

There's no place like Leelanau.

Conserving the Land, Water and Scenic Character of Leelanau County 2020 Annual Report

From Your Director

The more things change, the more they remain the same. —Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr

W riting in 1848, Karr's epigram was intended to assert that while things may appear to change outwardly, that which is most meaningful to people remains constant. For more than three decades, we have experienced little change in Leelanau since the Conservancy was founded by an act of profound foresight and grace by Ed and Bobbie Collins. The forests, the clear water, the orchards and fields, and the vibrant villages of Leelanau have thankfully stayed much the same, thanks in no small part to all of you—our Conservancy Family.

Then came 2020. A global pandemic. Tragic loss of life, with families, friends and communities struggling for connection. Businesses closed and jobs lost. Social and political strife not witnessed in a half-century. An urban exodus that continues with no end in sight. And, here in Leelanau, we have not gone unscathed.

Gratefully, 2020 brought welcome news too, thanks to you. News that we've been able to deliver over the course of an extraordinarily challenging year. Successfully adding 350 spectacular acres to our Palmer Woods Forest Reserve, now 1070 acres and protecting a five-mile border of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. The generous gifts that gave us the new Stites Natural Area, a stone's throw from the village of Sutton's Bay, and Pat's Preserve on Lime Lake. Both have now been acquired by the Conservancy and have new trails planned or are in progress. Same too for the ridgeline addition to our Cedar River Preserve. Not to be outdone, we completed five private forest and farm conservation projects—now putting us within pit-spitting distance of 200 conservation easements.

All told, together in 2020 we conserved 954 acres of our precious peninsula. We also witnessed dramatically more people than ever enjoying a connection with the Leelanau's land and water at our 28 natural areas and preserves.

Our plans for 2021? We have four new family farms we're working to permanently conserve, with several more in the

planning stages. In response to the overwhelming popularity of our trails and a growing interest in more of them, we have plans for new trails at Palmer Woods, Cedar River Preserve, Stites Natural Area and Pat's Preserve at Lime Lake. We also expect to complete the renovations of the historic farmhouse at the DeYoung Natural Area, which will become a community focal point for conservation stewardship, volunteerism and more. 2021 will also be a major planning year for the Conservancy, including a new comprehensive survey of our members and our community, as well as the work to craft our next multi-year strategic plan.

And, I'd be remiss in failing to mention we'll be wishing a fond farewell for our long-serving storyteller, Carolyn Faught, who will be retiring this spring. Be sure to read Carolyn's parting thoughts on page 15, with an essay by former Conservancy board member, and founder and editor-in-chief of *Traverse, Northern Michigan's Magazine* Deb Fellows. We love you, Carolyn. Needless to say, we will miss you!

And so, despite all the changes we witnessed in 2020, and the ones to come as well, what strikes me most is how the love of land and water has stayed the same. There has always been something uniquely special about Leelanau that brings us together and reconnects our hearts to the peninsula and to each other. What incomparable

gratitude and grace there is in that.

Together, let us continue to strive to keep it this way.

Thomas Nelson

Executive Director



Cover photo by Sheen Watkins Photography, photo right by Mark Smith, Tom's photo by Tristen Roman



Board Chair's Message:

Leelanau County is a land of spectacular natural features and amazing farmland. The Leelanau Conservancy is working hard to



farmland. The Leelanau Conservancy is working hard to protect some of the best of both landscapes. While we have a great story to tell about protecting both of these areas of concern, my focus in this report will be on our efforts to protect farmland.

Leelanau County is home to many types of agriculture, but it is the production of tree fruit and wine grapes for which the peninsula is most recognized. We are blessed with some of the best sites for fruit production in the country. This occurs due to a combination of the climate moderating influence of Lake Michigan, rolling topography that allows spring frosts to flow off the hills into low areas and deep, well drained soils.

The challenge is that the same features that make this area so good for agriculture also make it attractive

for residential development. The result is that the price of farmland is driven up due to the ability to develop housing, making it difficult for the next generation of farmers to afford. This "decoupling" of land value from its potential to generate income from agriculture is commonly found around expanding cities, but does not commonly occur in most farming areas of the country. When farmland is broken into small parcels and sold for development, the resulting fragmentation of the land makes it no longer suitable for commercial agriculture.

The Leelanau Conservancy is partnering with the farming community and others to help address this issue. When property is purchased in the United States it comes with many rights and some limitations. One of those rights is the right to split the land into smaller parcels and to convert the property from agriculture to another use, within the limitations of zoning and other laws. We at the Conservancy work with farmers who wish to see the land remain available for farming into the future.

The tool used by the Conservancy and farmers is a Conservation Easement (CE). The CE is an attachment to the deed that prohibits certain development rights, depending on the particular CE. Other rights remain with the property, i.e., the property remains in private ownership, and the owner can decide whether or not to allow forestry, hunting, etc. The land does not even have to be farmed, but it cannot be developed and therefore remains available for farming. Acquiring a CE is often referred to as a purchase of development rights. In some cases farmers have donated Conservation Easements to the Conservancy, but most often farmers are not in a financial position to do so and therefore need to have some compensation for the CE.

Fortunately, national policy makers have recognized the importance of maintaining highly productive farmland and have developed a program at United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that partners with conservancies and farmers to establish conservation easements. Typically, the USDA provides 50% of the development value, the Conservancy pays up to 25% and the farmer donates approximately 25%. This program is really important to our success because for every \$1 the Conservancy invests we get \$4 worth of protection.

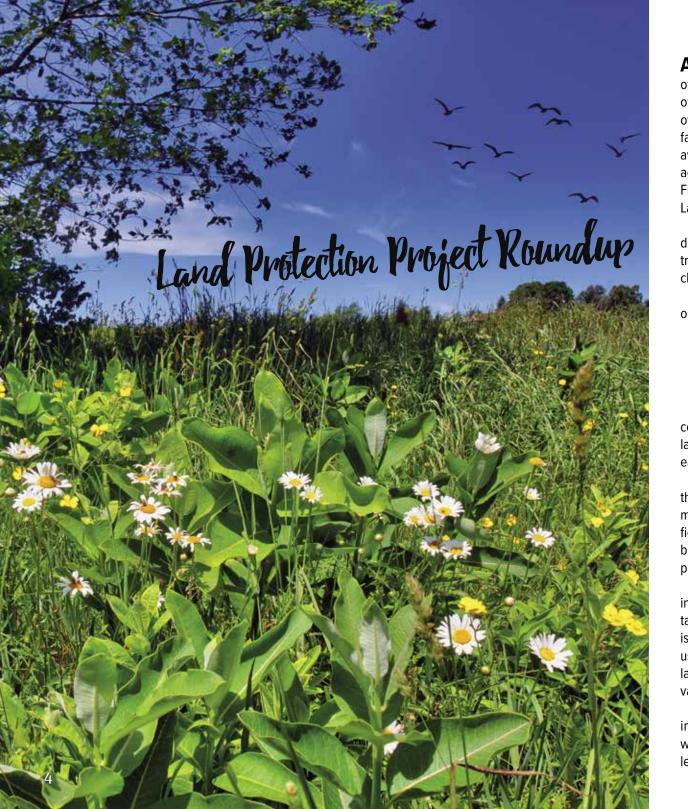
In 2020, the Leelanau Conservancy partnered with USDA and farmers to protect 500 acres of farmland on five farms. This brings the total to over 5,500 acres of land on 70 Leelanau farms that have been protected either through programs involving USDA assistance or from total donations by farmers.

