



There's no place like *Leelanau*.

Conserving the Land, Water and Scenic Character of Leelanau County

Summer Newsletter 2020



From Our Executive Director

*When despair grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting for their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*
—Wendell Berry

I see reasons for hope. I trust you see them too.

Amid all the upheaval in our world today, meaningful work and real healing can come in many ways, from great leaps of progress to the genuine gestures within the work we do each day.

The Conservancy's work has always been and continues to be about sharing the wonders of the natural world and the fruits of our agricultural heritage with everyone who wishes to experience them. In particular, our natural areas and preserves are places where everyone can feel a sense of belonging to something greater than themselves—to “rest in the grace of the world.” A real connection with Nature may not be the answer to all that's happening in our world, but I believe it is most definitely a part of it. It is a true ray of hope that everyone may share in.

In mid-March, like much of the nation, the Conservancy team shifted into working remotely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I'm proud to say that our team's commitment and dedication has been a testament to our mission and to our staff and board themselves, being the professionals they are. In a word, we have been extraordinarily productive and have not missed a beat in protecting our cherished peninsula.

As you'll read within these pages, we are on track to protect more than 1,000 acres of natural lands and

productive family farms this year, including six projects that we've completed in the first six months of 2020. We expect to open two brand new natural areas soon—the Stites Natural Area in Suttons Bay Township and the Cedar River Preserve addition in Solon Township—with the brand new Pat's Preserve at Lime Lake in the offing as well. And, as you may have heard, we have reached our \$3.5M goal to enhance our Palmer Woods Forest Reserve to more than 1000 acres—thanks to so many wonderful supporters, like you!

Last, but not least, we're overjoyed that our 27 existing natural areas have served as places of peace, serenity and quiet enjoyment for more people than ever this year. We have received numerous notes of thanks from so many of you for keeping these natural gems open during the pandemic.

Thank you—because you have made all of this possible.

Together, we continue to work to preserve the wonders of Leelanau, and to offer places of beauty, peace and hope for all. We are grateful for all you do to help us continue our quiet work and to be a part of the answer for which the world yearns.

Sincerely,
Thomas Nelson
Executive Director



Photo of showy lady slippers by Karl Hausler.

Cover photo of pathway to Van's Beach in Leland by Sheen Watkins.

Adjacent to Van's, the Conservancy has protected 240 feet of additional shoreline as well as 300 feet along the Leland Harbor, known as "Hall Beach."

PAT'S PRESERVE AT LIME LAKE

“The community support to purchase two other parcels, and Mr. Lovasz' gift, has truly been amazing,” says Executive Director Tom Nelson. “To have such spectacular 'bookends' on Lime Lake with first the Teichner Preserve, and now the Lime Lake Preserve, is a crowning achievement for our goals to preserve clean water, wildlife habitat and the scenic enjoyment of Lime Lake. And, in this pandemic, we have seen just how important our natural areas have been to those seeking safe places to connect with nature.”

The dream to create a new Lime Lake Preserve has become a reality! In May we closed on the final two parcels that protect 26 acres, over 1,000 feet of shoreline and help to ensure the long-term water quality of Lime Lake and the Good Harbor Bay Watershed.

“We are grateful to the Lime Lake Association for their support—they really understand the importance of protecting these wetlands,” says Conservancy Development Director Meg Delor. “We’ve had an outpouring of support from people around the lake and from the Leelanau Community to help preserve this unique ecosystem.” Meg adds that Martha Teichner, founder of the original preserve, made a generous gift and rallied the Lime Lake community to join her. Finally, says Meg, a longtime Conservancy supporter, Ron Lovasz, has made a significant gift that brought the fundraising results over goal. The new preserve has been named after Ron’s late wife, Pat.

From the new Preserve’s crescent-shaped shore, you can see Sugar Loaf. Across the lake to the northeast is our 40-acre Teichner Preserve. Together, these two Preserves will help to safeguard the stellar water quality of Lime Lake, Little Traverse Lake and Good Harbor Bay. The wetlands here act like a giant sponge. They also stem erosion, trap pollution, and slowly release cleansed water back into the lake.

The Preserve is also a haven for wildlife. Songbirds, red-shouldered hawks, and eagles live in the forest. In the spring-fed stream, brook trout spawn and thrive. Snakes and toads, ducks and otter are also frequently spotted here.

The first 5.9-acre parcel of the new Preserve, which was most at risk of being developed, was quickly purchased last May, thanks to our incredible supporters. The former owner had wanted to build a vehicle bridge over the stream, and install utility lines underneath it. That would have involved excavating 59 cubic yards of earth in a 400-foot long gash—threatening fragile stream bank habitat in the process. The owner had also applied to truck in nearly 500 yards of dirt to fill the wetland, and construct a road.

