further assurance that our investment will be carefully protected."



Moving Forward on Palmer Woods

If you are a cross-country skier who loves groomed trails, you know that such trails are limited in Leelanau. If all goes as planned, a new network of groomed trails will open up this winter at the new 707-acre Palmer Woods Forest Reserve near Glen Arbor. “Ideally, soon after we own the land, we would like to have a basic system of looped trails marked so that people can safely enjoy this beautiful woodland right away,” says Tom Nelson, Executive Director.

“This winter if we have enough snow, we can groom some of the existing logging trails.”

First up: completing the purchase. We hope the final documents will be ready to sign by year end—that means tying up all the loose ends on 14 separate parcels currently owned by the Palmer Family. Until then, the property is still in private hands and is not open to the public.

Project Manager and former Executive Director Brian Price is spending this fall laying the groundwork to open the property. “Right now we are working on a floristic study and species inventory,” says Price. “That information helps us to write a management plan, which acts like a kind of blueprint for decision making—everything from where to locate parking to planning trails to avoid environmental ‘hot spots.’ It’s a process we undertake for every property the Conservancy protects.”

The majority of groundwater that recharges Glen Lake flows from the eastern side of the watershed, where Palmer Woods is located. Protecting this forest will help to keep the water quality of Glen Lake high.



Palmer Woods, sure to become a fantastic four-season destination.

The management plan for Palmer Woods is more complex than most because it will continue to be managed as a sustainable forest. The property will stay on the tax rolls and timber income will help defray taxes and some stewardship costs. “It will be one of the most intensely managed forest tracts in our region – not from a standpoint of being heavily harvested – but rather in efforts to diversify the forest, to encourage trees of high value both economically and to wildlife, and even to restore native understory plants. The Palmer family has begun this process, and we expect to intensify those efforts,” says Price. “Another goal is to use Palmer Woods to demonstrate healthy forest practices. We want to document tree



The 707-acre Palmer Woods Forest Reserve is on track to open early in 2016 for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.

species and the current size of stands of trees so that we can track how well our management prescriptions are performing.”

The devastating storm that hit the area on August 2nd has hampered the planning process. In a few localized areas of Palmer Woods, the loss of trees was up to 90%. Salvage operations took weeks to complete.

Palmer Woods Winter Wish List:

- A high-powered snowmobile in good working condition with a long track to pull grooming equipment
- Volunteers to help groom trails (1/2 day, two times /week)

“There will be no logging this winter,” says Price. “Soon after we take possession, if we have enough snow, we can groom some of the existing logging trails. We’ll only be limited by the weather, when we can get trails properly marked, and when we can secure equipment and volunteers. At this time, we don’t need to create new trails; we just have to groom what we’ve got.” Come spring, docent-led hikes will reveal Palmer Woods’ hidden gems—from the long valley to the perennial spring.

Getting this far couldn’t have happened without over 600 families who helped to buy this forest. Down the

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Project Updates

40 Acres Preserved Along Mebert Creek Protects Important Wetlands

With limited funds, and so much to do, how does the Leelanau Conservancy prioritize what lands are most important to protect? While many factors enter into the decision, science and connectivity play two big roles. Our new Mebert Creek Preserve is an ecological powerhouse AND links already-protected lands. “It had long been on our wish list, but only recently did the land become available at a reasonable price,” says Matt Heiman, Director of Land Programs.



The new 40-acre Mebert Creek Preserve protects 3,000 feet of stream frontage.

Here’s why it scores big on our criteria list for protection:

