

There's no place like Leelanau.

Conserving the Land, Water and Scenic Character of Leelanau County
Fall Newsletter 2020



From Our Board Chairman

I'm often amazed by things living here in Leelanau County. My neighbor saw a bobcat not so long ago at one of the Conservancy's preserves while walking early with his dog. That's pretty cool. The early morning is a great time to see something inspiring on the trail.

The other day I was reminded of the ferocity of the wind that can bear from the northwest. One day, a pleasant 75 degrees and gentle breeze. The next, a gale blowing with freighters taking shelter off of Suttons Bay. You know those days. Part of the magic of living in this county.

In the year of Covid, I've been amazed by the resilience and dedication of the Conservancy's staff and board, and at what they have accomplished during these challenging times. Since mid-March when we shut the office to work remotely, the team has closed on five farm conservation projects (totaling 498 protected acres), and five more farm projects are under contract that will protect over 500 acres. Thank you so much to our farm families who partner with us in these efforts.

We also established "Pat's Preserve at Lime Lake" (our 28th natural area) and closed on three other land parcels that will protect sensitive wetland, water quality and important habitat. Incredibly, the team also completed its fundraising goals to permit the addition of 350 acres to the Conservancy's Palmer Woods Forest Reserve. This will take the Reserve to over 1,000 acres and eventually expand the hiking, biking and cross-country trail system to 40 miles. Covid or not, the Conservancy's work continues, as does the extraordinary resourcefulness and commitment of our team.

Clearly the Conservancy's Natural Areas, Preserves, Forest Reserves and protected farmland have been important to the well-being of all of us this year. Particularly when so much of the normal richness of our lives has been curtailed. The hike at Kehl Lake. The float down the Crystal River. The bike ride through Palmer Woods. Sitting on that bench in the meadow at Clay Cliffs that looks east over Lake Leelanau to the mid-peninsula orchards. Places restorative to our souls in a disruptive world. We are heartened by how many of you take advantage of those resources.

In a year with so much economic hardship and uncertainty, we are also amazed at how generous the Conservancy's supporters continue to be. The stewardship of our protected areas and the continuing effort to protect more land and water takes considerable

resources. We are immensely grateful to those of you willing to support the Conservancy financially and/or with your time. No matter what the gift, you are with us, helping, and we are so grateful. There's so much work left to do and it all starts with our members, donors, volunteers and land partners.

On a personal note, I'm surprised at how quickly my 10 years of serving on the LC board has passed. It will end this October, as it will for a few other fellow long-time board members. Thank you Emil Brolick, Bob Gilbert, Ed Ketterer and Warren Watkins for all your contributions. Those four are super smart and dedicated board members with a collective 35+ years of service to the Conservancy. That's remarkable.

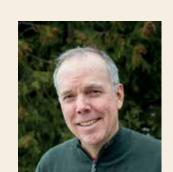
I think all of them would agree that stepping away from the Conservancy leaves a melancholy feeling. There are so many tremendous people on the board and staff. That has been true since Bobbie and Ed Collins started this important adventure 33 years ago. I have not worked with another team of such talented and genuinely nice, good-hearted people. They care deeply about our natural environment. About the plants and animals and our unique ecosystems. About the water quality and prime soils. About the natural and scenic beauty of the county. And about the health and well-being of those who live or visit here. Our board service may end in a Zoom meeting, without hugs or handshakes. But we'll certainly feel the Conservancy is in strong hands going forward, with a great team and extraordinary supporters.

And one last thing to end on. What's most amazing about the Leelanau Peninsula is the people who live here. Their character. Their willingness to help. Their friendliness and authenticity. Their appreciation of our natural environment. And their recognition of how critical it is to preserve and protect it.

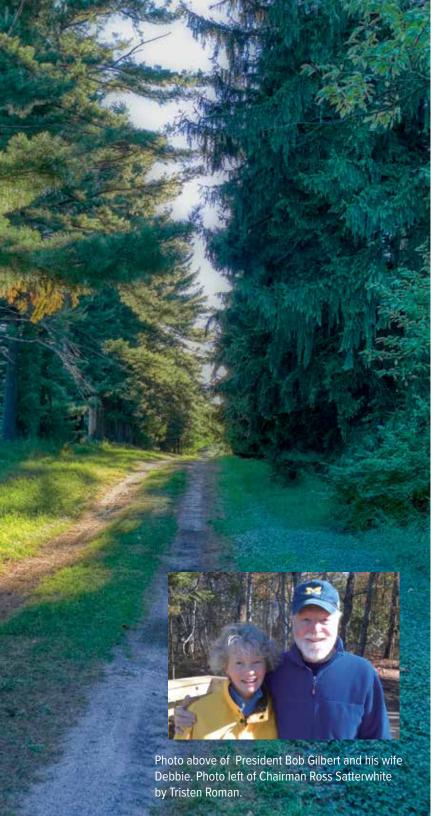
Thank you all for caring so much about the soul of this place.



Ross Satterwhite Board Chairman







From Our Board President

COVID-19 certainly has affected many lives. Debbie and I are no exception. Rather than head south in the winter like many of our Leelanau pals, we head west to the ski resort of Sun Valley, Idaho. We were scheduled to return to our beloved Leelanau Peninsula in April, when it became apparent that the virus made the trip problematic. It was either a three-flight, four-airport plane trip or a 2,000-mile drive through states that had closed their rest areas. And the flights were cancelled in any event. So we are trapped in Sun Valley until a vaccine or effective treatment materializes.