We wrote more about this ecological treasure and those who helped make it happen in our 2019 Annual Report. You can find that article on our website; just search Lime Lake.

Photo this page of new Lime Lake Preserve by Mark Smith

RINK FAMILY PROTECTS BOSKYDEL VINEYARD LANDS – 55 ACRES

Photo by Mark Smith



Before moving to Leelanau full time in 1987, my husband and I owned a tiny cottage on South Lake Leelanau. We were in our late 20s, and working in Cincinnati. Friends often tagged along to the cottage for the weekend and one Saturday, we discovered Boskydel Vineyard, just up the road from our spot.

Now in my 60s, my memory is not so great. But I'll never forget meeting Bernie Rink, standing behind a long counter in his tasting room, with his brush cut and suspenders. He was cranky. He was gruff. He was unsmiling. "You kids want to taste some of the best goddam rose in the country?" he asked. It was more of a demand than a question.

We tasted. And shyly asked questions and marveled at the stunning views. And like so many who have come and gone from his tasting room, we were charmed by Mr. Rink and his curmudgeonly persona. We bought a few bottles and headed on our way. For years to come, we all recalled that encounter. Bernie Rink was a man who made an impression.

Much has already been written about this iconic Leelanau vintner; one needs only to google his name to come up with a long list of tribute articles, and stories like mine abound. A quote from an *Hour Detroit* magazine article: "We were there once when a couple came in, and he said to them, 'What kind of wine do you like?' The girl answered, 'Sweet.' Bernie promptly responded, 'We don't have sweet!' and continued with us in our tasting."

The tasting room closed in 2017 when Bernie was 91. He and his five sons, who range in age from 51 to 63, made the difficult decision to transition the vineyard to a new owner, but first wanted to protect the land before it was sold. "It was heart wrenching," says Andy, the youngest (pictured at right with his dad.) They began working with the Leelanau Conservancy to forever preserve 55 acres at the corner of Otto and Lake Leelanau Roads with a conservation easement when Bernie was still alive. (Learn more about conservation easements: leelanauconservancy.org/land-protection-toolkit/)

"It was Dad's idea to protect the land," says Jim, his oldest son. "Growing up, he had a saying that he repeated many times over the course of our lives. The gist of it was that you should always try to leave the world a better place than you found it. Which of course, is what working with the Leelanau Conservancy is all about." The papers were fittingly signed during Earth Week, electronically, in the midst of Covid-19.

Bernie worked in the winery well into his 80s, and died in 2018 at age 92. Being a winemaker was his second job; he also served as the Library Director at Northwestern Michigan College until 1986. There, among other things, he is remembered for having established the college's Inuit Art collection, and growing the collection through an annual sale.

He met his wife, Suzanne, at a library conference. She had attended the University of Michigan, and had taken a job as the first children's librarian at the Traverse City Library. They were married and at first lived in town on Rose Street. "But he was like a coon in a cage," says Andy. Bernie longed to be out in the country and bought 16 acres and a farmhouse along Lake Leelanau Drive from Joe and Vivian Bunek, who eventually sold him an additional 49 acres.

Bernie was raised on an Ohio farm during the Depression. His father was a truck farmer, and sold everything at a Cleveland market from beef to pork to vegetables. Bernie's father also made wine in his basement during Prohibition. Bernie, says son Jim, "wanted to give his sons the same work ethic he had grown up with. He led by example and expected us to work hard. And we did." Among their tasks: pruning vines, hoeing weeds, digging post holes, pressing grapes and bottling wine.

"He told millions of people that he wanted to turn his sons into assets instead of liabilities, and he wanted us to go to bed tired at night," adds Andy.

Suzanne became a full-time mom as one son after another was born. "Mom was as much of a steward of the land as Dad was," says Andy. "She was underrated



Photos top and bottom by Mark Smith. Middle photo: Bernie Rink with his son Andy.

and always in the background as Dad had that large and magnetic personality. But she was really the root of it all, and loved us boys and Dad enough to enable it all to happen.”

Bernie was the first to grow grapes commercially in Leelanau, planting a one-acre test plot in 1965. “I really doubt that the wine industry would have happened in the region if not for Bernie,” says fellow vintner and long-time Leelanau Conservancy Board Member, Larry Mawby. Larry met Bernie when he was just out of college and was “a wannabe writer” who gradually turned to winemaking. At that time, Bernie was still making wine in his basement.

“He generously shared all of his knowledge with us aspiring vintners,” says Larry. He describes the Rink farm as “a good vineyard site, with light sandy soils and low fertility which grapes thrive in.” The slopes overlook South Lake Leelanau, facing west and south-- “really good for grapes,” adds Larry. “A mix of trees helps to stabilize a fragile hillside. The land has a lot of potential.”