At this point in time the pressure is increasing to convert land from farming into housing, but at the same time we are seeing ever increasing interest on the part of farmers to partner with the Conservancy to protect their land from future development. We are also blessed with successfully acquiring additional USDA funding for that will allow us to leverage approximately \$10 million for farmland protection.

We are making a very significant difference by helping to maintain farmland and assisting the transfer of farms to the next generation. We sincerely appreciate the tremendous financial support of our members and the strong interest of the local farming community.

Together we will help keep Leelanau a land of highly productive farms and amazingly beautiful scenery with an abundance of diverse flora and fauna.

Jim Nugent Board Chair



As the year came to a close, it was pretty incredible to look back over 2020 and realize that with your help and the dedication of some wonderful landowners, we closed 13 projects, totaling over 954 acres. Some highlights: An unprecedented number of family farms were protected (five) totaling 500 acres—forever available to generations of farmers to come. In addition, we added 350 beautiful acres to the Palmer Woods Forest Reserve. Finally, we created the new natural area, Pat's Preserve on Lime Lake. Even more amazing, we did it all in a pandemic.

Your support makes all good things possible! Here's a rundown of what we accomplished, listed by date. We have a tradition of ringing a cowbell in the office on the days projects close. This year we had to do that virtually.

You can read the longer stories about all of these projects on our website.

Walter Jedena Protects 81 Acres of Farmland on French Road Project Completed 1/30/2020

Just before our office was closed due to Covid-19, we completed a project that had long been in the works, protecting land known locally as the old Fleese farm with a conservation easement.

For years, Walter Jedena had long admired the property on the corner of French and Hohnke Roads. He had driven by it many times, always intrigued by the "bucolic" land: its expansive fields, beautiful barn, the house with long johns waving in the breeze off the front porch, the weathered siding. When the property was listed for sale, he quickly made an offer.

Walter is not a farmer; in fact he has made his living as an investor and developer. But with each and every project he has taken on, says Walter, "the highest and best use of each property is always at the forefront of my thinking. I wish for the land to be used to its greatest potential. The Fleese farm has good fertile land. You could put houses on it and make a few bucks. But the value of the farmland is that it is there in perpetuity."

The Jedena property contains prime, unique and locally important agricultural soils, and six acres of non-forested wetlands. This land is private and not open to the public. Photo left by Mark Smith

Iconic Boskydel Vineyard Land: 55 Acres Overlooking South Lake Leelanau Project Completed 4/22/20

The late and legendary Bernie Rink was the first to grow wine grapes commercially in Leelanau, planting a one-acre test plot in 1965. "I doubt if the wine industry would have happened here if not for Bernie," says vintner and past Conservancy Board Member Larry Mawby. "He generously shared his knowledge with all of us aspiring vintners."

Before Bernie died in 2017 at age 91, he and his five sons began the process to forever protect their land with a conservation easement. "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."

Thanks to the Rink family, this ideal grape growing site will forever be available to future farmers. This land is private and not open to the public. Photo top right by Mark Smith

Pat's Preserve on Lime Lake Completed: 25 Acres Added in 2020 Project Completed 5/20/20

The dream to create a new preserve on Lime Lake became a reality in 2020. We began this project in 2019 with a 5.9-acre purchase, and last year we acquired two more parcels (25 acres). The new preserve protects over 1,000 feet of shoreline and helps to ensure the longterm water quality of Lime Lake and the Good Harbor Bay Watershed.

The new preserve is named in memory of Ron Lovasz's late wife, Pat. "Ron's significant gift brought the fundraising results over goal," says Meg Delor, Development Director.

From the new Preserve's crescent-shaped shore, you can see Sugar Loaf. Wetlands here act like a giant sponge, stemming erosion, trapping pollution, and slowly releasing cleansed water back into the lake. It is a haven for wildlife; the forest is home to songbirds, red-shouldered hawks and eagles. In the spring-fed stream, brook trout spawn and thrive. Snakes and toads, ducks and otter are also frequently spotted here.

One former owner had wanted to fill wetlands, build a vehicle bridge over the stream and install utility lines underneath it. That would have threatened fragile habitat and created untold disturbance. An ecological catastrophe diverted, thanks to our supporters and caring landowners. Plans for public access here are in the works; stay tuned. Photo middle right by Mark Smith

The Mawby Farm: 152 Acres Near Suttons Bay Project Completed 5/22/2020

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.

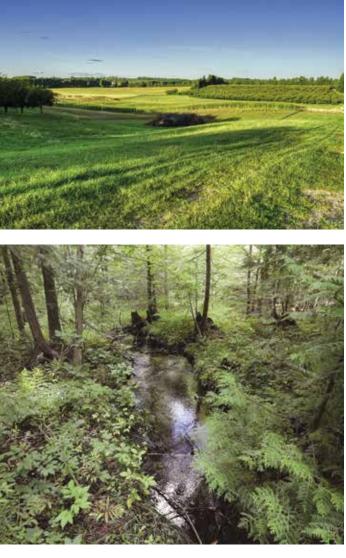
Ron and his siblings, Larry Mawby and Joan (Mawby) Dunklow have ensured that the springtime vista, as well as a spectacular view in the other direction—overlooking Power Island and Grand Traverse Bay—will never change. In May, the siblings protected 152 acres with a conservation easement—a tool that keeps the land in private hands, but restricts it from development forever.

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. "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." This land is private and not open to the public. Photo bottom right by Mark Smith continued on pg 6











continued from pg 5

Porritt Farm: 136 Acres along CR 633's Agricultural Corridor Project Completed 6/3/20

Greg Porritt has preserved the farm he grew up on that adds to a large block of protected lands along CR 633. It is near the historic Rex Dobson Ruby Ellen farm—the first farm in Leelanau to be permanently protected. Also adjacent or nearby: the Core and Stanek Farms, and orchards owned by the Gregory family. MSU's Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Station lies just south.

"This fantastically beautiful farm also preserves a wooded slope that is part of a critical wildlife corridor and helps to protect the water quality of nearby Lake Leelanau," says Kim Hayes, Director of Farmland and Easement Programs. The land's proximity to Traverse City and the views put it at high risk for development. "Multiple home sites here would have irreparably altered the high conservation values," adds Kim.

"Rex Dobson was a huge influence on all of us," says Greg Porritt. "It got me and my folks thinking about what could happen here. My parents and I were not big talkers. But it was always an implied understanding that the farm should be protected one day (with a conservation easement)." This land is private and not open to the public. Photo left-top by Mark Smith

Heffron Land Protects 30 Acres: Near Pat's Preserve on Lime Lake Project Completed 6/29/20

Thanks to unrestricted gifts to our land protection fund, we were able to acquire this ecological gem from the Allan J. Heffron Trust. The acquisition is located at the corner of Narlock and Maple City roads—not adjacent to but near Pat's Preserve at Lime Lake.