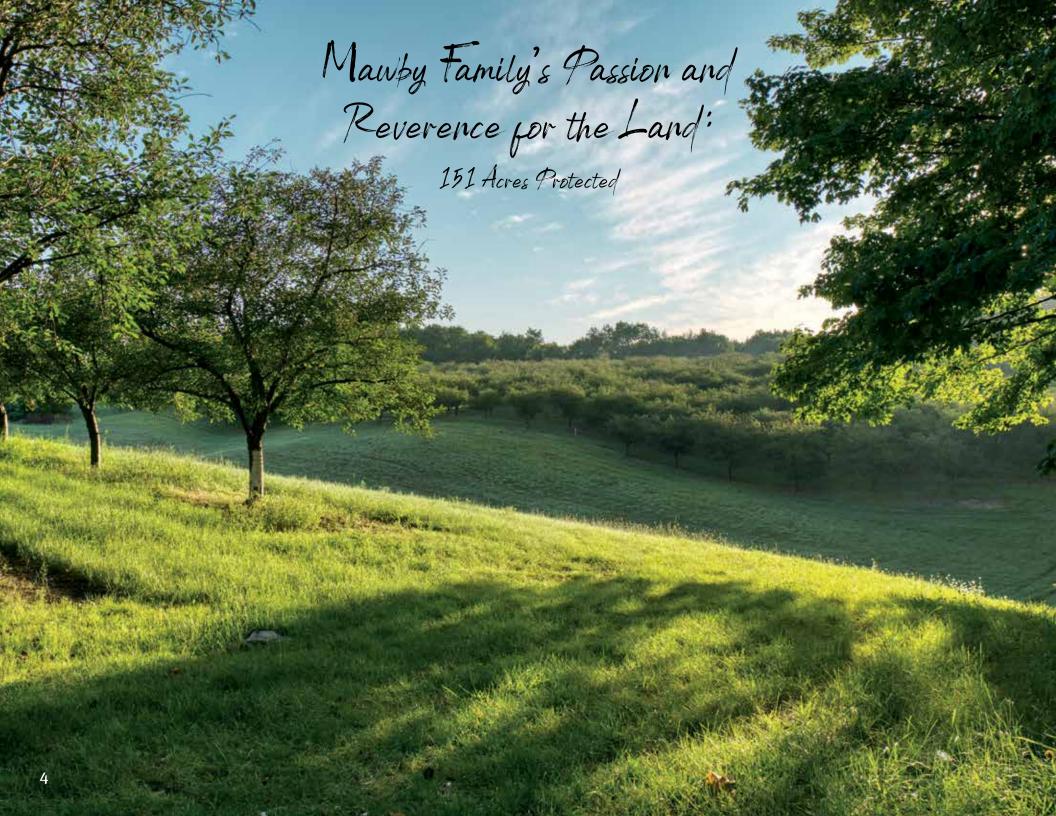
When we have expressed our preference to be in Northern Michigan to our friends and neighbors in Sun Valley the usual reaction is surprise and disbelief. After all, this is the playground for the rich and famous (as well as for plain old skiers like us). Many have flocked here to avoid the pandemic, and just about everyone we know is from the East and West Coasts. To them, Michigan is "fly-over" territory. So these poor souls have never had experiences like this:

- Viewing the always different, always fabulous sunsets over the Manitous from the Lake Michigan shore.
- Walking the boardwalk through the beautiful cedar forest in the Swanson Preserve.
- Hiking to the platforms at Clay Cliffs or the Whaleback and taking in the beauty of the Manitou Passage.
- Hiking the Ridge Trail in the Krumwiede Forest Reserve in the fall and looking across the valley to the brilliant scarlet maple trees in the Palmer Woods Forest Reserve.
- Paddling through the incredible Cedar River Preserve and picturing yourself in the Everglades, minus the alligators.
- Driving or cycling on a back road and being stunned by the beauty of a cherry farm in bloom, or tidy rows of grape vines on a rolling hillside,

- often with the blue of Lake Michigan or Grand Traverse Bay in the distance.
- Savoring the harvest season which brings to market wonderful cherries and apples, and the pies and ciders which are made from them. Not to mention sweet corn.
- Touring our wineries and sampling some of the nicest white wines produced anywhere, winners of national and international gold medals.
- Watching a thunderstorm moving majestically across Lake Michigan from the west.
- Swimming, playing and body-surfing in fresh water with a firm sand bottom and an absence of worrisome things like sharks and Portugese man 'o war.
- Hiking through a forest filled with trillium at Clay Cliffs and elsewhere.
- Cycling the Heritage and Leelanau trails with their constantly changing and often stunning views.
- Hiking the exquisite Kehl Lake trail.
- Savoring a meal of Carlson's fresh caught fish.
- Need I also mention the delights of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore?

So, dear friends, we long for our sweet peninsula and realize once again why its preservation is so worth fighting for. And we are mightily grateful that you do too.

Bob Gilbert Board President



Ron Mawby's memories of growing up on a fruit farm just outside of Suttons Bay are poignant. He recalls how the kitchen in their house had a big picture window in it over the sink facing west. "At bloom time out that window was a vista of white. Mom insisted each year that we all come look. I recall being struck by both its beauty and the sense I had that Mom took it as a gift. It was given to us, yet had to be worked for in order for the gift to continue," says Ron.

Ron and his siblings, Larry Mawby and Joan (Mawby) Dunklow have ensured that the springtime vista, as well as a spectacular view in the other direction—overlooking Power Island and Grand Traverse Bay—will never change. In May, the siblings protected 151 acres with a conservation easement—a tool that keeps the land in private hands, but restricts it from development forever (see box on page 6).

Their father and grandfather, Ed and Wesley Mawby, purchased this farm in 1953. Ed and his father were major fruit growers and owned multiple farms from Grand Rapids to Garden in the Upper Peninsula. Ed was a man who enjoyed rural life. As Grand Rapids' development inched closer to his 80-acre farm in Rockford, the third-generation fruit grower and his wife, Virginia, opted to move the family north to the then-quiet outskirts of Suttons Bay. In 1963 they made it their year-round home.

Larry was just entering high school; Ron and Joan were 11 and 7. All three have strong feelings about this beautiful land, located up a long dirt drive across from Plant Masters and abutting the Donnybrook Farms subdivision. The Mawby orchards are currently managed by a local operation known as Cherry Bay Orchards, Inc. A farm market once operated by the Mawby family along M22 was recently torn down in preparation for conservation of the land.