Farmland Protection Director Kim Hayes worked with the family to close the deal. “I feel honored to have helped the Rink family achieve their goal of protecting their farmland into perpetuity, says Kim. “Having started the process with Bernie was special for me. His role pioneering grapes in Leelanau has forever made a mark in our agricultural history.”

While uncertainty in the midst of the pandemic abounds as to who will take over the property and what they might grow there, one thing is for certain, says Andy. “I’m very glad that as a family we decided to keep it from being developed—that would have broken all of our hearts. At the end of the day it was the right decision and one I will never regret.”

As for Bernie, he continued to make an impression until the day he died. Behind his gruff exterior was an intellectual who had held court for years with local writers and NMC faculty. He read voraciously and was fond of literary quotes which he posted on cardboard around the tasting room. When he was in hospice, Bernie flawlessly recited a long sad poem to everyone who visited. Titled “Around the Corner” by Charles Hanson Towne the poem is about seeking out an old friend only to learn that he had died.

Andy volunteers to read the poem to me over the phone. “I probably can’t get through it without sobbing,” warns Andy. He was right. By the end, I was teary too.

—Carolyn Faught, Senior Writer

Around the Corner by Charles Hanson Towne

Around the corner I have a friend,
In this great city that has no end,
Yet the days go by and weeks rush on,
And before I know it, a year is gone.

And I never see my old friend's face,
For life is a swift and terrible race,
He knows I like him just as well,
As in the days when I rang his bell.

And he rang mine but we were younger then,
And now we are busy, tired men.
Tired of playing a foolish game,
Tired of trying to make a name.

"Tomorrow" I say! "I will call on Jim
Just to show that I'm thinking of him",
But tomorrow comes and tomorrow goes,
And distance between us grows and grows.

Around the corner, yet miles away,
"Here's a telegram sir," "Jim died today."
And that's what we get and deserve in the end.
Around the corner, a vanished friend.

Charles Hanson Towne (1877-1949) was an author, editor, professor, and poet. This poem is in the public domain.

Staying Connected, Now and Forever

Right: Bill and Julie Pumphrey share thoughts on what inspired them to join the heritage society.

Like so many Leelanau Conservancy members who split time between two homes, Bill Pumphrey and his family always long to be in Leelanau. One way they stay connected from their home in Ann Arbor is to watch the sunsets on Good Harbor every night via a video camera that Bill installed in their Leland home. This passion for our peninsula is why Bill and Julie are longtime Sustainers and members of the Richard O. Ristine Heritage Society.

The Pumphreys normally travel to Leelanau a couple of times a month. But it's never enough time, says Bill, who plans to retire in a few years and can't wait to move up north permanently. The pandemic has given him a glimpse of what that life might be like. "When Covid-19 hit, everyone said 'Let's go home to Leland.' All of us consider Leland to be home." Julie is a retired dentist and they have two college-aged children. Bill works for an automotive component manufacturer and was suddenly forced to work from home. So they packed the car and headed north in mid-March.

Now Bill finds himself sitting in Zoom meetings all day, looking out on Lake Michigan. At lunch, the family takes a beach walk. "We have been very lucky to spend two solid months in Leelanau, given the circumstances," Julie said in late May. "Having the Conservancy natural areas to hike at has been a godsend. We've explored many that we had never been to before, like Lighthouse West."

Bill, 60, was raised in Ohio. Julie grew up in Midland. Thirty years ago over Memorial Day Weekend, when they were dating, the couple ventured north and stayed at The Homestead. It was Bill's first time to Leelanau. "I immediately fell in love with it," he said.

They dined at the old Inn at the resort. "It was a beautiful night," recalled Bill. "As we watched the sunset, I asked Julie to marry me."

Julie said yes and they soon became parents and owners of two golden retrievers. They came to Leelanau whenever they could, staying in dog-friendly rentals on Cathead Bay and Little Traverse Lake. In 2004, they bought their property on Good Harbor Bay; Maddie and Matt were 5 and 3 at the time. In 2008, they replaced an old cottage

with a new home.

Julie stopped practicing dentistry which allowed her and the kids to spend entire glorious summers on Good Harbor Bay. Bill would commute on weekends. As they grew up the kids took on jobs. Maddie volunteered at the Leelanau Children's Center, worked at the Harbor House, and later was a counselor at Shady Trails. Matt worked at the Harbor House one summer and home construction another. At the end of summers, they would reluctantly pack the car and head back to Ann Arbor.

Bill said they became aware of the Conservancy early on. Their first gift was in 2006 to acquire a Leelanau Preserver's tile on the Leland Village Green so that their children would always have a physical reminder of the family's support for the Conservancy. A year later they became Sustainers Circle members. On joining the Heritage Society, Bill said, "to us, it was a natural extension of being able to maintain our connection and support to the one organization that we feel does the most to maintain the culture of Leelanau and what this county is all about. Joining the Heritage Society just closes the loop. It ensures that our support, through a small family foundation that we established, continues long after we are gone."