Giant white pines, a rich conifer swamp and diverse wetland habitat nurture a plethora of plants and wildlife including bears! The Heffron family purchased the land in the late 1980s and offered it for sale to the Conservancy after learning about the new preserve on Lime Lake. "We knew that it was an important parcel of the watershed," says Mrs. Heffron. "Our intention was to protect the lake from what could have happened. Our kids all grew up fishing, water skiing and swimming on Lime Lake and we have many cherished memories. If you spend time on Lime Lake you can't help but realize how unique it is; a hidden gem, really." This land will eventually be open to the public. Photo middle left by Michael Robinson

> Nemeskal Farm: 77 Acres in the Bohemian Valley Project Completed 8/26/20

See story on page 10. Photo top right by Mark Smith

Dechow Family Protects 30 Acres in the Bohemian Valley with 2nd Donated Conservation Easement Project Completed 12/28/20

For the second time, Paul Dechow and his wife, Joanne Blum, are conservation heroes. They have donated a conservation easement and protected 30 additional acres adjacent to their 105-acre home and property, on which they donated a conservation easement in 2017.

This project closes a gap between Krumwiede Forest Reserve and their first conservation easement. The 30acre hardwood forest also lies adjacent to Palmer Woods and the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, adding to a large block of protected lands.

The Dechows purchased the 30 acres from Paul's sister and her husband, Lynn and Jim McAndrews, wanting to add more hardwood forest to their property.

Paul enjoys collecting wood from downed trees for woodworking projects. As with the first project, Paul says that he and Joanne wanted to "see the land stay the same for future generations." The Dechow family history in this area runs deep and is detailed in a story on our website written after their first project. (Search Dechow to find it.)

This land is private and not open to the public. Photo bottom left by Leelanau Conservancy staff

Palmer Woods Forest Reserve Adds 350 Acres Project Completed (3 Parcels) 8/31/20; 10/1/20 and 12/18/20

In 2020, the Conservancy reached the ambitious goal of raising \$3.5 million for a 350-acre addition to Palmer Woods. This stunningly beautiful land will expand the Palmer Woods' trail system to a projected 40 miles of hiking, cross-country skiing, and mountain biking trails for all to enjoy. It also protects a thriving wildlife corridor and expands Palmer Woods' border with the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore to five miles.

Creating such a large swath of protected land helps to ensure that groundwater-fed Glen Lake and Good Harbor Bay remain healthy, and allows the northern hardwood forest to continue to mitigate climate change through carbon sequestration.

"We are humbled by the outpouring of community support and love for Palmer Woods," says Executive Director Tom Nelson. "I'd like to give special thanks for the early and generous support of the Edmund F. & Virginia B. Ball Foundation and the matching challenges from the Carls Foundation and Ron & Marvel Jones."

Stay tuned for updates on trail development and eventual public access to the new addition. We look forward to sharing this beautiful land with you.

Photo bottom right by Leelanau Conservancy Staff





What's the difference between a Natural Area (NA) and a Conservation Easement (CE)?

		NA	CE
1	Open to the public	1	
Ш	Privately-owned		1
2	Conservancy-owned	~	
\$	Stays on the tax rolls		1
*	You can hike there	~	
Ú	Protects family farms		~
*	Protects wildlife	1	1
绦	Protects forestland	1	1
MONA	Protects wetlands	~	~
٢	Protects biodiversity	1	1
	Protects aquatic habitat	~	1
	Protects water quality	1	1
*	Protects scenic views	~	1

2020: The Year of the Trail

The verdict is in: the pandemic drew people outside in 2020. And Leelanau Conservancy's natural areas were no exception. This year, a record number of visitors enjoyed the Conservancy's 28 natural areas and preserves. (102,294 people hiked our trails in 2020, as compared to 57,383 in 2019!)

There were nearly three times the amount of visitors to Clay Cliffs, the Conservancy's most popular natural area, in 2020 compared to 2019. And visitors to Houdek Dunes Natural Area nearly doubled. So did the number of bikers riding at Palmer Woods. In fact, visitor numbers were higher at all of the 12 locations where we have placed trail counters, small devices that record movement.

All year, we kept hearing from you about how essential being in nature was for your physical and mental health during the pandemic. "Peace." "Just what I needed." "Less stressed, reset and refresh." "Like natural Valium." "Socially-distanced therapy." These are just some of the benefits you shared with us when we asked in a social media survey how our 28 natural areas helped you cope with life in 2020.

The outdoors was the one place we could go to escape the confines of quarantine, breathe in the fresh air, and—for a moment—feel normal. Whether you loved riding the flow-style mountain bike trails at Palmer Woods, paddling to the Cedar River Preserve, or taking a quiet walk through the cedars at DeYoung Natural Area, it is only because of generous members like you that these lands are open for all to explore, find adventure, and seek solace.

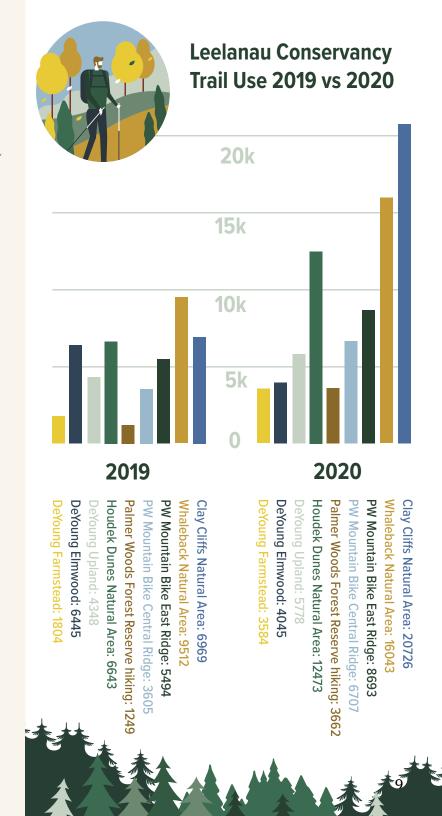
Photo by Mark Smith

"I had so much fun hiking with my kids at Clay Cliffs this weekend. It's challenging enough to feel like you're getting a workout, but easy enough for four-year-olds to navigate on their own. So fun to see the trail through their eyes - they spotted 3 blue butterflies, trillium, chipmunks, and one son correctly identified ramps (where did he learn that???)! I love sharing our special Leelanan gems with my family." -Jane Debo Price

"When the pandemic hit. There was a lot of uncertainty Happening in the world and we didn't know what was safe or responsible to do. So. The Ability to safely escape into nature was incredibly valuable for both our mental and physical health. It also served as a very important way to socialize with a friend or family member. As we enter 2021. I knew it would be important to continue recreating and socializing safely. So i've made the goal to visit all of the conservancy natural Areas this winter and spring." -Nick LOUD

"My life's greatest treasures are right here. I visited a new, little, publicly-accessible nature-gem with my sons after remote school today. A quick walk from our school and neighborhood." -Jenee Rowe