Increasing development nearby motivated the family to protect the land. "Everyone wants to come up to Leelanau because it's so beautiful," says Joan, who lives near Suttons Bay with her husband, Dave. Together, they run Dunklow Maintenance. "But it's not going to be the same Leelanau we love if everyone develops their

land. I want others to be able to experience the beauty and peace that we did growing up here."

Larry, a retired grape grower and vintner was the only one of the three to become a farmer. He is no stranger to land protection, having served on the Leelanau Conservancy's Board of Directors for many years. In 2008, during a break in his Board service, he protected 32 acres known as L. Mawby Vineyards with a donated conservation easement.

On the land that he and his siblings have protected, "There easily could have been 12 or 13 homes built," says Kim Hayes, Farmland Protection Director. The project also protects a 10-acre wetland complex that includes 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."

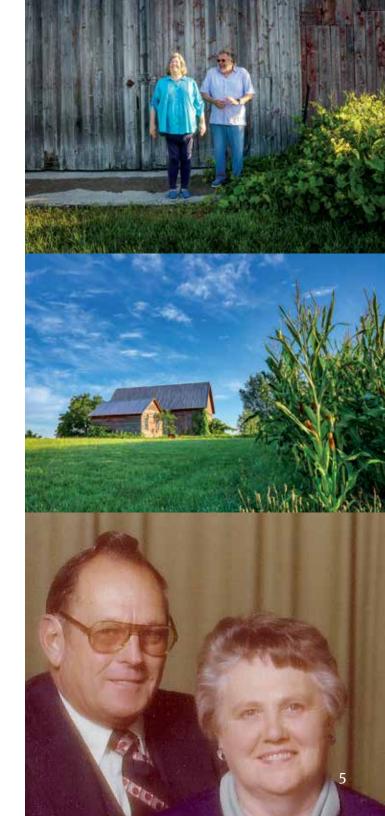
"I want others to be able to experience the beauty and peace that we did growing up here."

— Joan Dunklow

"What I love about the Mawby family is their commitment to something greater than themselves, their passion and reverence for the land and water intertwined with their love of their parents," says Tom Nelson, Executive Director. "It is powerful and it runs deeply through the work of the Conservancy. Larry, Ron and Joan's commitment to their mom's and dad's legacy is truly an inspiration to all of us." That commitment includes the family donating 25% of the fair market value of the land to the project costs.

"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," says Larry. "The Leelanau Conservancy has a track record of being able to do that and my family feels comfortable in entrusting it with that responsibility." Continued on page 6...

Photos of the Mawby farm by Mark Smith: Larry Mawby and sister Joan Dunklow (pictured above right) were raised on this farm along with brother Ron. All three say that preserving the land honors their beloved parents, Ed and Virginia Mawby (bottom photo).



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In July, the family put the protected 151-acre farm up for sale, as well as a separate adjoining 10-acre parcel with a farmhouse and barn.

It's a decision that all three think would have pleased their beloved parents. "My dad was a visionary—well-known and well-loved in the fruit industry," Joan says. "My parents loved living 'up on the hill' and truly enjoyed working together in all of their various farm business ventures. They felt that their life and land was a blessing."

"During his career he was involved in all aspects of the fruit business," adds Ron, a retired college professor who lives in Kentucky. In addition to managing multiple farms and retail markets, his father had sold fertilizers and was a partner in fruit-packing and processing plants.

Despite Ed's preference for being in the orchards, Joan notes that her father did love talking about and selling fruit to the public. He also loved to educate people on the varieties of apples that he grew.

"My dad had an insatiable curiosity about the fruit industry," adds Ron. But the thing Ed enjoyed most was producing the fruit, and without great fruit-growing land, says Ron, you can't grow great fruit.

He recalls the luxury of walking in to the orchard after school "to eat the best two bites of an apple and toss it away. I got spoiled growing up on fresh fruit and didn't realize how unusual that was."

Although he left Suttons Bay after high school and has since lived all over the country, Ron returned to Suttons Bay during college summers to work in the orchards with Larry. He has a "deep attachment" to this spot. "I spent my Saturdays mowing and the views were spectacular; really wonderful. I value having learned a piece of land, where I knew where all the big rocks were and knew it the way you know your own house, and can reach for a light switch in the dark."

Lunchtime daily business meetings with his parents and siblings "gave me an education on how things get done, and the complexities and difficulties," says Ron. "It was a family business and a team. You got a visceral sense of what has to happen for things to work. Dad loved being a fruit grower and my mom and Joan did the bookkeeping, worked in the farm market, and looked after the house. They were a real couple in business together."

Joan has three sons who all have great memories of hunting with her father and "driving up and down the rows of fruit trees with my mother, throwing mini bars of soap under the young trees to deter the deer. They all understand what we've done and are appreciative and supportive of protecting the land," says Joan. "This is one of the few stretches left that isn't houses. We can't let go of everything; we just can't or we won't be what Leelanau County is anymore."

Ron agrees. "My wife grew up in Silicon Valley and when she was a child there were cherry and apricot orchards everywhere, which are now paved over and filled with houses. I don't want to see that happen to Leelanau County. I'm not a big player in anything; not wealthy and don't have power but I do have the ability to preserve something that is beautiful and to create a lasting legacy." —Carolyn Faught, Senior Writer

What is a Conservation Easement?

Private lands like Mawby Farms are protected with a legal agreement known as a conservation easement—a somewhat confusing term because the word "easement" can sometimes denote access, which is not the case. All of the private lands that the Conservancy has protected with conservation easements are not open to the public and remain in private hands. This legal tool restricts development on the land, protects its natural features and each agreement is tailored so that it does what is best for the land and the landowner.

Funding: The Mawby and Porritt families donated 25% of the fair market value of their land. Federal farmland 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%.