"We are lucky enough to have Leelanau County as part of who we are," Bill continued. "When I die, I'm going to have my ashes put into Good Harbor Bay during something we call 'Diamond Hour' - that's when the sun hits the water and twinkles across the waves like diamonds."



Bill and Julie Pumphrey

Photo by Mark Smith



THE PEOPLE OF PALMER WOODS

And Why They Want to Grow
It to 1000 + Acres

*Photo: Solace Seeker
Emily Douglas gets to
work on the new fern
garden.*

People fall in love with Leelanau Conservancy Natural Areas for all sorts of reasons. Everyone has their favorite place and after 19 years of writing for the Conservancy, I thought I'd heard it all. That is, until I started talking to people about what it is that makes the Palmer Woods Forest Reserve so special to them.

I've been out to this one-time working forest a number of times for other stories since it was protected in 2016. I've wiped out on the groomed cross-country ski trails, met and written about the former owners, hopped over logs on a fern garden tour, covered a Fun Run sponsored by M22. I've seen the stunning fall color and the spring ephemerals along the Price Valley Trail, named for our founding directors.

In writing this story, however, I've come to realize that perhaps more than any other natural area we own, Palmer Woods stands apart. Because of its sheer size, it has the capacity to embrace nature lovers and recreationists, scientists and hunters, toddlers and octogenarians. It is, perhaps, the most multi-faceted of our beautiful properties—not in an ecological sense so much, but in its potential to connect people to the land.

I was blown away that the Leelanau Conservancy could raise the money to buy the first 721-acre majestic forest. Last year, when our organization made the commitment to try to increase the property to a "1000 Acre Wood," I was dubious. It meant taking yet another leap of faith at a cost of \$3.5 million. I have to admit, I didn't think it could be done. Our donors are fatigued, I thought. Well, I was wrong. And once again I was amazed by the generosity of people who think like we do: *There's No Place Like Leelanau*—and are willing to go to the mat to preserve the best of it.

Meet the people who can't wait to make this 1000-Acre Wood a dream come true.

—Carolyn Faught, Senior Writer

The Leader

On a sunny, pre-pandemic February day, Executive Director Tom Nelson welcomed 45 hikers to the 350-acre addition the Conservancy is fundraising for. He told the crowd he wanted them to remember three numbers: 1000, 95 and \$3.5 million.

Before leading them into the hilly woods, Tom explained: "We are on our way to creating a '1,000-Acre Wood'. The price tag on this magnificent proposed addition is \$3.5 million. We are 95% of our way to making this dream a reality. And we need your help to get there."

Five years into his tenure as ED, Tom has watched Palmer Woods develop into one of the Conservancy's most-visited natural areas. He's passionate about this place and the opportunity to add to it for a number of reasons.

#1: Palmer Woods protects clean water in nearby Glen Lake and Good Harbor Bay. "In Leelanau County, we have so much groundwater moving under the forests, feeding into lakes and streams," says Tom. "One of the best ways to keep groundwater pristine is to keep the forest above it intact. Clean water benefits everyone from humans to animals to the plant kingdom."

#2: This massive forest will help to tackle climate change. Fun fact: a mature tree absorbs carbon dioxide at a rate of 49 pounds per year. In one year, an acre of forest can absorb twice the CO2 produced by the average car's annual mileage. A thousand acres can offset a lot of carbon. "The forests are the answer," says Tom.

#3: The trails here are critical to engaging the next generation by expanding opportunities for four-season recreation. (See profiles to follow).

#4: Palmer Woods is home to a working forest laboratory. Two large deer exclosures were constructed in 2017: fenced-in areas

where plants and saplings are off-limits to hungry deer. A multi-year study aimed at determining the effects of deer browse on the health of the forest is in the works.

“When I think about Palmer Woods, the people and the land are always inextricably linked,” says Tom. “People must have a meaningful connection with the land to want to protect it and therefore, engaging the next generation of conservationists is critical to our future. Here in our own little corner of the planet we are saying here is your chance to see, hear, touch, smell and fall in love with nature.”

“The bottom line is that nature is worth fighting for,” adds Tom. “And those who love nature will fight to protect it.”

The Mountain Biker

For Bob Sutherland, owner of Cherry Republic, the mountain biking trails at Palmer Woods have become “my go-to place for our family,” says Bob. “It’s a place for us to have a more active outdoor time that brings us all together.”

“I’m a fan of the adrenaline rush,” says Bob. He and his two sons, ages 13 and 11, tackle the jumps featured on the single-track flow-style mountain bike trails, while his wife, Stephanie skips the jumps and watches Bob and the kids soar through the air. Palmer Woods is just a 10-minute drive from home. Before it opened up to mountain bikers, he drove the family to Arcadia, Bellaire, even up to the U.P. “I can get all of the joy I need right here at home,” he says. “And watching my kids progress on mountain bikes has been a huge blast.”