"THE OUT-OF-DOORS IS ALWAYS OPEN. BEING IN LEELANAU MEANS TRAILS, WATERWAYS, BIKE PATHS, FRESH FOOD, FORAGING, BIRDING, HUNTING, FISHING, STARGAZING, AND MORE. THANKS TO THE LEELANAU CONSERVANCY, ACCESS TO NATURAL AREAS IS EASY, AND IN ADDITION TO BEING OPEN DURING A PANDEMIC, ADMISSION IS FREE. CONSERVANCY PROPERTIES DON'T DISCRIMINATE AND THE RANGE OF ACTIVITIES IS AS DIVERSE AS THE ABILITIES OF THOSE WHO VISIT. SOMETIMES, IT IS MEDITATIVE AND SOLITARY AND SOMETIMES, IT IS A SOCIALLY-DISTANCED WAY TO SOCIALIZE. NATURE IS "ALWAYS OPEN" AND AN ESPECIALLY COMPELLING REASON FOR #WHYLEELANAU." -MARY L. CUSICK



BOHEMIAN VALLEY'S NEMESKAL FAMILY LANDS FOREVER PROTECTED

Photo by Mark Smith

Just off of County Rd. 669 in the beautiful Bohemian Valley is a dirt road named after the Nemeskal family. From this intersection is one of the most breathtaking views to be found in Leelanau County, especially in the height of fall color. The panorama takes in 74 acres owned by three siblings: Mary Ann, Betty and their late brother, Anthony Nemeskal. The siblings' love for this place and the extraordinary history of their ancestors dating back to the late 1800s has led them to forever preserve their farm with a conservation easement.

The Leelanau Conservancy has protected other private lands nearby, including most of the adjacent Olsen farm as well as 105 acres owned by the Dechow family. This growing block of conserved lands is great for wildlife, agricultural practices, battling climate change, and ensuring that the beloved views in this part of the Bohemian Valley will never change. Also worth noting: just over the hill to the west lie the Conservancy's 110acre Krumwiede and 1070-acre Palmer Woods Forest Reserves.

"We are pleased to have part of our 160-year-old farm become protected and preserved through the Leelanau Conservancy," says Mary Ann, who worked with the Conservancy on behalf of her siblings. "I think our father would be very happy to know that his childhood home will stay the way it is today."

Mary Ann's great-grandparents, Thomas and Katrina Nemeskal, immigrated from the Czech Republic around 1860 and were among the first settlers in the area. The deed to their land was reportedly signed by Abraham Lincoln. After they died, the land passed to their son, Anthony Nemeskal, who, like his parents, ran a sawmill here. The family also operated a subsistence farm in order to feed the lumbermen who lived in a white 12-bedroom house on the property.

To feed all those lumbermen, Anthony hired a cook named Bessie, a widow with two children. He quickly fell in love with her and they married. Together they had four more children, including Mary Ann's father, Albion, along with Peter, Helen and Ruth.

Mary Ann recalls the stories told by her grandmother Bessie. "The cook stove in the kitchen turned out sourdough hotcakes all day long, with warm batter always at the ready," says Mary Ann. "They raised hogs for bacon, chickens for eggs, cows for beef and milk. The road from Maple City to Suttons Bay was better so they went there for provisions in a horse and buggy and to Traverse City only once a year."

Much of the timber harvested off the land was shipped to Chicago to rebuild after the great fire of 1871, which burned 3.3 square miles of the city and destroyed more than 17,000 buildings. The Nemeskal family also owned seven acres and a dock on Lake Michigan, located a few miles away. Giant logs were loaded on horse-drawn drays and hauled to meet cargo ships that traveled between Leelanau and Chicago. (See photo below, courtesy of Mary Ann Nemeskal.) Mary Ann says that one of the ship's captains gifted a pair of brass binoculars to the family, now a treasured artifact.

The logging heyday was winding down and came to an end for the Nemeskals after the big white house burned to the ground one windy fall day. The cedar shingles on the roof caught fire and the fire department could not get there in time to save it. "My Aunt Ruth was just a baby, asleep inside," says Mary Ann. "They grabbed her, the guns and the ammo. Pictures we could have cherished were left behind."

Mary Ann's grandfather (Anthony) passed away in 1938. As he was dying, Anthony asked his children who would take over the farm. "No one wanted it," says Mary Ann, "but my dad stepped up and I'm grateful that he did."

Soon after Anthony died, Bessie also lost her daughter Ruth to pneumonia. "My grandmother was so strapped for cash that in order to pay for the two funerals she sold the seven acres on Lake Michigan for \$100 an acre," says Mary Ann. "We are grateful now the national park owns that land."

Mary Ann and her siblings grew up in nearby Maple City. Her father, Albion, worked as a public utility contractor and her mother, Vera Mary (Shimek) was a school teacher, so although they owned the land, they were not the ones who farmed it. That task fell to Mary Ann's Uncle Jim (Nemeskal) and Aunt Vicky (Hlavka). Mary Ann and her siblings helped their aunt and uncle during the summer. "I learned how to fix fences; Betty helped to milk cows," she says.

Eventually Mary Ann and her siblings inherited the property. She says that they all came to the realization that they did not ever want to see the land developed. They were aware that other properties nearby, like the Olsen farm, had been protected. Friends encouraged them to reach out to the Leelanau Conservancy.

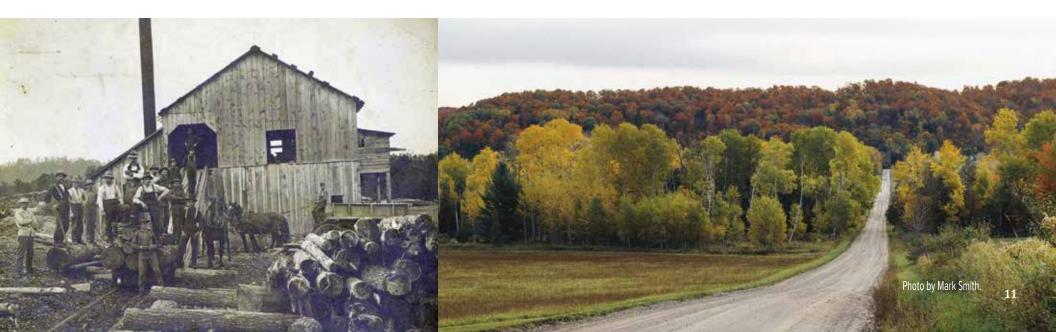
"People go up and down this road and they appreciate the beauty but don't understand what it takes to maintain it," adds Mary Ann. "The funds we received from the easement purchase will help to pay the taxes, and if we get into a jam we can sell it." Five acres that were kept out would support two home sites.

"We could not stand to think of these beautiful hillsides being chopped into 10-acre lots," explains Mary Ann. "We felt that the thing to do was to keep it in the family and keep it as it is."

The Nemeskal conservation easement has 46 acres that have been identified by the federal government as having "prime, unique and locally important soils." Also included is 15 acres of hardwoods, a spring-fed pond, and eight acres of wetlands.