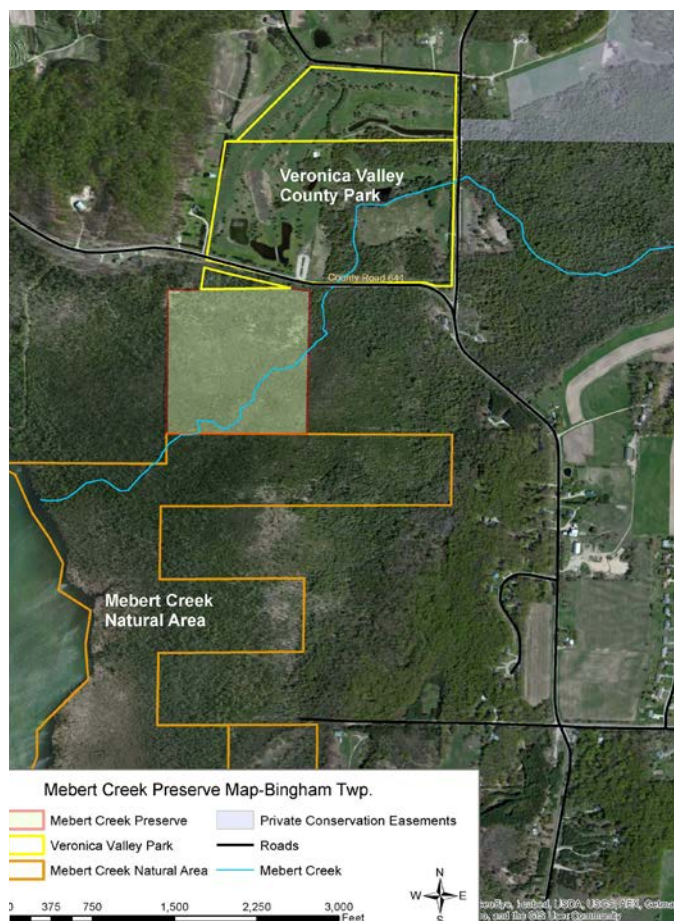
1. The Preserve is sandwiched between two important public resources: the 100-acre Veronica Valley Park and the massive wetland complex known as the 140-Acre Mebert Creek Natural Area. (Mebert Creek NA was one of our earliest projects, and it takes in 4,000 feet of frontage on Lake Leelanau. It features a rare lowland floating mat fen and was acquired with help from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. Today it is owned and managed by Bingham Township.)

2. The new Preserve protects 3,000 additional feet along Mebert Creek--an alkaline, cold-water trout stream that is an important tributary flowing into Lake Leelanau. Also present on the land are several seeps and springs that trickle in to Mebert Creek, as well as groundwater recharge areas that help to filter water entering the lake.

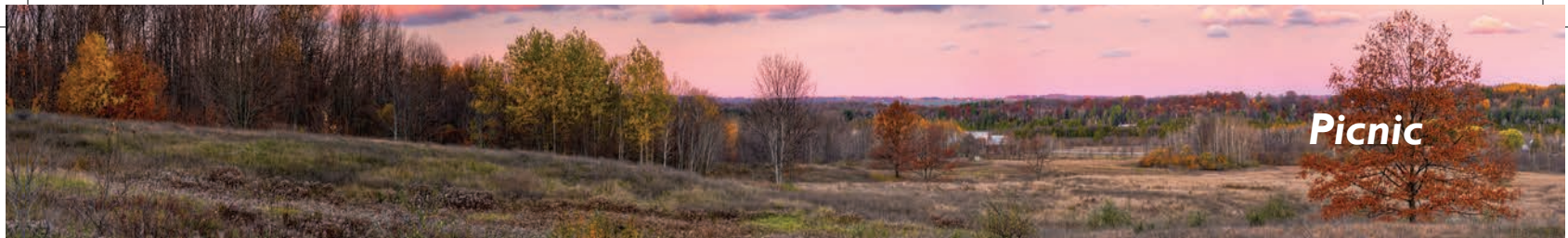
3. The land and other protected properties nearby serve as an important corridor for wildlife. Red-shouldered hawks nest here and a plethora of warblers sing from the property’s northern shrub thicket and hardwood conifer swamp. Bobcat, deer, beavers and osprey are just a few of the species spotted in the area. Two privately owned conservation easement properties are located nearby, adding to the richness of this green corridor.

In addition to its environmental qualities, the new Preserve will provide important dryland access to birders and hunters in the future. “There was almost no feasible way to access much of Bingham Township’s Mebert Creek Natural Area before—it was largely landlocked due to the extremely thick wetland along the lakeshore,” says Matt Heiman, Director of Land Programs. “This will provide the missing link in years to come so that avid birders, hunters and naturalists will have access to the north part of the Mebert Creek Natural Area walking directly west from the Veronica Valley parking lot.” Since the Conservancy only recently acquired this parcel and still needs to clearly delineate the property boundaries and establish management rules we will not be opening it to deer hunting in 2015; however we look forward to offering this opportunity to hunters in 2016.