As a business owner, he’s thrilled to see families from elsewhere spending a full day in Leelanau. “They can bike, then hit the beach, do some shopping, eat out,” says Bob. He’s

excited about the prospect of a longer trail system planned for the new addition. “What we have now is a great 40-minute workout,” he adds. “I’m looking forward the possibility of longer rides, spending maybe three hours in the woods, stopping to enjoy the scenery and taking our time.”

The Family Man

Peter Fisher and his wife Cassidy were born and raised in Leelanau, graduates of Glen Lake High School. Peter was an Alpine ski racer, and won the state’s Division 2 giant slalom and slalom races in 2000. Cassidy went on to Middlebury College in Vermont where she raced on the Nordic ski team. The couple moved back to Leelanau to raise their family, and to take advantage of all the recreational opportunities that the peninsula has to offer. An avid mountain biker himself, Peter says he is “over the moon that we will have a really great network of trails close to home for young families like ours.”

In fact as soon as their oldest son, Ethan (3 ½) was able to strap on skis, Peter had him out at Palmer Woods. And in the summer, Peter carries Ethan’s “strider” bike (one without pedals) until they reach the last part of the East Loop

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Right, clockwise: 1. Mountain bike enthusiast Bob Sutherland (third from left) and his sons help out on a pre-pandemic trail maintenance workbee last summer with Director Tom Nelson (fifth from left). 2. Match makers Ron and Marvel Jones helped make our dreams come true. 3. Recreationist Kathy Dowd-Cook ski-joring with her pup. 4. Dr. Dan Palmer, the former owner of Palmer Woods and fern expert. 5. Botanist Lianna May documents the plants of Palmer Woods. 6. Family Man Peter Fisher teaches son Ethan to cross-country ski.



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bike trail. “It’s amazing what a little kid can do just by pushing and gliding with his feet,” says Peter. “He was having a blast. The terrain has just enough of a descent to help him pick up speed and roll along.”

Peter, a realtor, said that when Tom Nelson reached out for support from the business community, “we were all in.” He and Cassidy were among the first to donate. He is also part of a volunteer group of mountain bikers that is committed to maintaining the trails.

The Winter Rec Enthusiast

Kathy Cook-Dowd, 62, is a retired postal worker who lives in Cedar with her husband, Tim. Her favorite thing to do at Palmer Woods is to go cross-country “skijoring” with her rescue dog, Winnie. Skijoring is derived from a Norwegian term that means “ski driving.” Winnie wears a harness connected to a 10-foot-tether and is free to run. In the process, the dog pulls Kathy along. “Winnie loves going out there,” says Kathy. “It’s a safe way to let her run and it’s the only groomed trail in the area where dogs are allowed. And there’s always more snow out there with higher elevation and the trees that block the wind.”

Kathy also enjoys snowshoeing at Palmer Woods, as well as trail running and hiking. Her husband, Tim, volunteers with Friends of Sleeping Bear, helping to groom trails in the winter, and for the last six years he has also served as an ambassador on the Heritage Trail. Says Kathy: “Palmer Woods is such a great asset for the west side of the county.”

The Botanist

Liana May is intimately acquainted with all that’s green and good at Palmer Woods. The plant biologist has documented 309 species including nine first-ever recorded species in Leelanau. Liana assigned this working forest a “Floristic Quality Index (FQI) score of 54.5.

A FQI is a measurement of the ecological significance of a given area. (To put Palmer Woods in context, Cedar River Preserve, a multi-faceted wetland complex, holds the Conservancy’s highest score of 91.)

“Palmer Woods has a really high score for an upland forest, and is significant at the state level,” says Liana. “Its sheer size provides a diversity of microhabitats—everything from dry steep sandy slopes to sheltered valleys to a stream bank.” She’s helping to conduct a long-term study that will document the effects of deer browse on the forest by studying plots inside and outside of the deer exclosures. “Adding 350 acres will just make a good thing get even better,” says Liana.

The Match Makers

When we approached Ron and Marvel Jones about making a gift to the Palmer Woods 1000-Acre Project, these longtime, generous Conservancy supporters wanted to know how they could best help. After hiking the property with Tom and other staff, they offered a \$500,000 pledge that would match the gifts of other donors, doubling their impact.

The couple spends part of their winter in Ft. Myers Beach, Florida, where they have been going for the last 50 years. Ron says it was once a “beautiful little community, all white sand beaches – small bridges – sandy roads

– no buildings taller than one story for miles, with access to the beaches and bays. “Today it saddens them to see “hundreds of 20- to 50-story hotels and condominiums, limited access to the beaches and mostly commercial buildings. That is the last thing we want to see happen to our beautiful Leelanau Peninsula.”