"Anytime you can work with a Leelanau family that has a road named after them, well, that's very rewarding," says Matt Heiman, the Conservancy's Director of Natural Land Protection, who worked with Mary Ann on the project. "Protecting the scenic views of the Bohemian Valley is a high priority and there's a high diversity of habitat in a small area here. It's a great thing to protect Leelanau's family farm heritage."

How Do Preserved Private Lands Differ from Natural Areas?—See infographic on page 7.



2020 Stewardship Highlights

(all photos by staff unless indicated in caption)

Stites Natural Area Opens!

2020 saw the opening of the David and Phyllis Stites Natural Area, within walking distance of the Village of Suttons Bay. We are grateful to Ray and Jan Pezzi for donating this beautiful land for the benefit of wildlife and the Leelanau community. The land had once been slated for development, with up to 60 houses planned. Instead, hikers are now enjoying a beautiful hardwood forest—soon to be full of spring wildflowers.



Fern Garden at Palmer Woods Takes Shape

Our work on creating a fern garden at Palmer Woods continues. A small volunteer group from Hagerty Insurance helped to plant ferns collected from around Palmer Woods and also from private land (with permission) where a specific population of two less common ferns grows. They also helped to move limestone rock to create a wall, which will provide a more specific habitat for certain specialized ferns. Former owner of the property, Dr. Daniel Palmer is a fern expert who has written two books. His dream is to showcase the ferns that grow in Michigan on this property and he and his wife, Helen, have made a gift to establish the new fern garden. Land Steward Emily Douglas is overseeing the project.



What's on Tap for Pat's Preserve at Lime Lake?

Staff are working to assess the ecological value of the property and to create a trail plan, with the preserve planned to open to the public in 2022. Photo below of staffer Kim Hayes on shores of Lime Lake by Mark Smith.



Kehl Lake Boardwalk Repaired and Raised

Thanks, YouthWork crew, for repairing the Boardwalk at Kehl Lake Natural Area after trees fell and caused damage. (YouthWork provides work-based learning opportunities for youth throughout Michigan). There are many hazard trees in this area due to the Emerald Ash borer. When high winds happen, these stressed or dead trees are quick to fall. Higher than expected water levels also required the observation platform to be raised.



Trail and Infrastructure Planning for Expanded Palmer Woods

Plans are in the works at Palmer Woods—a fantastic four-season recreation destination that got bigger this year thanks to you. We are working with Rock Solid on a comprehensive hiking/mountain biking and cross-country ski trail system that takes in the 350-acre addition. We have also contracted with



Gosling Czubak on a site plan for expanded parking and trailhead infrastructure. Stay tuned for updates!

Cedar River Ridgeline Trail in the Works

Our staff mapped out a great trail along the ridgeline at the new Cedar River Preserve addition and contracted with Child and Family Services' YouthWork program to help clear the beautiful new path. From this new trail, expect to see gorgeous views of Lake Leelanau as well as an expansive panorama of the Cedar River swamp. As of this writing, plans and permits for a new parking area were underway. Stay tuned for info about a 2021 opening. You're going to love it.



Next Generation Gets to Know Palmer Woods We could show staff cutting back thorny brambles that is a constant task along the Palmer Woods mountain biking trail. But instead we choose to show how your support is engaging future generations in our conservation work. These kids were among three teams of area children who participated in Norte's youth mountain bike workshops at Palmer Woods this fall. They learned mountain biking skills and enjoyed this beautiful natural area, along with the parents who brought them there.



DeYoung Farmstead Improvements

Big progress was made in 2020 on restoring the iconic DeYoung farmhouse. Accomplishments include an exterior paint job, refinishing the original wood floors, windows and doors. A new ADA entrance and patio were also added with special considerations to maintain the historic character of the Circa 1860's farmhouse. Stay tuned for news on how we plan to use this space in a way that will honor the DeYoung family and benefit our community.



Keeping Trails Safe and Clear

Our natural areas saw more usage than ever in the pandemic. Thanks to everyone who reported downed trees via our website "submit trail conditions" form located on each natural area page. Staffer Chase Heise, pictured below, removes a tree at Clay Cliffs Natural Area. In 2020, over 150 trees fell across our trails and had to be removed.



Water Monitoring Program Marks 31st Year

Despite the challenges of 2020, the Leelanau Conservancy was able to continue lake water monitoring, which occurs on seven county lakes. Special thanks go out to Leelanau Conservancy Founding Executive Director, Brian Price (pictured below), who volunteered his time to sample all of the lakes in 2020. This invaluable data from 1990 to present is shared among local organizations and is available to the public on our website. Unfortunately the stream sampling program was postponed in 2020 due to the pandemic; stay tuned for how you can help in 2021.





"Voice of the Leelanau Conservancy," Carolyn Faught, Retires

I first met Carolyn Faught when she walked up the stairs of *Traverse, Northern Michigan's Magazine*'s Union Street office late one afternoon, applying for the job of marketing/circulation director. It was over 35 years ago, I was 28, in over my head and in need of help. Carolyn was a year younger and had moved North with her husband Dave, leaving behind a career she had loved. Several hours later, it was dark and we still couldn't talk fast enough. And we've never stopped. And, of course, she got the job.

Anyone who knows Carolyn can absolutely picture that scene because I'm sure you have been just as captivated by her energy, her passion, her incredible openness and that earnestness that just pulls you into her sphere. Carolyn and Dave started out in Cincinnati where she had been a successful buyer for a major department store chain. Dave worked for Procter & Gamble. They had managed to buy a small cottage in Leelanau County and when Dave got an accounting job in Traverse City, they left it all to come North. One idea was to open a bed and breakfast in the centuryold house they'd bought. She would have shone at that, of course. But happily, instead, she chose to come to the magazine where she served as the marketing director for several years and then joined the editorial department where she honed what are now her amazing storytelling skills.

I recommended Carolyn for the job in communications at The Leelanau Conservancy. By that time, she had left the magazine to be home with her two sons and begin "a garden," which we all now know as the incredible Omena Cut Flowers. I had no hesitation in nominating Carolyn for the position as I knew she would bring not just her writing skills, but her integrity, passion, drive and quality of "never having met a stranger," to the work of the Conservancy. I was on the board at that time, new head of what had been called the Membership Committee. We promptly renamed it the Outreach Committee and with Carolyn and an amazing group on that committee, we grew from 13 Sustainers to hundreds, added the Leelanau Preservers program whose tiles can be found on the Village Green, changed the annual meeting to a multi-generational celebration and so much more.

Through it all, and for years beyond, Carolyn's ability to capture the heart of "conservancy" through her writing, and her uncanny skill of getting people involved has built a membership truly defined, and bound, by passion and commitment. The stories she has shared of farmers and landowners, who have had the vision and courage to protect their land in perpetuity, will live on as testaments to the mission that defines the Conservancy's work. And her words celebrating and respecting volunteers of every stripe has inspired countless others to join a volunteer effort.