2020 Volunteer of the Year-Mark Smith

 ${f F}$ or the last few years, Mark Smith's beautiful photos have graced the covers of our newsletters and appeared on our website and social media. More recently this retired educator has functioned as quasi-staff, volunteering to go out and shoot photos of all of the major land protection stories. "Mark's beautiful photos, from the wetlands at the Lime Lake Preserve to the stunning views from the Boskydel Vineyards, have helped in immeasurable ways to convey the visual story of our work," says Executive Director Tom Nelson.

Mark spends hours out in the field, from early dawn to sunset, capturing the essence of Leelanau. In this newsletter, Mark photographed all of the Mawby and Porritt farm images, including the cover photo. Many more compelling photos of these two farms can be viewed on our website. Thank you, Mark, for not missing a beat during the pandemic, and for your beautiful work, more needed than ever during these uncertain times.

Volunteer Update

Summer is usually "THE" season of volunteers and something we all look forward to. As many of you know, volunteering this year has been limited, and though we haven't been able to meet for our traditional work-bee gatherings, so much work has been done! You are all amazing!

Quietly behind the scenes and in unconventional ways, many volunteers have been doing their thing for the Conservancy this season. So many things! From trail stewarding, to the wild flower rescuers, photographers, some small groups like the bike trail crew at Palmer Woods. Add to that our amazing docents, our two Huron Pines AmeriCorps members, yoga teacher Katherine Palms, as well as those that have been keeping up the Little Library, the work at the Village Green and DeYoung Farmstead. Finally, all the wonderful Board and committee members that have participated in many Zoom meetings keep us all energized and inspired.

We really accomplish so much more than would ever be possible with you as part of the Conservancy team.

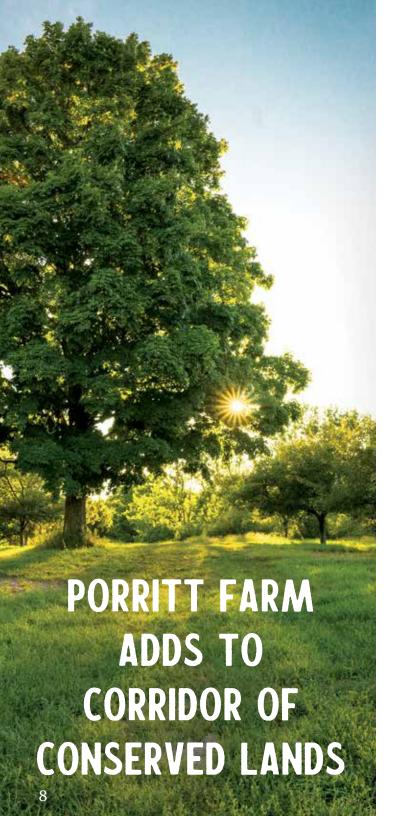
And, I can't forget all the NEW volunteers that have come to us wanting to lend a hand, it's truly inspiring and a beam of light to connect with so many great folks who want to help us care for Leelanau. If we haven't been able to put you to work just yet, we look forward to more opportunities to get you in action soon.

And, we have some exciting new concepts in the works. Stay tuned!

While Covid has diminished our ability to have full capacity volunteering, it has only increased our gratitude for our volunteers.

Thank you for all you do!

Lindy Kellogg Events and Volunteer Manager



Rex Dobson was the very first farmer in Leelanau to permanently protect his land from development. In 1999, he worked with the newly formed Leelanau Conservancy and the state of Michigan to forever preserve 90 acres of his Bingham Township farm. Named for his dear mother, the historic Rex Dobson Ruby Ellen Farm is now a non-profit community resource, and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Rex's family story and his reverence for the land have been well-documented in film and in print (www.rubyellenfarm.com)

This story is about Rex's younger neighbor and friend, Greg Porritt, who two decades later, has followed suit, protecting his nearby 136 acres with a conservation easement* (see box on page 6). It is the farm that Greg grew up on with his parents, John and Nancy, and his four sisters. The Porritt farm adds to a corridor of protected lands along Co. Rd. 633. This pastoral landscape takes in the 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 (see map).

"The fantastically beautiful Porritt farm adds to a highly productive 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, now 64, was just 11 when he moved into the farmhouse where Ruby Ellen had been born in 1903. That fact alone intertwines the two men's history; and the ensuing decades further solidified their bond. Rex passed away in 2011, but like all great people, his legacy lives on. Greg says he was hugely influenced by Rex's example.

Greg's dad, John, was not a farmer. He had taken a job as a construction manager in Traverse City, but his daughters loved horses and that's how they ended up with this farm and its beautiful old barn. They purchased the home and 136 acres in 1967. Greg's dad leased some of the land back to Rex, who continued to grow hay, oats and corn there.

Rex was a lifelong bachelor farmer who lived with his parents. He and Greg first connected along Co. Rd. 633. Rex was hauling a load of hay and recruited Greg on the spot to help him. "I was all of 90 pounds, soaking wet," says Greg. "I could barely reach the pedals on the tractor." He recalls delicious fried potato lunches prepared by Ruby Ellen, and how Rex had "an uncanny ability to know just the right time to bale the hay, which can mold if it's not at the right time."

Greg is the oldest of five and worked for Rex every summer. After graduating from Suttons Bay High School in 1974, he studied forestry and took a job as a forest technician for a time under the DNR. "I was 12 years old when Dutch elm disease came through in the late 60s," he says. "That was a big influence on me; it made such an impact visually when all of those diseased trees were logged."

Greg married his high school sweetheart, Joy LaCross, in 1978 and they had three children. When his parents retired and built a home on nearby Lake Leelanau, Greg and Joy bought his parents' farmhouse and four acres in 1988. By this time, some of the land had been converted to cherry orchards under leases with first the neighboring Stanek family and later with the Gregory family. Ultimately, in 2017, after his parents died, Greg inherited the farm.

Years earlier, the Porritts had enrolled 80 acres of their land in a Leelanau Conservancy program called FarmAbility. This 10-year program paid farmers annually to keep their land undeveloped, but was not a permanent protection solution. "My parents and I always had an implied understanding that the farm should be protected one day when the time was right," says Greg.