“We thank God for this beautiful peninsula and also the Conservancy teams and the people of the peninsula for preserving the pristine waters, fields, and forests that make visiting and living on the Leelanau Peninsula such a wonderful and rewarding experience,” says Ron. “Marvel and I are dedicated along with others to continue this outstanding effort. The Palmer Woods project falls directly into the objective of preserving what makes Leelanau so special. With everyone’s help, this wonderful undertaking will be accomplished.”

The Solace Seeker

The former owner, Dr. Daniel Palmer is a fern expert who has written two books. His dream was to showcase the ferns that grow in Michigan on this property and to that end, he and his wife, Helen, have made a gift to establish a new fern garden.

Conservancy Land Steward Emily Douglas, a botanist and also a big fan of ferns, is spearheading the project. She spent a lot of time in the woods last summer working with volunteers to establish the garden. “Palmer Woods’ long connecting trails through such a large hardwood forest are rare in the area,” she says. “The addition means that Palmer Woods will soon share a five mile border with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. It feels like you can really get immersed in something that is much bigger than yourself and really get away from it all.”

This piece was created for and originally appeared in the *Boardman Review's* summer issue.

Photo by Karl Hausler



Going the Distance for Palmer Woods

Imagine running the entire length of M22—117 miles, over a 30 hour stretch. Who would do that? Andy Belanger, that's who, and he did it to raise funds in support of the Palmer Woods 1000-Acre project. He started his run after work the Friday of Memorial Day weekend and paced through the night, which he described as the favorite part of his odyssey. "The pitch black along the National Park where it was so peaceful and I could see the stars, floating eyes and hear coyotes and frogs," said Andy.

He raised over \$5,000 in donations that were matched by two foundations, tripling the amount donated by his fans. "I'm thrilled. I love the outdoors, camping, and keeping our water clean is huge to me. We live in paradise up here."

Andy's intention was to complete the run in 30 hours. But 75 miles in and 21 hours later, he couldn't keep food or water down on a lunchtime rest stop. He had to call it quits for the day, but hit the road again the next morning. "It was Sunday and I thought, I gotta go out and finish this," says Andy. "I didn't want to let people down." Finish he did, 42 miles and 11 hours later.

Executive Director Tom Nelson met up with Andy in Suttons Bay along the way to thank him and hand off a Conservancy swag bag. "He was clearly in a lot of pain," says Tom. "His feet were taking a beating, but he was in great spirits. I can't imagine the stamina and sheer willpower to do what he did. What a guy."



Sustainers Circle Sentiments

Covid-19 forced us to cancel one of our favorite events of the year—our Summer Sustainers gathering. We will miss seeing this dedicated group of people whose annual support has been so critical to our success over the years. The kind and supportive messages that many of you have written on your renewal remittances, like the one below from Lisa and Len, mean the world to us at this time when we can't connect in person.

"We are sustainers, but this is an extra contribution. We have been sheltering in place at our second home in Lake Leelanau since March 12, and we just don't know what we would do without the beautiful Conservancy trails. Talk about sustaining! They have sustained us. Thank you for all the work the Conservancy does that we feel so passionately about but never needed as much as we do now. Best, Lisa Rudgers and Len Niehoff"

Thanks also to Lisa, who shares many of her beautiful images, like this one from Whaleback Natural Area.

A Sustainers Circle membership of \$500 or more annually provides foundational support to ensure Leelanau is protected now and in the future. Sustainers Circle members receive invitations to Sustainers Circle-only events, recognition in our annual report, and insider updates about how you are helping to preserve Leelanau. Six hundred families are making a collective impact. To learn more about joining, visit leelanauconservancy.org/support.



Stewardship Updates

Thanks for Your Patience

We've heard from so many of you just how important our natural areas have been to you during this pandemic. Our members are exploring natural areas they've never been to before and using these places to exercise as well as to escape into beautiful nature during these troubling times.

Our Stewardship crew has been working hard since Governor Whitmer lifted the stay at home order. Their always-challenging job was made more difficult by the lost days as field season was upon us. Keeping our natural areas safe and accessible and in top-notch shape is the job of this crew. They love the work—everything from repairing boardwalks to mowing paths to pulling invasive garlic mustard. They are doing their best to meet our usual high standards, and appreciate your patience and understanding if you see something not quite up to par. If you have to step around a downed tree along one of our trails, or notice that the grass at the Village Green is a tad long, know this: Right now there simply aren't enough hours in the day to get it all done. But we are doing our best to catch up and to carefully integrate our incredible volunteers as stewardship finds its new normal.

Field Notes

1. To save money, our stewardship staff took on mowing and maintenance of the Leland Village Green this year. Our staff also maintains the paths at natural areas like Clay Cliffs and mows around the farmstead at DeYoung.