Carolyn and I became instant friends that evening as the streetlights came on. We raised our kids as cousins, shared the joys and traumas that come with a 30+ year friendship, believed in each other through thick and thin and found in the other a matching passion for this place and the need to protect it forever. I count among my life's blessings that Carolyn is my dear friend and that I played a role in her becoming the voice of our cherished Leelanau Conservancy for so many, for so long. Words have meaning and we can all feel grateful that it has been Carolyn's words that have honored the people-staff, board, members, volunteers-and the mission of the Conservancy, words that will live on in perpetuity so poignantly and so beautifully. — Deb Fellows, former board member and the founder and editor-in-chief of Traverse, Northern Michigan's Magazine.

A Fond Farewell From Carolyn Faught

It has been the honor of my life to tell the stories of the Leelanau Conservancy for the last 20 years, and to be a part of protecting this place that I so dearly love. A place that is woven into the DNA of my two sons, and that has such a tight grip on my own heart. In the process, I have come to know so many incredible people.

My journey with the Conservancy started when I was writing for *Traverse*, *Northern Michigan's Magazine*, and Kehl Lake Natural Area had just been protected. It was 1992, and I stood on the shores of Kehl Lake with Founding Executive Director, Brian Price. With a sweep of his arm, he told me that ³/₄ of the shoreline would never be developed. I was wowed then and continued to be wowed by each and every project since.

In this fractious world, I am grateful that Leelanau offers all of us an unbreakable bond: our collective love for this incredible place. To me, the Conservancy has never been about just one person; rather it is defined by the sum of its parts—which means each and every one of you. Your generosity and good will has amazed and touched me time and again over the last two decades. Together, we have done great things.

By design, my May 1 retirement coincides with planting season at Omena Cut Flowers. While I may be stepping away from the Conservancy, and joyfully digging in the dirt, I will continue to cherish the Conservancy's mission, and all of the friends I made along the way.



Staff News

We are pleased to announce some staff changes and promotions:

Chase Heise (top-left) has been promoted to Conservation Easement Program Manager. He joined our staff in 2015 and has excelled as a Land Steward on our Stewardship Team. In his new role, Chase will work with nearly 200 conservation landowner families to facilitate good communications and to ensure that conservation easement agreements are upheld.

Kim Hayes (top-right) did a remarkable job of handling the bulk of the CE Program Manager job in addition to her land protection duties for seven months, stepping in after Yarrow Brown resigned. Kim has been promoted to Farmland & Easement Programs Director to also provide supervisory oversight to the CE Program. Kim is well-suited to these additional duties, having served in a similar land trust role for 15 years in California prior to joining our team.

Chad Jordan (bottom-right) replaces Chase as Property & Trail Maintenance Specialist. Chad brings a wealth of professional experience and knowledge of trail building and maintenance, community outreach, and project management. He has served as Trail Ambassador for TART and president of the Northern Michigan Mountain Bike Association since 2016. He is also a former licensed homebuilder. As a volunteer, Chad has also helped us to choose trail contractors and led trail-maintenance volunteers at Palmer Woods. (see story on page 27).

In August we celebrated Membership Coordinator **Gayle Egeler**'s (bottom-left) 30th Anniversary with the Leelanau Conservancy. Gayle is our longest-serving staff member ever and has contributed so much to our success. Her attention to all the details that really matter and her great relationships have enhanced our goodwill in the community. Gayle has planned events, worked with volunteers, and stewarded all of our donors with the utmost of care. We are so fortunate that she has been on our team for the last three decades!

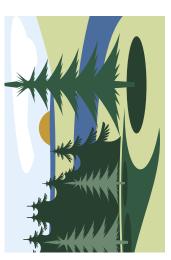




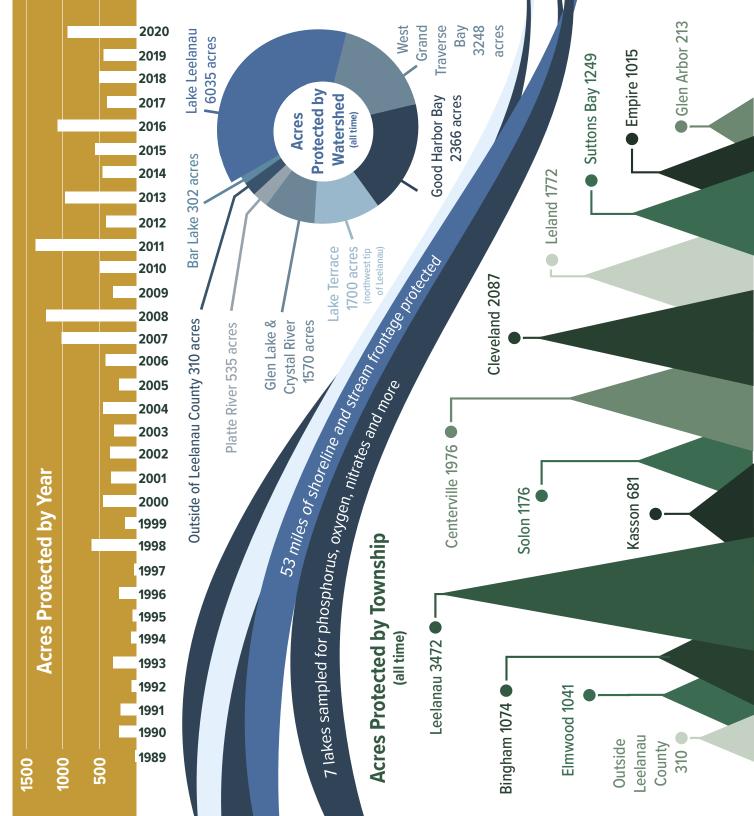
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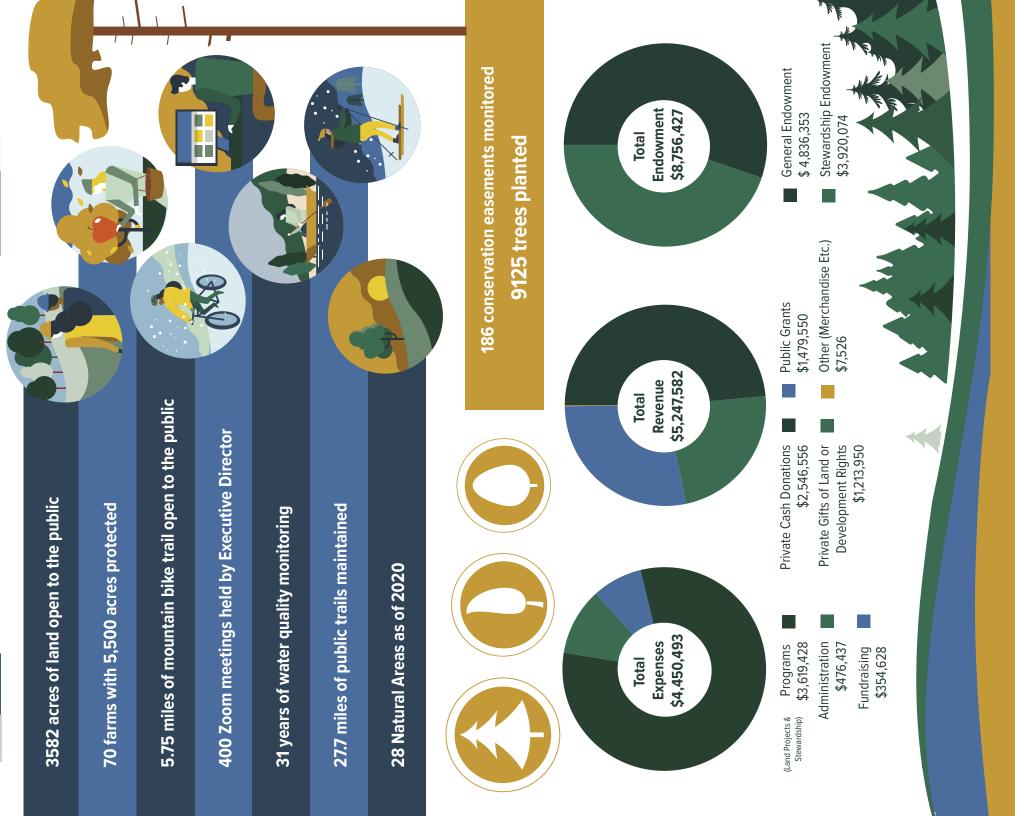


