

Sustainers Circle 2020 Virtual Event Speech Transcripts

Ross (From Video)

“All of us at the Conservancy hope you guys are doing well, and your families are safe and that, uh, everyone is feeling good. Because These are extraordinary times and, uh, the most important thing we are all doing is being safe and taking care of our family, and our friends.

It took the staff very little time under the leadership team to figure out on how to work remotely, and, uh, they have been going at it ever since. We’ve been really busy these last four months, we’ve protected a number of additional pieces of land, our fundraising, and communications efforts – all that stuff – has been going really well.

The other thing I wanted to say was that it’s been very interesting how important the natural areas and the work that the Conservancy has don, has been to peoples minds and peace of mind during this pandemic.

Whether just getting outside to get a little air or get a little hike, get a little peace and quiet – a respite from the problems of the world. It’s in a time like this that we really recognize how important the work is that the Conservancy does is to the community and you guys are really at the centerpiece of it. The Sustainers – there are probably 1,100 or so of you out there who support us annually, support the operating aspects of the Conservancy’s business. You support the staff, the equipment that we need, the expenses that we have on an annual basis to raise funding, the technology, the tools – all the stuff that go into taking care of and growing this incredible work of protection that the Conservancy has been doing now for 32 years, I think it’s been.

You know that’s 15,000 acres of land that’s been protected. That’s 50 miles of shoreline and streamline that’s been protected. That’s 28 Natural Areas, AND 180 (conservation) easements that affect wildlife, the flowers and the plants, and our views and water quality and the overall character and scenic beauty of this place.

All of that happens because of the Sustainers! You guys are the centerpiece of it, we cannot tell you how important that is; and how grateful we are for it. What we are doing is preserving the soul of the county; I guess is one way to put it. And I’ll conclude my video remarks by saying Thank You for doing that! Really, from all of us – Thank you.

Go out, enjoy it. Find a natural area, take a walk, take a bike get on the trails at Palmer Woods – enjoy it. Because it’s there for everyone and its there because of you guys. Thank you again. “

Tom (From his notes & video)

“Thank you Ross - I really appreciate that eloquent and heartfelt statement.

I WANT TO SAY HI FOLKS!

You know, our annual Sustainers event is always a really truly delightful opportunity to come together in partnership and friendship. It’s really one of our absolute favorite events of the year, and the entire Conservancy team is so sorry we can’t be together this year. As Ross said, we sure do miss you.

It goes without saying that so much has happened since we met last June. 2020 has been such a tough year—a somber year. But I hope that all the wonderful things that the Conservancy has accomplished, which I’ll share in a moment, will shine some light and joy upon you during this really, really hard year.

But first and foremost, these accomplishments would not have happened without you –your generosity, your support of our team, our projects and programs, and your tremendous commitment to the critical lands and waters of Leelanau County—**Thank You.**

So, what have we done together? We have added three new natural areas:

The Stites Natural area in Suttons Bay – soon to be open to the public, this is the first of our natural areas to be within easy walking distance from a village. With sweeping views, towering trees and gorgeous wild flowers, I am certain that this natural area will quickly become a local favorite!

Pat’s Preserve at Lime Lake – we have just closed on 32 acres of pristine forested wetland that protect the clean water of not only Lime Lake, but also Shetland Creek, Little Traverse Lake and Good Harbor Bay. We so are looking forward to completing a hiking trail so we can share the primeval beauty of this preserve with you.

And an unexpected bonus: We have just completed an addition to this brand new Lime Lake Preserve, protecting 30 more acres—62 acres total—of this ecological powerhouse for clean water for Lime Lake and the Good Harbor Bay Watershed.

And, *you are the first to know!* – We have completed the fundraising campaign for our \$3.5 Million Palmer Woods 1000-Acre Project. As I speak, we are working to close on this fabulous 350-acre addition to Palmer Woods. Truly majestic hardwood forest protects the Good Harbor Bay and Glen Lake Watersheds, permanently protects habitat and a 5-mile border with the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, and will also provide outstanding 4- season recreational opportunities for all who love Leelanau!

Thank You for all you’ve done to help us make this One Thousand Acre Dream come true!

That’s not all!

Since last June, we have preserved 5 family farms, totaling nearly 600 acres:

- The Gallagher Farm -- 172 acres in Elmwood Township
- The Jedena Farm - 81 acres in Centerville Township
- And the Rink, Mawby and Porritt Farms, totaling almost 350 acres in Bingham Township

Permanently protecting these family farms means that they will never be developed and will always be there for local food production. It also means we’ll keep literally tons of sediment, nitrogen and phosphorus from entering our county’s precious waters.

Needless to say, the context we’ve been working in has been remarkable. Much of the work we’ve been doing in this truly *banner* year for your Conservancy has been done by our team *after* the pandemic hit.

- Four family farms
- Pat’s Preserve at Lime Like and the 30-acre addition
- And of course, reaching the finish line on our \$3.5 Million goal for our Palmer Woods 1000 Acre Project

ALL these milestones have been reached *since April of this year!*

Folks, there is no stopping the good work of your Conservancy. We continue to make headway to preserve and steward the lands and waters in Leelanau. Our land protection team is continuing to work with family farmers to protect 10 more farms within the next 2-3 years.

And our stewardship team is working on plans to open our newest natural areas, while continuing to maintain our current properties to provide everyone a space to enjoy nature and outdoor recreational activities.

Because of You, together we can continue to do this great work!

The Leelanau Conservancy's mission is: Conserving the Land, Water and Scenic Character of Leelanau County. YOU, our beloved Sustainers, make it possible for that mission to come to life.

By fulfilling this mission, the Conservancy is also helping to solve critical environmental issues like sequestering carbon, pollution prevention and supporting and protecting clean water. It is your continuing support, and encouragement and generosity that make it possible to fulfill the mission in which you have entrusted to us. I am so grateful for your faith in our team and the Conservancy.

Thank you all, from the bottom of my heart. Because of you, THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE LEELANAU!

Have a safe & enjoyable summer! Thank you."