2. Plant biologist Liana May identifies the moonwort fern at the new Cedar River Preserve addition while conducting a floristic quality assessment (FQA). A FQA is a field based study that inventories the plants in a natural area to inform the conservation value of that area. It helps as a tool to guide and inform our management plans.

3. AmeriCorps Member Molly Fava tackles invasive garlic mustard at Clay Cliffs.

4. The mountain biking trails at Palmer Woods have been a huge hit with the biking community. After some season-starting maintenance to prevent erosion, trails were opened back up in May to a happy audience.

5. The new Stites Natural Area will open soon. At press time our staff had ordered a new sign and was marking trails and boundaries. Stay tuned for updates. This spring Ray Pezzi, who with his wife, Jan, donated the land, discovered pink lady slippers growing there, and took this photo.

6. AmeriCorps Members Anne Rodeck and Molly Fava take a break from pulling garlic mustard at Lighthouse West to visit a vernal pool there. Vernal ponds or pools are seasonal bodies of water that provide unique habitat for plants and animals.

7. We always love planting tree seedlings with school children in the spring. This year that was a no-go. However thanks to our partnership with the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and

Chippewa Indians, over 8700 trees made it into the ground at Chippewa Run and DeYoung Natural Areas with the help of contract labor in May. Among those native species planted for wildlife that can adapt to climate change include American plum and hazelnut, serviceberry and bur oak.

8. A tree fell on the old migrant quarters at Chippewa Run Natural Area. Chase Heise removed the tree after the stay at home order was lifted.

9. Chase Heise maintains signage at Clay Cliffs and adds one-way loop indicators in response to Covid-19. This natural area saw a five-fold increase in visitors due to the pandemic.

10. Covid-19 has us missing our volunteers terribly—and especially during garlic mustard season. Staff and AmeriCorps members tackled as much as they could. We appreciate all of the homeowners who also dropped bags into the dumpster parked at Clay Cliffs, the host site for the county, provided by the Invasive Species Network.

Caring for the Lands

Ultimately, Stewardship is all about caring for the lands that are entrusted to us. We were so happy to see how many of you have turned to our natural areas for exercise and refuge during this time of Covid-19. Our trail counters captured 1044 people in March of 2020 at Clay Cliffs, vs only 188 in 2019. Houdek Dunes and DeYoung also saw big increases in visitors.

“Highest and Best Use” Philosophy Leads to Protection of 80-Acre Fleese Farm

For years Cedar businessman Walter Jedena had long admired the Fleese Farm on the corner of French and Hohnke Roads. He had driven by it many times, always intrigued by the “bucolic” property: its expansive fields, beautiful barn, the house with long johns waving in the breeze off the front porch, the weathered siding. “What’s the story?” he wondered.

One day his assistant arrived at Walter’s Cedar compound and said that a for-sale sign had popped up near the house. It was 1998. Walter jumped in his truck and drove out to the farm. He called the agent listed on the sign, and put a purchase agreement into motion. The 80-acre property was his within a number of weeks.

The former owner, bachelor Raymond Fleese, was in a nursing home and the farmhouse had sat empty for years. Walter says that when he was finally able to get inside “It was if the family had just walked out; there were still egg shells in the kitchen sink.” After taking ownership, Walter cleaned out the house, held an auction, selling off tractors and other equipment. “I had no real plans but felt it was a wonderful property worth investing in,” he says.

In February, Walter protected the land with a conservation easement which removes the development rights from the property. He was compensated for his actions through a federal conservation easement funding program called the Regional Conservation Partnership Program through the Natural Resources Conservation Service, which funded 50% of the project costs. The Leelanau Conservancy’s farmland protection donors covered 25% of the cost and Walter donated 25% in a bargain sale.

Walter Jedena, 80, is not a farmer. In fact, he has made his living as an investor and developer; building quality homes and apartments in Traverse City. Walter also bought and refurbished the property once known as the Red Lion Motor Lodge (now the M-22 Inn) near Suttons Bay. He owned it for 30 years. But with each and every project he has taken on, Walter says “the highest and best use of each property is always at the forefront of my thinking.”

For the next two decades, Walter leased the land to neighboring farmers who grew hay and corn. “Vineyards were starting to come in and I thought the land might be good for grapes or hops,” says Walter, noting its location is along the Leelanau Wine Trail. In the meantime, three farm families nearby protected their land with

conservation easements (Kelenske, Kuhn and Hohnke). Walter began exploring the possibility of protecting his land in 2016.

Walter was born in Romania and spent part of his childhood in an Austrian camp for displaced persons during World War II. His family immigrated to Detroit when he was 10. Walter graduated from the University of Detroit with a degree in Germanic languages, and worked for Xerox, Allstate Insurance and Chrysler. “None of those jobs captured my heart and I wanted to make my mark up here,” he says. He had taken a trip to Lake Michigan and was hooked.