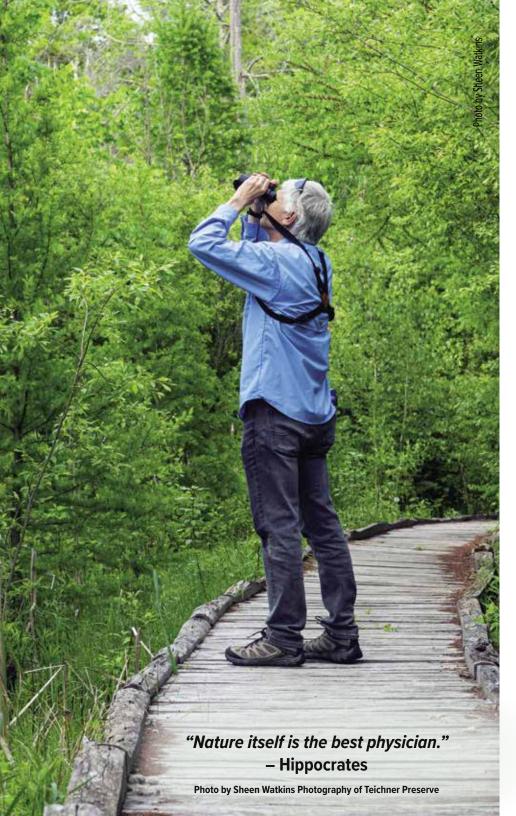




Acres Protected in 2020, 16,066 Total Acres Protected (all time) 954







Richard O. Ristine Heritage Society

The Heritage Society recognizes donors who have shared in the mission of the Leelanau Conservancy by making a gift through a will, bequest, trust, annuity, insurance or other planned gift. This important group is helping to ensure the long-term financial capabilities of the Conservancy. If you would like information about this special giving circle or about making a planned gift, contact Leslee Spraggins, Planned Giving Officer.

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This is Our Place and Our People

Imagine spending your 20s living and working on the 46-mile-long island in Lake Superior known as Isle Royale National Park. Imagine boarding a Piper Cub plane flown by an Alaskan bush pilot in the dead of winter, watching wolf packs from the air. The pilot drops you off with your snowshoes and a two-way radio with a promise to come back for you six hours later. You spend the day tracking moose, collecting their frozen urine for analysis.

Or, imagine being in charge of restoring Circa 1855 lighthouses on this rugged and isolated island, far from the civilization that most of us know.

That life belonged to our new Heritage Society members, Lee Jameson and Barbara Nelson-Jameson. (Barbara was the moose tracker, Lee the restoration expert.) The couple spent 40 years working for the National Park Service (NPS) after meeting at the University of Michigan's school of Natural Resources in 1974. They spent 10 years at Isle Royale, seven in Ohio at Cuyahoga National Park and the remainder at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (SBDNL).

The Jamesons' passion for the outdoors has informed nearly every decision of their adult lives. That includes a decision to include the Leelanau Conservancy and the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy (GTRLC) in their estate plans. "We are huge advocates for conservation and appreciate these organizations; their work is about everything that we believe in," says Lee.

Lee's job as a Facilities Manager & Historic Restoration Specialist ultimately put him in charge of all park buildings, utilities, trails, campgrounds and historic structures at the parks where he served—including Leelanau's SBDNL. Barbara started out as a seasonal park ranger then earned a master's degree in natural resources management.

Much of Barbara's career was centered around providing technical assistance to communities, non-profits and state and local governments as part of a Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program—an offshoot of the park service. She wrote grants and brought stakeholders together on projects such as the Detroit River Walk, the Ohio Erie Canal Tow Path Trail and Leelanau's Heritage Trail. Tom Ulrich, Deputy Superintendent for SLBNL calls the Jamesons a "conservation power couple."

"Lee kept this park in great shape for literally tens of millions of visitors, as well as for all his colleagues," says Ulrich. "Barbara too has an admirable legacy. The Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail is just one local example of a much-loved community resource that would not have happened without her leadership."

Barbara's expertise and passion for conservation led her to serve for nine years on the Leelanau Conservancy's Board of Directors, where she chaired its Land Protection Committee. "Providing outdoor recreation opportunities and access to nature is wonderful," says Barbara, "but land and water conservation is what is really in my heart and why I choose to donate my time and energy to the conservancies."

She helped to form the Leelanau Conservancy's science-based land protection planning process. "Barbara is such an amazing and delightful font of information and experience," says Tom Nelson, Executive Director. "She immediately upped our game when she joined our board. And, Barbara and Lee's passion for Leelanau—now shared by their daughter Emily—is inspiring." When Barbara's board term ended, she joined the GTRLC board.

The Jamesons' park service story includes Lee's marriage proposal on South Manitou Island and years of long-distance romance. After a camping honeymoon, Lee dropped Barbara off at the Isle Royale ferry and drove to Nebraska. He was based there for three years working as an historic restoration specialist in the NPS Midwest region. Their time together was limited until he secured a position on Isle Royale, too.

A decade later, they wanted to start a family and transferred to a less rugged locale: Ohio's Cuyahoga Valley National Park. During that time, daughter, Emily, now 22, was born.

Their goal was always to return to SBDNL where they both started their careers as 'seasonals.' That goal was met in 1999, when Lee became SBDNL's Facilities Manager. Barbara, whose work took her all over Michigan and Great Lakes region, moved her office to Empire too. "What an amazing place to raise a child," says Barbara. "Leelanau is such a welcoming community and, my God, it's just beautiful."

Emily followed in her parents' footsteps, attending U of M and earning degrees in environment and statistics. She is applying to graduate programs in freshwater ecology. "Having grown up on the Leelanau Peninsula, I very much support my parents' contributions to the Conservancy," says Emily. "They will help to protect the lands and waters that I love, and for future generations."

The Jamesons live on Omena Bay. Both retired recently and Lee says that "inspired us to get our financial planning act together. Putting the conservancies in our estate plan is all about thinking globally and acting locally. This is our place and these are our people."