For Greg, that time is now. His wife, Joy, died suddenly of a heart attack at 58 in 2015. He is disabled after a benign brain tumor impaired his balance, hearing and vision in 2010. Still, he walks this land he loves often.



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On the day we met for this story, we traversed a beautiful two track flanked by white pine and spruce trees that leads up into the orchard. Greg stopped often to bend down and toss branches aside. He pointed to an old pear tree among spruces that likely sprang from a discarded core. On the other side of the hill, lays Lake Leelanau.

"When Rex protected his farm, it got me and my folks thinking about what could happen here," says Greg, who turned thoughts into action. Like Rex, his land is now protected with a conservation easement, ensuring that this iconic farm and birthplace of Ruby Ellen will remain undeveloped and available for future generations. Greg's generous donation of 25% of the fair market value of his land helped to make this project happen.

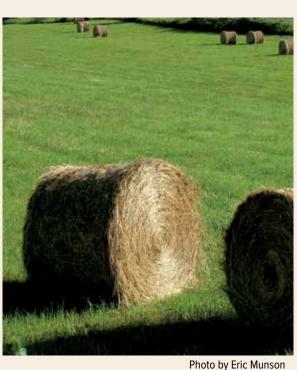
"When Rex protected his farm, it got me and my folks thinking of what could happen here," says Greg, who turned thoughts into action.

"I had the pleasure of getting to know Greg's parents, John and Nancy Porritt, about a dozen years ago," says Tom Nelson, the Conservancy's executive director. "It wasn't hard to see the deep bond they had with their land—a quiet reverence and respect. Clearly they passed that depth of love on to Greg. It's also not hard to imagine John, Nancy, Joy and Rex all looking down on Greg with a profound pride for the commitment he's made to their legacy, to which Greg has now joined in earnest. I can tell you that we at the Conservancy are grateful beyond words." —*Carolyn Faught, Senior Writer*

Private Land Protection... What's in it for You?

Did you know...that the Leelanau Conservancy has worked with over 180 landowners to protect nearly 12,000 acres of private lands—including farmland like Greg Porritt's? Protected private lands are not owned by the Conservancy, and they are not open to the public for hiking, hunting or exploring. But even though the public can't access these incredible places, we all benefit from their protection. The views, wildlife and water quality we all enjoy are the direct result of private lands protected with a tool called a conservation easement. Learn more about conservation easements on page 6 and on our website.





Nemeskal Farm Protected

Just as this newsletter was going to press, we closed on farm #5 for 2020. We are excited to report that the Nemeskal family has permanently protected 74 acres in the beautiful 'Bohemian Valley' along Co. Rd. 669 in Cleveland Township. The land contains approximately 40 acres of agricultural land, 15 acres of hardwoods, a spring-fed pond, eight acres of wetland and 16 acres of prime, unique and locally important soils. The family will retain the existing farmstead and continue agricultural practices on the fields, which are currently in hay, along with conducting forest management of the hardwoods under an approved management plan. Stay tuned for a more in-depth story to come on this project.

"My brother, sister and I are pleased to have part of our 160-year-old farm become protected and preserved through the Leelanau Conservancy," says Mary Ann Nemeskal. "I think our father would be very happy to know that his childhood home will stay the way it is today and has been for the last 33 years."

Good Government and Money Talk

A significant portion of the funding to permanently protect Leelanau's farmland comes from the federal government through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The rest of the funds come from donors like you, as well as landowners who contribute by selling conservation easements to the Conservancy for less than fair market value.

In September, our local NRCS office invited us to host a site visit meeting. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation, Bill Northey, was in the area and wanted to meet with local stakeholders. The meeting took place at the recently protected Mawby farm. Larry Mawby as well as fellow farmers Don Gregory and Jim Nugent attended. All three men have also served on the Leelanau Conservancy's Board of Directors. Kim Hayes, Director of Farmland Protection, helped to put the event together—masked, socially distanced, and outside the entire time.

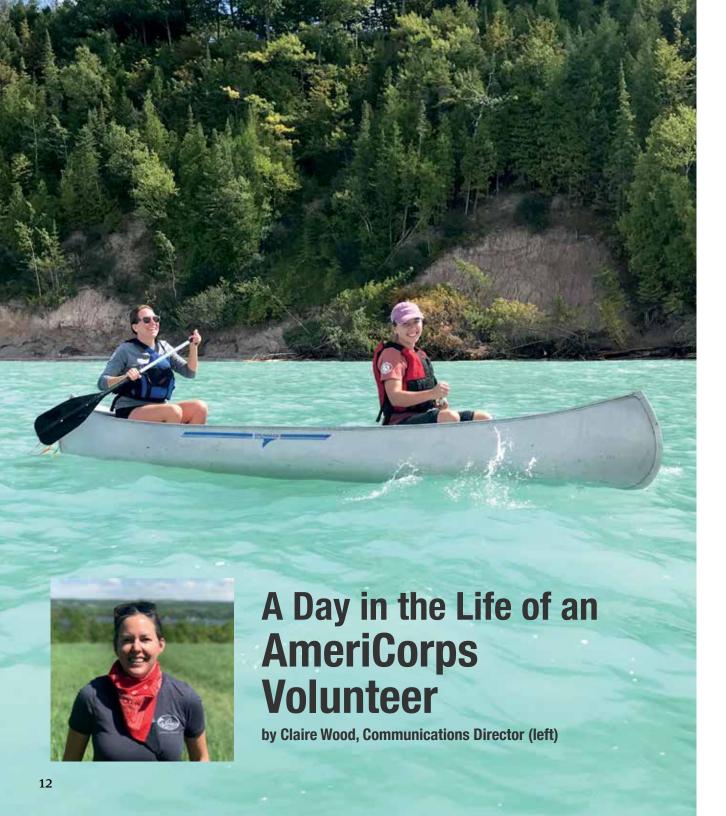
"It was a really great meeting discussing the UDSA funding support for protecting farmland,"

says Kim. "We shared lots of thanks and also talked about what works great about the program and where we believe there could be changes to improve it. We shared that we have been incredibly productive working with so many landowners with NRCS's help and financial support. And that our list of interested farmland owners (about 20 at this time) is long and that we need support for years to come in order to meet the need."