“Anyone who visits will need to do some bush-whacking,” says Heiman. No trails or parking areas are planned. “The property is thick and wild and will be kept that way.”



The shaded green box represents the new purchase, which links Veronica Valley and Mebert Creek Natural Area, providing an extensive protected corridor for wildlife.



Picnic

2015 Picnic—A Great Gathering

Our Picnic at our Chippewa Run Natural Area came just a few days after the huge storm that hit the area. We were grateful to our 74 volunteers who helped put on this big day and to all who attended (an estimated 650 people) in the midst of the chaos. Some of our Auction Committee members were without power, including Barbara Winkelman, who also had a tree fall on her house. Despite that, Barbara showed up for hours at our site to help set up the beautiful Auction. Committee members John and Kathy Imboden of Glen Arbor came to load items to take to the Picnic site. They also lost power for days, but have a generator and opened their home to neighbors to take hot showers, charge cell phones, and do laundry.

Between the Auction, Pies for Palmer Woods appeal, and underwriting, our 2015 Picnic raised just over \$100,000 to help the Conservancy do its work. Thank you to all who made it successful--especially our nearly 150 generous Auction donors!



Top: Barbara Winkelman (right) and Susie Oliver created the stunning displays at the Auction.

Middle Right: Amy Tennis promotes the auction item "Dinner in the Hopyard" at New Mission Organics.

Bottom: Kathy and John Imboden load items to take to the picnic site.

Volunteers of the Year

Congrats to the team of Al Swiderski and Dave Coyne, two exceptional stewardship volunteers. We have a lot of wonderful people who help to care for and maintain our trails but wanted to recognize this specialized team who has headed up some serious construction projects. Al and Dave built the boardwalk at Swanson Preserve and led the team that built the deck at Clay Cliffs. Every time we have a construction need like this, we call these two skilled carpenters and they are always willing to help, saving us time and money. They have also dug fence posts, put up signs, built benches—if it involves wood they can do it!



Al Swiderski (left) and Dave Coyne are our 2015 Volunteers of the Year.

Business Supporter of the Year

Matt and Keegan Myers have built a business centered on getting out in nature, and celebrating and enjoying the places we protect. M22 and the Leelanau Conservancy are perfect partners because we both value the same things. M22 has been a great ambassador for the Leelanau Conservancy to all the generations. They promote the Leelanau Conservancy at their M22 Challenge and on their merchandise. For our Auction, they donated four guaranteed race slots. In addition to donating a percentage of their gross sales every year since 2008, they collaborated on a direct mail campaign this spring that brought us many new members.



Left to right Matt Myers, Tom Nelson, and Keegan Myers.

Stewardship

Summer Stewardship Crew: What They Loved and Learned

Our Stewardship Crew had a super productive summer maintaining and improving our natural areas with the help of our fabulous volunteers. Two of our summer staff are funded by a grant from the Sustain Our Great Lakes program. Together, they conducted plant surveys at 14 natural areas, looking for invasive species. One of the ways we can make the most of our resources is to follow an “Early Detection, Rapid Response” (EDRR) protocol. If we can catch an infestation early on of swamp thistle or garlic mustard, and treat it, we win.

In addition, the crew helped with storm cleanup, installed new signs and benches, spread chips on trails, prepped our picnic site, helped out at Eastern Michigan University’s field school week at DeYoung Natural Area’s historic buildings and so much more. We say goodbye to our seasonal staff, a group of young adults who brought so much energy, good will, and sunshine to our office. Here’s what they had to say about their time spent with the Conservancy and an insight into the excellent work they did all summer.

Chase Heise Emma Velis



Chase monitors invasive species at Lake Leelanau Narrows Natural Area.

“Over the summer I came to know all of the Conservancy’s properties, and what makes each of them so unique. Venturing into areas seldom seen by humans is one of the best perks of working as an EDRR crewmember. My many summer experiences will benefit me for the rest of my career. The work we do is very satisfying, and I believe that we left each property in a more thriving, natural state.”