“I decided it was time to pack my belongings,” he adds. Walter was 29. His father helped him to buy his first bay front lot near Elk Rapids. He built a home by himself, “learning by doing,” says Walter. Eventually his parents and other family members followed him to Leelanau.

Walter is continually on the lookout for good investment opportunities, but is always guided by his “highest and best use” philosophy. “Even though I am a developer, I’m sympathetic to not using every parcel of ground to make homes,” says Walter. “I wish for the land to be used to its greatest potential. The Fleese farm had good fertile land. You could put houses on it and make a few bucks. But the value of farmland is that it is there in perpetuity. My reason for conserving it is because 50 years from now, are we going to need more lots for houses or are we going to need land to grow crops on? I think the latter.” The protected farmland contains prime, unique and locally important agricultural soils, and the ecological features include six acres of non-forested wetlands.

Walter worked with Kim Hayes to navigate the detailed, lengthy process. “Working with the Leelanau Conservancy was a very fine experience,” says Walter. “Kim worked really hard, was very honest and forthright, and built my trust.”

“I enjoyed helping Walter permanently protect the Fleese Farm, and truly came to understand and respect his solid dedication to do so,” says Kim. “This is a great project keeping agricultural land in the heart of Leelanau County, and with an easement designed to best serve the needs of farming into the future.”



Walter Jedena





Great Farmland Preservation News: 288 More Acres Protected!

Your Leelanau Conservancy is still saving farmland under a high threat of conversion to development despite the ongoing pandemic. Two more iconic farms rooted in Leelanau County's agricultural heritage have been protected forever with conservation easements. Stay tuned for longer stories to come, but we couldn't wait to share the heartening news that these lands will continue to be farmed for generations to come.

The Porritt Farm in Bingham Township: 136 Acres

Greg Porritt has protected the farm he grew up on that provides the missing link to a corridor of protected lands along Co. Rd 633. This pastoral land is now part of a large block that includes the historic Ruby Ellen and Core Farms, the Stanek Farm and orchards owned by the Gregory family. It also backs up to MSU's Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Station. "The fantastically beautiful Porritt farm adds to a highly productive, and protected agricultural area," says Kim Hayes, Director of Farmland Protection. "It also preserves a wooded slope that is part of a critical wildlife corridor and helps to protect the water quality of nearby Lake Leelanau." The land's proximity to Traverse City and the views put it at a high risk for development, adds Kim. "Multiple home sites here would have irreparably altered the high conservation values."

Greg Porritt: *"Rex Dobson, who protected the first farm in Leelanau, was a huge influence on all of us," says Greg. "His mother, Ruby Ellen was born on this farm. My parents and I were not big talkers. But it was always an implied understanding that the farm should be protected one day."*

The Mawby Family Farm in Suttons Bay Township: 152 Acres

Vintner Larry Mawby grew up on the farm that he and his two siblings, Joan Dunklow and Ron Mawby have protected with a conservation easement. The land is located near Plant Masters of Suttons Bay along M-22; a defunct farm market structure was torn down recently. The family intends to sell the land, much of which is currently managed by the fruit farming operation known as Cherry Bay. "There easily could have been 12 or 13 homes built here," says Kim. The project also protects a 10-acre wetland complex that takes in a groundwater-fed rich conifer swamp. "That complex is a big deal," says Kim. "It's a fantastic wildlife corridor that ultimately connects hydrologically to Grand Traverse Bay."

Larry Mawby: *"My parents and siblings always felt a sense of stewardship, to make sure that the land was preserved and left better than we found it. The Leelanau Conservancy has a track record of being able to do that and my family feels comfortable in entrusting it with that responsibility."*

Both families donated 25% of the value of their land. Federal farmland protection funds through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program of the Natural Resources Conservation Service provided 50% of the cost, and donations from our wonderful supporters made up the remaining 25%.

"We could not be more delighted that the Porritt and Mawby families have partnered with us to permanently preserve their family farms," says Tom Nelson, the Conservancy's executive director. "We cherish their leadership in the farming community, and I know the greater Leelanau Community does as well. We are grateful to these heroes."

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Photo by Karl Hausler

Palmer Woods 1000-Acre Project: We Met Our Goal!

We're thrilled to share that we have reached the goal of raising \$3.5 million for the Palmer Woods 1000-Acre Project! Thanks to our wonderful donors, Palmer Woods will soon encompass 1071 acres and will eventually offer up to 40 miles of hiking, mountain biking, and cross-country ski trails. This project would not have been possible without your support! Please stay tuned to our e-newsletter and social media posts for more updates on the completion of the purchase and eventual public access.

See story on page 8 about all the ways people are using and enjoying this majestic hardwood forest.