The meeting lasted about an hour. "The Undersecretary seemed engaged and to be a really good listener," says Kim. "I also received an open-door invitation from our State Conservationist to call him if we have a project that seems to be in a logiam due to the federal process. He said he'd help move it along if at all possible. We left the meeting committing to work together to reduce the timeframe needed to close these projects. Hopefully, the Undersecretary will think about us and Northwest Michigan when new funding cycles come up."



Left to right: Don Gregory, Jim Nugent, NRCS Undersecretary Bill Northey, Kim Hayes, Larry Mawby, Jason Kimbrough (NRCS District Conservationist), Garry Lee (NRCS State Conservationist), and Bill Elder (NRCS Area Conservationist)



We set out from Leland Harbor in two canoes on a calm, sunny morning in late August. The hypnotizing ripples of turquoise water sparkled from the sunlight as I gazed south towards Whaleback. I had joined our two AmeriCorps members, Molly Fava and Anne Rodeck, to monitor the shoreline of Clay Cliffs Natural Area. With the record-high water levels, the only way to reach it without swimming was a 5-mile round-trip paddle.

Sitting in the front of the canoe with a notebook and camera in hand reminded me of my days as an AmeriCorps member on the famed Au Sable River. I fondly recall that summer full of new experiences—tromping around in waders mapping old fish habitat structures built in the '60s, avoiding fly-fishermen while paddling the "Holy Waters" to scout for invasive purple loosestrife, and hiking the sandy riverbanks to plant cedar saplings. AmeriCorps offered me the opportunity to literally "get my feet wet" and gain experience in the conservation field.

I spent the previous year living in a cramped studio apartment in Chicago's Lincoln Park, making the 45-minute commute each way to a Southwest suburb to work for a leading publishing company. I was in my mid-20s, and while I enjoyed the editing work, I discovered I did not like the stress of city life. I dreamed of an idyllic life in the woods where I could stare at the stars every night if I wanted to. At the same time, I had become quite interested in the environmental movement. I jumped at the opportunity to move up north and work for a worthy cause. AmeriCorps was that opportunity.

AmeriCorps is a national service program—think the domestic Peace Corps—devised by President Kennedy in 1965. Each year, 75,000 people participate in volunteer, full-time service to give back to their communities and gain career experience. AmeriCorps members receive a living stipend and education award in exchange for their service. This is the Conservancy's 4th year hosting members through Huron Pines' program, and the help they provide our stewardship team is tremendous. "They do so much to keep

our natural areas accessible and maintained," says Director of Natural Areas and Preserves Becky Hill, who supervises the AmeriCorps team. "They're the eyes and ears of our natural areas, and their excitement for what they're learning and seeing is energizing."

Although Molly and Anne had never monitored by boat before, they eagerly took off on the journey, in awe of the towering cliffs above us. We watched with wonder as a Bald Eagle dove from a dead white pine to fish. We traversed the ombre blue waters for about an hour until we finally reached Clay Cliffs.

Stewardship staff monitors each of our 28 natural areas every year. But Clay Cliffs is unique. Here, Molly and Anne took photos and documented signs of recent erosion (there were many), looked for invasive species, and observed the observation deck above. We saw giant Petoskey stones too big to carry, massive chunks of clay and old-growth trees that had fallen 200 feet into the water. We lingered, savoring the remoteness and the last bits of summer sun on our faces.

Clay Cliffs was the fifth property the pair had monitored this year. Anne's favorite was Soper Preserve: "there are so many different habitat types there—swamp, upland, cedar forest. We saw a coyote den and found a huge pair of antlers." Molly agreed; she loves trekking to "places where people haven't been." They spend much of the rest of their time doing trail maintenance; one mows and the other weed whips. They also agree on their favorite part of that job: the people (and pets!) they encounter. "Folks always thank us for our service and keeping up the trails," says Anne. Garlic mustard was also a never-ending task for the two for about six weeks this spring, "but without volunteers due to Covid-19, it was tough to make much headway," Molly says.

Another tough reality thanks to Covid-19 was the lack of in-person training that Huron Pines usually offers. They also missed out on team bonding and networking with the 30 other Huron Pines AmeriCorps members scattered across Michigan, a valuable perk of the "Corps" experience. "But I feel really lucky to

have Anne here," Molly says. A native of Dearborn and recent graduate of Tulane in New Orleans, Molly has a strong foundational background in ecology and evolutionary biology but says AmeriCorps has given her much-needed "real-world experience." She goes on, "it offers a broad scope and variety you might not get going straight into a job. And it has helped me figure out what I like and don't like."

Anne, a Leelanau local with a teaching background, wants to mesh that experience with her passion for nature. She loves the animal world and using the forest as her classroom, and hopes to one day find a career blending both of her passions. "AmeriCorps gave me a year to practice and dig deep into learning, and I'm grateful for that time," she says.

Becky adds, "I've been amazed at the quality of the members that serve with us. Each one has different skills, and the program allows the freedom for members to build service projects around their interests. Looking at our members who go on to grad school or start their careers, I know their time in AmeriCorps was formative".

We hugged the shoreline as we paddled back to the harbor. The wind picked up and it was getting choppy. This was different than river paddling, but my muscle memory kicked in. I watched as Anne and Molly splashed through the waves undaunted. As we paddled, I reflected on my life-changing AmeriCorps service, and how it led me to where I am today. It was the entry-point to my career, how I found my purpose, and how I met my husband. Almost a decade later, many of the 15 members from my group still keep in touch. Hopefully, this experience is the beginning of something wonderful for Molly and Anne as well. When we finally reached the dock, none of us were fazed. My arms were floppy and my back was already sore as we lifted the canoes into the trailer, but a smile spread across my face. These are the days we live for, days adventuring in the field. They remind us of why we do what we do and inspire us to keep going. All in a day's service.