“As a Leelanau County native, I was amazed to discover how little of Leelanau I knew before this summer. With the Conservancy, I had the opportunity to explore unique areas around the county. This, coupled with the intense focus necessary in a plant survey, allowed me to notice plants and ecological relationships that I’d never really seen before.”



Emma treats invasive purple loosestrife in the Lake Leelanau Narrows.

Ana Wodek Nathan Burns



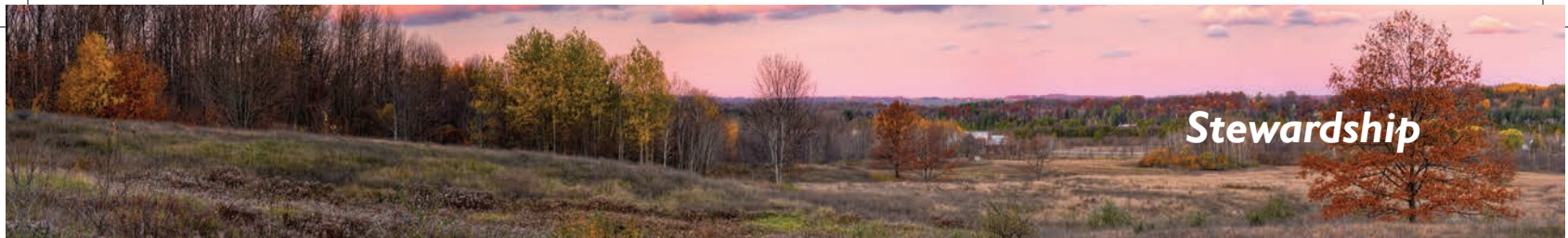
Ana helped to meet one of our goals of installing signs and updating kiosks.

“Working with the Leelanau Conservancy has truly been one the most gratifying experiences of my life. It was an honor to be able to help preserve and maintain the land that we all love so much. I learned something new each and every day out in the field and enjoyed meeting ALL of our wonderful members. Thank you for the exciting yet educational summer! Go Stew Crew 2015!”

“It has been a great pleasure to become involved with the Leelanau Conservancy and the community. I am thrilled to be using my skills to benefit the lands and recreational opportunities for our visitors. My coworkers and our fantastic volunteers are among the best I’ve worked with: professional, extremely knowledgeable, and friendly. I very much look forward to returning to work next spring.”



Nathan oversees a group of volunteers as they pour a new foundation for an historic power house at DeYoung.



Stewardship Gets the Job Done



Chainsaw training was more important than ever after the big storm downed so many trees. Pictured (L to R) stewardship staff Nathan Burns, Chase Heise, Emily Douglas, and Emma Velis.



Stewardship staff get creative with a wood-burning tool to make signs for the Clay Cliffs trail.



Garlic mustard is an invasive species that crowds out native flora important to wildlife. This mass was pulled at a workbee and given to our friends at the non-profit Paperworks Studio in Traverse City, where they will turn it into note cards. (paper sample in foreground.)



Water boards were added along the trail at Whaleback Natural Area to prevent erosion on steep slopes. Note the tree roots exposed where volunteer Marc Vargas creates the water diversion trench.



Ana Wodek (left) and Land Steward Emily Douglas, cleaning up garbage along the Lake Leelanau Narrows Natural Area.



The Redfield family tries out a new bench at Clay Cliffs Natural Area that they helped to install.

Tribute to Finance Director Susan Price, Who Steps Down at Year End

I first met Susan Price over the phone, some 23 years ago. I was working as an editor for *Traverse, Northern Michigan's Magazine* then, and called her regularly because one of my jobs was to list all the hikes and events in the region.

At the magazine, we received the Leelanau Conservancy's newsletter. I remember being taken with the look of the publication that included line drawings of loons and native plants. I didn't realize at the time that Susan did the layout and so many other things at the Leelanau Conservancy, from managing finances to organizing board meetings to writing fundraising letters. She is not the sort of person who lets you know all that she does. The quintessential behind-the-scenes person, she shuns the limelight.

As Susan moves toward her retirement, I have thought a lot about what she has brought to this organization, and how little our members know about her. Brian, her husband and the organization's founding director, was always the one out front, and Susan wanted it that way. But Brian would be the first to tell you that the Leelanau Conservancy could not have been nearly as successful without Susan on board. For all the land Brian wanted to protect, there had to be a fundraising effort to make it happen.



Susan and Brian Price are pictured with Conservancy Founders, Ed and Bobbie Collins, at a 25th Anniversary celebration.

Brian was able to be a visionary and a conservation leader in part because Susan handled much of the day-to-day nitty gritty here—particularly in the early years before additional staff came on board. While he met with lead donors, she crafted direct mail campaigns. She created budgets, wrote grants, organized volunteers, paid bills and communicated with people like me.

I have spent the last 14 years working closely with Susan, and attribute much of my own success in outreach

and communications to our partnership. Her institutional knowledge, personal integrity and pragmatism have been the hand on the tiller of communications.

She has been a staunch defender of our “brand,” from the little things like eschewing slick color paper to the big things, always asking “Is this who we are?” or “Why does this matter?” She is uncanny at determining the right message, and at pinpointing what I’ve made unclear or missed the mark on in a story or press release. She is acutely aware of our “voice” and how important it is to interweave personal stories while also talking about the science and gravitas behind our work

She has been a hawk on spending. Because she tracked and reported on every penny coming in and out, and knew of all our obligations and dreams, she was saddled with being the “bad guy” who often had to say NO. Always at the heart of it, though, was her respect for our donors and their intent. She knew that people wanted to see us protect as much land as possible, and every other expense had to be measured against that. I think that because Susan had to have felt the financial weight of the world on her shoulders here, it could make her seem, at times, well...cranky. On the other hand, her fierce determination to make sure projects were successful and funds were raised gave us all confidence to move forward. In my opinion, she has been every bit of a leader as Brian was.

Finally, her booming laughter and compassion for people going through hard times are things I will never forget. When I went underwent cancer treatment, she helped to organize meals for me. She is always the one to urge staff to go be with their sick mother or to not miss that big soccer game.

We often hear the words “trusted” when people describe the Leelanau Conservancy. Nine times out of 10, donors, when given a choice, will check the box “use where most needed.” That’s a tribute to Susan, I think, and the way she has helped us to always do the right thing.

— Carolyn Faught, Communications Director



Susan with husband and Founding Director, Brian Price, in 2000.

Conservancy Welcomes New Staff Members

Betsy LePoidevin is the Leelanau Conservancy's new Director of Charitable Giving. Betsy has more than a decade of fundraising and leadership experience, most recently with The Nature Conservancy in Missouri as their Director of Philanthropy. She has helped raise millions of dollars for conservation in Missouri and around the globe. Other key accomplishments included embarking on a new relationship with the St. Louis public broadcasting television station, scheduled to last at least 3 years, which promotes freshwater conservation in the St. Louis region and beyond. She also is particularly proud of being a part of bringing bison back to Dunn Ranch Prairie Preserve.

While Betsy has been visiting Leelanau County since she was a child, her husband and three children were able to visit every summer for the past 10 years. Currently, she is staying in a family cabin in Cedar, but she and her family look forward to putting down roots of their own soon. It is a joy for her to be so near to the places she helps protect.

Betsy has a bachelor's degree in biology, from Principia College and a master's degree in media communications, from Webster University, giving her a unique understanding of conservation issues and the importance of sharing the story of our natural world. She is passionate about protecting our resources for future generations and spending time in the woods hiking with her Labrador retrievers.



Betsy LePoidevin (left) and Sam Plotkin joined our team this summer.

Sam Plotkin, our new Farm Programs Manager, grew up in the Metro Detroit area and attended Michigan State University. His studies at MSU focused on social policy and food systems. After graduating from MSU in 2011, Sam worked as an apprentice on diversified small farms in Connecticut, Detroit, and Harbor Springs.

During his time as an apprentice, Sam was inspired by land trusts around him that were working to permanently protect farmland and the agricultural heritage of rural communities. This fueled his desire to continue his education in graduate school with a focus on farmland conservation. Coupled with an eagerness to explore the high plains and intermountain

west, Sam's interest in graduate school took him to Missoula, Montana to pursue a degree in Environmental Studies at the University of Montana.