It's Official: Majestic Palmer Woods Grows by 350 Acres!

Good things take time. Some of the Leelanau Conservancy's biggest and best projects were decades in the making. Saving the Crystal River. Preserving the iconic DeYoung Farm and shoreline. And now, Palmer Woods and its new 350-acre addition join the list. In the process, this vast, enduring place of serenity and play offers even more now for you, your family and friends.

It's been a complicated and time-consuming process, but three separate landowners have made it possible for this majestic natural area to grow to 1,070 contiguous acres. The addition also expands a shared border between Palmer Woods and the National Park to five miles.

"We are just incredibly grateful to these three landowners for making this project possible," says Tom Nelson, Executive Director. "And of course this dream come true would not have happened without the extraordinary generosity of our lead donors. Longtime supporters Ron and Marvel Jones inspired others to give with their amazing \$500,000 match, which helped immensely to propel us toward our goal."

The Carls Foundation provided an additional \$500,000 match to help acquire the land and the Ball Foundation donated \$1,000,000 toward trail development. "The Glen Arbor business community really stepped up too, and of course, Andy Belanger's epic fundraising run of the entire length of M-22" adds Tom. "Together, with over 300 other donors, we were able to raise the needed \$3.5 million to make it happen. It's just truly astounding and we are so fortunate to have this kind of support."

The 1000-plus acre wood will continue to safeguard the clean water of nearby Glen Lake and Good Harbor Bay, benefitting wildlife, swimmers and anglers alike. "In addition, we are providing a world class, four-season recreation facility right here in Leelanau County, adding to the economy and well-being of our peninsula," says Tom.

When the expanded trail system is complete, Palmer Woods will offer up to 40 miles of four-season recreational opportunities for hikers, cross-country skiers, and

mountain bikers of all ages and abilities. "People asked for this, and the response has been amazing," adds Tom.

"It's wonderful that Palmer Woods is enjoyed by so many," says Dr. Dan Palmer. He is the patriarch of the family who sold the first 715 acres to the Leelanau Conservancy, and for whom the Reserve is named. The Palmers have generously donated 14 acres to the 350-acre addition project. "Our family is happy to see it expanding for even more recreational and conservation opportunities, and are pleased to donate the 14 acres. We're looking forward to further explorations in the woods!" (Learn more about the Palmer family on the Palmer Woods page of our website.)

To complete the project, the Conservancy purchased 36 acres from Walter Jedena and 300 acres from Harvey and Marilyn Warburton. This is Walter's second land protection project in the last 12 months, whose story we told in our summer newsletter. It is also on the News page of our website.

The Warburtons' beautiful land, stewarded by the couple for nearly three decades, is located on both sides of Wheeler Road. They acquired five adjoining parcels between 1992 and 2000. "We just wanted woods, saw it as a safe investment, and never intended to build here or develop it," says Harvey. "Any thought we ever had of using it meant keeping it as it is."

Harvey adds that they were drawn to the land because it is connected to the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Two kettle holes, unique geographic features, are some of their favorite parts of the property. Thoughts of putting up a rustic cabin were explored, but never materialized, adds Marilyn.

As a boy, Harvey's fondest memories include walking in the woods with his father and uncle. Marilyn also grew up with a nature-loving father who took her fishing and hiking. "We wanted a place where we could hike with our family, let our dogs off leash, smoke a cigar if I wanted and where our sons could safely hunt," says Harvey. The Warburtons also own a home on Glen Lake, which they

moved into from Detroit after Harvey retired from Chrysler. In 2008, the Warburtons bought 2000 red pine seedlings from the Soil Conservation District and had them planted. Although the deer ate many of them the first year, enough survived to create a beautiful entrance to the property on the west side of Wheeler Road.

"It's such a powerful and humbling thing to witness first-hand the passion of so many good people who came together to make this dream come true," says Tom.

The Warburtons hired forester Dick Cooper to ensure that under his watch the forest quality would remain high. "We had no thought of selling timber but John Martin told us about Dick," says Harvey. "Dick's philosophy is always about maintaining the long-term health of the forest." Selective harvests culled trees that Cooper thought would die in the next 10 years. Into the openings, new trees would spring up and "20 years later the forest is better off than it was," adds Harvey.

The Warburtons held on to 20 acres that adjoin the addition and are glad that the property they have loved for so many years will remain conserved. The Warburtons spend part of the year in Seattle, where two sons settled. "It's going to be this way when our boys come back with their kids to walk on Leelanau Conservancy trails," says Harvey. "They will see turkey and deer, birds and coyotes and can say, 'this used to be Grandma and Grandpa's land."

"It's such a powerful and humbling thing to witness first-hand the passion of so many good people who came together to make this dream come true," says Tom. "Well over 1,000 acres of majestic forest is a truly extraordinary legacy. And it belongs to everyone who made it possible." Watch LeelanauConservancy.org for news of trail openings.

Photo left: Harvey and Marilyn Warburton with their pup, Woody, on the land they have stewarded for over two decades.





Groundwater streams from the Heffron property feed into nearby Lime Lake, contributing to the lake's high water-quality and stellar fish habitat. Photo by Mike Robinson



"Pat's Preserve" at Lime Lake Grows with Addition of 30-Acre Heffron Land

Last fall, when staffer Kim Hayes visited the Allan J. Heffron Trust property near Lime Lake, she spotted bear scat. A few months later, on a winter visit, she discovered a hefty paw print along a snowy path. "I was so excited," says Kim, Director of Farmland Protection. "It was just great to see bear presence in different seasons suggesting that bear is living there." Giant white pines, a rich conifer swamp and diverse wetland habitat nurture a plethora of wildlife and plants on this special land. Plus, groundwater streams from the Heffron property feed into nearby Lime Lake, contributing to the lake's high water quality and stellar fish habitat. What a place.