Sam's graduate thesis explores the role land trusts can play in supporting farmland access for beginning farmers. While in school at UM, Sam also worked for the Bitter Root Land Trust in Hamilton, Montana on a variety of farmland conservation projects.

Sam's deep connection to the people and land of the Leelanau County area drew him back home. In his leisure time, Sam enjoys hiking, trail running, camping, and cooking.

Baby Talk: Meet Our Youngest Conservationists!



We're delighted to have some fresh new faces in our midst. Natural Area and Preserves Manager, Becky Hill, her husband Jason and son Fen welcomed baby brother Ira (pictured right) into their life in May. Conservation Easement Program Manager Yarrow Brown and her husband, Ben, are new parents, having brought Selah Rue (pictured left) into the world in late September. Congrats to all!



Happenings

Seeking New Docents

Our Docents are important ambassadors for the Leelanau Conservancy. These dedicated volunteers lead hikes at Conservancy Natural Areas and Preserves, like Houdek Dunes, Clay Cliffs, or Whaleback, sharing their knowledge with over 500 visitors annually. With the addition of new places to showcase, combined with docent attrition, our need for interested new docents is now.

This is a volunteer commitment that involves some mandatory training and willingness to participate in a set number of hikes per season. “There are no prerequisites other than a love of nature, an interest in sharing it with others, and a willingness to learn,” says Volunteer Coordinator Emily Douglas. “Our spring training program will give you the skills you need to become an effective docent.”

We are also entertaining the idea of training some student docents (high school or college age) who could lead hikes with their peers. To learn more or express interest, contact Emily: edouglas@leelanauconservancy.org or 231-256-9665.

Winter Hike Schedule

At the time this newsletter went to press, our wonderful docents were just getting together to plan the winter hike schedule. They’ve got some great outings on tap to showcase our beautiful natural areas during the winter season and you can see a “month-ahead” schedule at LeelanauConservancy.org/events/hikes. We also announce our hikes weekly on Facebook and in emails.

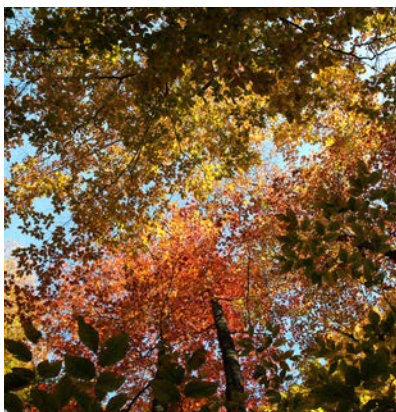
(email cfaught@leelanauconservancy.org to get on our list.)



Visit leelanauconservancy.org to view and sign up for docent-led hikes.

Moving Forward on Palmer Woods (continued from page 3)

road, the possibilities are intriguing. Could Palmer Woods become one of the outdoor trail destinations of Leelanau County? How many miles of trails could we maintain? Could we connect our trails to Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore trails? Can recreation in the forest be linked to education? The answers are, in large part, a matter of resources, says Director Tom Nelson.



Palmer Woods, a four-season destination, is set to open to the public early in 2016.

“If we believe Palmer Woods can be a one-of-a-kind cross-country skiing and hiking type of experience—and it certainly has that potential—additional support and volunteer time can help make it happen. We are grateful for the overwhelming support enabling this purchase and hope to continue “dreaming big”. And we look forward to discovering, along with you, all that Palmer Woods has to offer!

Send Us Your Selfies

We love to see your selfies and read the comments posted on Facebook about your experiences at our natural areas. Here’s one of our favorite “selfies”. Bear the dog enjoys the view from the observation deck at Clay Cliffs Natural Area on an outing with the Hinsch family.



The Garthe Farm (continued from page 1)

Talgo farm, which belonged to Gene's Aunt Christine, in 1985. Gene began farming on the land where he grew up as well as on adjacent parcels that he leased from relatives.

"Joining the three family parcels together as one farm was Gene's long-term goal," Kathy explains. And over time that hope became a reality. Gene and Kathy had the opportunity to buy

"Like the Leelanau Conservancy, Kathy and Gene operate with the philosophy that a good project must be good for both the land and the people involved."

the original Garthe Bluffs Farm in 1999 after the last of Gene's great uncles passed away. Gene credits Kathy's diligent work and dedication to her career at Leelanau Memorial Hospital and Munson Medical Center for their ability to join the parcels back together into the 200-acre farm they now own. Kathy smiles as she pours over a family history book and makes notes of pages for me to consult. She says, "Gene has always had a vision that is consistent with his aunts and uncles — which was to keep the land in agriculture. Long before the Conservancy was formed, this is what we believed in.

Gene is known for his entrepreneurial spirit and love of research and new projects. In 2000 he was approached by two companies about growing organic fruit. The idea appealed to Gene because of his interest in how the land was farmed before the era of heavy chemical and machinery use — and also simply because, in his words, "research fits my personality." Gene is continually interested in moving towards a farming model that requires less inputs and less manipulation, drawing on the wisdom of those farmers who came before.

Garthe Farms produces a variety of fruit, including pears, apples, sweet and tart cherries. Gene produces organic apples primarily for cider. He grows 26 varieties of apples that ripen over a six-week period, which allows him to harvest each type at its peak flavor. As Gene lists off his apple varieties, I can't keep up with my notes — stopping him to repeat a few delicious types I've never heard of, like Swiss Gourmet and Graham Spy. His passion for growing fruit is contagious. After I ask about a particular caterpillar I've been battling on my own few apple trees, Gene brings out the Michigan State University 2015 Guide to Fruit Pests. The book is two inches thick. "This is what keeps me busy!" he says with a twinkle in his eye.

Nikki Rothwell, the director of the Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Station affectionately calls the Garthe

farm, "Research Station North." She describes some of the "crazy things" Gene has encouraged her to do, like ordering a weed steamer from Australia to control weeds organically. Gene always has a research project in progress on the farm and he enjoys collaboration. "When I first came to work at the Research Station, the Garthes welcomed me into their home for dinner and shared books with me," Nikki says. "They both encouraged my work as part of the agricultural community."

It is easy to imagine the warmth of the Garthes extending to Nikki and many other young farmers and farm entrepreneurs. Not only is it important for the Garthes to have their land in a conservation easement, it is also very important to them that the land remain in agriculture so that future farmers will have opportunities to cultivate the land. Kathy says, "We hope that this land will always be used for

agriculture or as a place to conduct research. What is exciting is that the Conservancy is giving us options. We now have a team of people working on this question of how we can keep this land in agriculture."

Before heading home, I get a tour of the buildings surrounding the farmhouse — a beautiful barn with an ancient stone silo, the pig house under a black walnut tree, a former chicken coop

complete with stained glass windows, the granary, tool shed, and an extensive storage building that has doubled as an art studio. All the buildings have been cared for, preserved and renovated for modern uses — like housing family and friends. With respect for generations past, the Garthes have created places for future generations to farm and flourish. Their generous spirit emanates around the property and is reflected in their commitment to see their farm preserved with a conservation easement. Like the Leelanau Conservancy, Kathy and Gene operate with the philosophy that a good project must be good for both the land and the people involved. Because of their vision, the historic Garthe farm will remain in agriculture long into the future.

— Zane Kathyne Schwaiger, former Communications Assistant



Gene Garthe is continually interested in moving towards a farming model that requires less inputs and less manipulation, drawing on the wisdom of those farmers who came before him.

Giving Matters

Welcome New Sustainers: “Tour de Glenn Cyclists”

Every year a group of about 60 bicyclists come to Leelanau for “Tour de Glenn.” For three days, friends from all over Michigan and beyond ride up to 70 miles a day and donate proceeds from the event beyond their costs to charity, specifically the American Cancer Society and the Leelanau Conservancy. “About 80 percent of the group is physicians,” says founder Glenn VanOtteren, a pulmonologist from Grand Rapids. “We truly treasure the beautiful serenity that Leelanau County offers along with some of the best cycling in the country, and

we are grateful for the work the Leelanau Conservancy is doing to keep it that way.”

We welcome the Tour de Glenn Cyclists and the following people to our Sustainers Circle since publication of our last newsletter—thank you! To learn more, contact Gayle Egeler. Annual giving levels begin at \$500. Benefits include special recognition in our publications and events every year where Sustainers can meet our Staff, Board and other Sustainers who share their commitment to our work.