In June, thanks to past unrestricted gifts to our land protection fund, we were able to purchase this ecological gem from the Allan J. Heffron Trust. The acquisition is located at the corner of Narlock and Maple City roads. On the other side of Maple City Road lies the new 26-acre "Pat's (Lovasz) Preserve at Lime Lake" with 1,000 feet of shoreline (see map). The Preserve is named for project donor Ron Lovasz's beloved late wife. (See story on our website.)

Pat Heffron and her late husband, Allan, bought the two parcels totaling 30 acres in the 1980s. "We knew then that it was an important parcel of the watershed," explains Pat. "Our intention was to protect the lake from what could have happened." The Heffrons were significant donors to the Teichner Preserve

project because of the love they and their extended family have for Lime Lake.

"Our kids all grew up fishing, water skiing and swimming on Lime Lake, and we have many cherished memories," says Pat. "If you spend time on Lime Lake you can't help but realize how unique it is; a hidden gem, really. The water quality is top tier in the state. We just wanted to protect those elements that have real value and to be good stewards of the lake."

Last fall, Pat happened to attend a Lime Lake Association meeting where Executive Director Tom Nelson and Fund Development Director Meg Delor presented plans for the Conservancy's new Preserve. "It was serendipitous," says Pat. "I don't always attend those meetings but was so excited when I learned about the project, and thought it would be perfect to try and incorporate our land someday." Soon after, she and Kim began working together on the purchase.

Lime Lake Association President Dean Manikas, who presided over that meeting, is thrilled too. "We are extremely grateful to the Leelanau Conservancy and its contributing membership for the commitment to protect water quality in the Good Harbor watershed," says Dean. "The new Preserve is a sensitive wetland with a meandering stream that filters and conveys the largest source of surface water to Lime Lake. Accolades go out to the team for their vision to cobble the private properties together to form this natural treasure."



It's OK to be Anonymous

The Leelanau Conservancy receives gifts from many donors who prefer to keep information about their charitable giving private, including people in the Richard O. Ristine Heritage Society* who have included the Leelanau Conservancy in their wills.

Reasons for anonymity?

- Some don't want their names in the donor list
 - -They don't want friends or family members to know
 - -They don't want other charities to know
 - -They don't want institutions (banks, attorneys, newspapers) to know
- Some don't mind their names listed, but don't want the amount disclosed
- Some might make tentative plans that could change and they don't want to raise false hopes for the charity

It's all OK! The Leelanau Conservancy strives to honor our donors' wishes, including requests to be anonymous. Some anonymous donors (in print) are happy to come to our annual Heritage Society party (in person). We are sorry we can't have the party this year.

Contact Meg Delor, Development Director, or Leslee Spraggins, Planned Giving Officer, if you're interested in leaving a legacy to the Leelanau Conservancy—including anonymous gifts.

*The Richard O. Ristine Heritage Society, named for a Leelanau Conservancy planned-giving hero, recognizes those who have included the Leelanau Conservancy in their estate plans—if they allow us to.





























Stewardship Updates

- 1. A bright green tree frog blends in with its environment at Chippewa Run Natural Area.
- 2. Due to high water levels, the Kehl Lake observation dock was raised this summer. Photo by Rick Gans.
- 3. Norte taught kids classes at the Palmer Woods bike trails this fall, teaching youngsters to ride safely.
- 4. Sunbeams illuminate a fern gully in Palmer Woods.
- 5. A trail group met every Tuesday at Palmer Woods to maintain trails from erosion and keep them safe.
- A small group of Hagerty employees volunteered to help with the fern garden project at Palmer Woods Forest Reserve this summer.
- 7. Stewardship staff surveyed and scouted trails for the new addition to the Cedar River Preserve, slated to open in late fall 2020.
- 8. Thanks to Katherine Palms for teaching Conservancy Yoga and Meditation virtually this summer. Here she is at Conservancy-protected Hall Beach in Leland.
- 9. Vibrant blue eggs found in a ground nest at the Cedar River Preserve's wetlands.
- Land Steward Chase Heise ponders the algae growing at the Cedar River Preserve addition's kettle hole in July.
- 11. Chase Heise "repointing" a corner of DeYoung's historic upper barn using traditional mortar and hand tools, taught by volunteer Steve Stier.
- 12. A monarch rests on native wildflowers blooming along the bike trails at Palmer Woods.
- 13. The Creek at the new Lime Lake Preserve. Staff are working to assess the ecological value of the property and create a trail plan, with the preserve planned to open to the public in 2022.
- 14. Rare carnivorous pitcher plant at the Cedar River Preserve.

All photos by Conservancy staff unless indicated.

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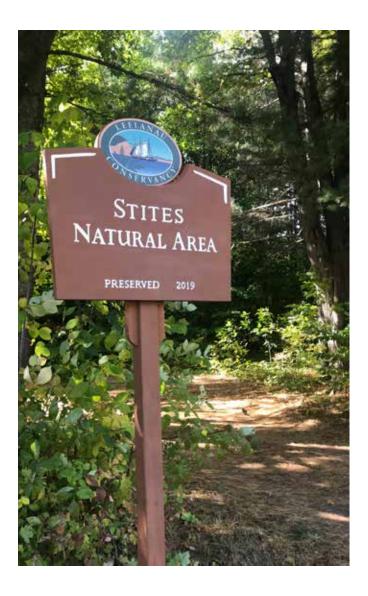
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A Suttons Bay Gem: Stites Natural Area is Now Open!

The new David and Phyllis Stites Natural Area near the village of Suttons Bay is now officially open! We are grateful to Ray and Jan Pezzi for donating this beautiful land for the benefit of wildlife and the Leelanau community. Spectacular ridgeline views, majestic hardwoods and fabulous fall color are all on tap at this new ecological gem. The new Stites Natural Area, named for Jan's parents, is located on West Broadway, about two tenths of a mile up the road from the Suttons Bay Post Office. For more information visit our website.