Conrad and Judith
Donakowski
Joe and Dawn Erhardt
Pamela Fraker
Bruce and Cindy Hagen

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Michael and Vicki Ross
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John and Ann Snyder
“Tour de Glenn Cyclists”
Joe and Cate Varley
William Vogt and
Claire Eberwein



Monthly Giving: Become an Evergreen Member!

Giving a small amount every month can add up in a big way, helping us to protect this place we all love. Monthly giving allows you to set up automatic donations, and is the “greenest” way to donate. It eliminates the need for checks and saves money—so your donation goes even further. Sign up/learn more at leelanauconservancy.org or call our office. At year end you will receive a single acknowledgement for your year of giving. We'll stay in touch as we always do, but you won't receive any more renewal letters!



Pictured: The Smiths at their favorite place in Leelanau County, their house on Warden's Point on Lake Leelanau.

The Leelanau Conservancy's work is critically important to preserving what's special about Leelanau County – open land, clean water and unique landscapes. Giving monthly allows for a consistent cash flow into the organization and makes budgeting and donating easy for us. Keeping the organization on our minds each month also reminds us of the many things we are grateful for Up North—even in the depths of winter.”

-- Allan & Melissa Smith.

Checking In

Local Trust and Investment Officers for Chemical Bank stopped by to present Executive Director Tom Nelson with a donation from the bank's northwest Michigan leadership team. The team is allocated funds to disperse to non-profits in their area that they feel deserve their support. “Senior management gets together to discuss area non-profits and who we want to support, says Kathy Dixon (pictured with Bill Newberry and Tom Nelson.) “We love the work of the Leelanau Conservancy. The beauty and uniqueness of Leelanau is why we are all here.”





Honorariums & Memorials

Do You Have a Plan for the Future?



The Leelanau Conservancy can help you design a legacy gift that:

- 1) Helps you achieve your goals
- 2) Provides potential tax advantages
- 3) Supports the Leelanau Conservancy

Call Leslee Spraggins at the Leelanau Conservancy at 231-256-9665 to learn more.

The Richard O. Ristine Heritage Society

Please consult your professional tax or legal advisor about your specific situation.

Give a Meaningful Gift

When you give a Leelanau Preservers gift, you can preserve land in a child's name, and instill in them at an early age that they have a stake in what Leelanau is to become. You can also give a gift to friends or family who love Leelanau. Or, preserve land in your own name. As a result of your contribution, your gift recipient becomes a "Leelanau Preserver." All Preservers gifts fund Land Protection. We keep track of acres preserved and send a beautiful card acknowledging your gift. What a great holiday gift! Learn more at leelanauconservancy.org.



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Suzette Almas & Salvadore LoPiccolo

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Why We Preserve Book—A Great Gift!

Working with iconic Leelanau photographer Ken Scott, the Leelanau Conservancy has published a book of photos and essays about the lands that the Leelanau Conservancy has protected over the last 27 years. The 56-page book features 52 stunning color photographs and seven essays by a cache of writers including renowned chef Mario Batali, CBS Sunday Morning News correspondent Martha Teichner and *Traverse*, *Northern Michigan's Magazine* publisher Deborah Wyatt Fellows.

The book retails for \$25 plus tax, and may be purchased at our office or by calling 231-256-9665. You can also order it at LeelanauConservancy.org (see link on our home page). The book may also be found in local bookstores.





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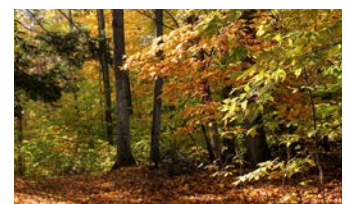
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Conservancy Staff Thanks You!



Every year our staff tries to get out to one of the places we have protected so that everyone can learn about a project or simply visit a place they might not otherwise get to. On a gorgeous mid-September day, we canoed the Crystal River. Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore owns the land along the Crystal now, but the Leelanau Conservancy was instrumental in permanently protecting the 108 acres of wetlands and unique dune and swale habitat. We served as a bridge-builder and took out loans to buy the land and hold it until the park could make it their own. This is the kind of work your membership supports. Thank you! We hope you, too, find your way out to the special places that together, we have preserved for future generations.