If you would like more information about joining the Heritage Society, please contact Planned Giving Officer, Leslee Spraggins: 231-256-9665 or lspraggins@ leelanauconservancy.org.



The Jameson family with new pup Maple, on the hunt for a Christmas tree in 2020.

Founders Society

The Founders Society recognizes those donors whose generous and long term support has resulted in cumulative lifetime giving of \$25,000 or more to the Leelanau Conservancy.

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Almost 200 individuals and families have made gifts of land or development rights to the Leelanau Conservancy since our founding in 1988. The generosity of these donors allows the Leelanau Conservancy to leverage fundraised dollars to conserve even more of what you love most about Leelanau. The names below reflect donors from 2020. For a list of all land or development rights donors, please visit Leelanau Conservancy.org.

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Welcome New Sustainers!

Thank you, Sustainer Circle Members, whether you have recently joined or been with us since year one, we are grateful for your participation in this important giving circle. And to all of those members who increased your annual gift this year, thank you! Your annual pledge to support our operations ensures that our long-term goals to conserve Leelanau's land and water resources can be met. Meet new members Rick and Donna Simonton and hear what inspired them to join.

"We love to explore the world we live in and love via non-traditional modes of transportation...e.g. hiking, biking and cross-country skiing. In addition, we moved here (Suttons Bay) seven years ago and there is still not a week that goes by where Donna or I will tap each other on the arm and say, "Can you believe we live here"? The uniqueness and excitement we have of our lifelong dream of living in this area still has not worn off and hopefully won't for the rest of our lives." -Rick and Donna Simonton

The people listed at right joined our Sustainers Circle in 2020. If you would like more information on how to join this giving circle please contact: Meg Delor, Development Director

mdelor@leelanauconservancy.org

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Right: New Sustainers Rick and Donna Simonton with their dog, Kolbie

Trillium photo left, by Mark Smith



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"To the attentive eye, each moment of the year has its own beauty, and in the same fields, it beholds, every hour, a picture which was never seen before, and which shall never be seen again." -Ralph Waldo Emerson (staff photo)

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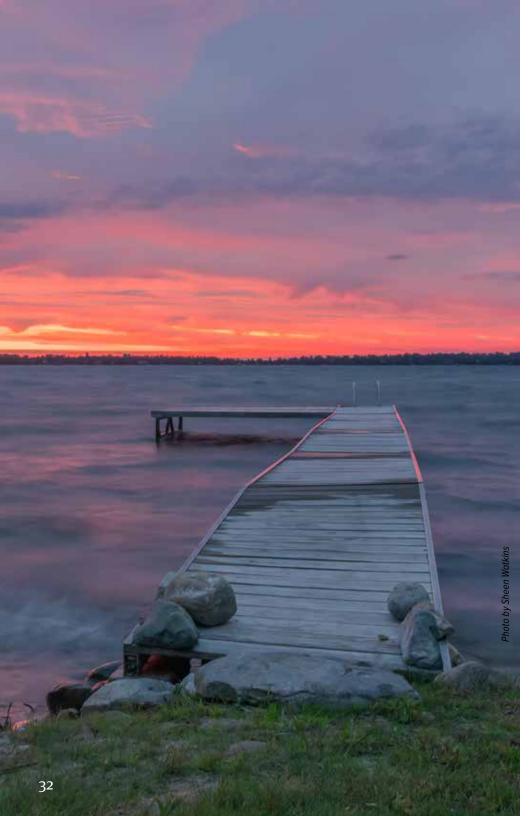
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Photo by Sheen Watkins

Volunteering in 2020—A Year of Adjustments

Normally on this page we list all the people who volunteered for the Leelanau Conservancy in the past year. While we did have some limited groups participate in socially distanced activities, and individuals who could work solo, we chose not to list any names this year.

That's because so many of you wanted to help, but the pandemic got in the way. That goes for our docents who couldn't lead hikes to wildflower rescuers whose digs were cancelled. Finally, many people filled out volunteer interest forms and it broke our hearts to have to put them off until we can safely hold workbees or invite mailing crews back into our office.

"Despite the pandemic, the energy and the eagerness to help was so wonderful," says Lindy Kellogg, Events and Volunteer Manager. "We're asking everyone to hold onto their good intentions because we will need volunteers more than ever in 2021. When it's safe to gather again, we will be in touch. Our staff has really missed your help!" Stay tuned for news on volunteer opportunities (see Volunteer Connection Box).

Our Thanks To:

1. Our Docents who kept up with meetings and held virtual events—a tour of the DeYoung Natural Area (Dave Amos), a Tree Talk video (Shelley Yeager, pictured) and a Poetry Reading (Sharon Oriel).

2. Wildflower Rescuers who continued to care for and water plants left from last year's sale, and to plan for the future.

3. Our fantastic AmeriCorps Members, Anne Rodeck and Molly Fava. They were out at our natural areas every day, doing things like maintaining trails and removing invasive species.

4. Yoga instructor Katherine Palms who livestreamed yoga and meditation sessions from our natural areas.

5. Mailing crew volunteers, who worked with Gayle to stuff and fold envelopes in their own homes. (picture from 2019 of Gayle with Treva DeJong.)

6. Volunteer photographers who kept sending in gorgeous photos all year to keep us and our members inspired, like this one from Mark Smith.

7. Masked volunteers who planted hundreds of tree seedlings at Clay Cliffs.

8. Trail Stewards, who walk our natural areas often to report issues like downed trees, and to clear brush and branches from the trails.

9. Everyone who pulled garlic mustard on their own—either at our natural areas or on your own property.

10. Dr. William Scharf, who continued his bird research at Chippewa Run Natural Area, rising early for several weeks to drive out from Traverse City to document birds here. Photo by Lisa Meils.

11. The Palmer Woods Mountain Bike Trail Crew see story right

Finally, thanks to our board and committee members—who spend many hours meeting over Zoom to continue the Conservany's work despite the strange times.





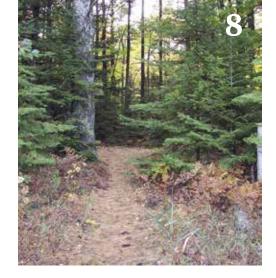
















Volunteer Spotlight: The Palmer Woods Mountain Bike Trail Crew

One group that was able to eventually meet up and work in a socially distant fashion was the "Palmer Woods Mountain Bike Trail Crew." Every Tuesday evening from late August through October, up to 10 people showed up to keep the trails safe and clear. "It was a diverse collection of people, from hard-core mountain bikers to people whose kids or grandkids are trail riders, friends at Bike Leelanau, (an area organization whose mission revolves around biking), and some without a bike connection that simply wanted to be outside and help," says Lindy. Tasks included cutting back brambles that quickly grow along the trail as well as backbreaking work of shoring up the trails with a clay/topsoil mix in places where Palmer Woods' sandy soils had eroded.

That job entailed taking a pick axe to a pile of clay to break it up, and filling buckets with a clay/topsoil mixture that "looked like crumbled Oreo cookies," says Lindy. Then, driving the buckets as close as they could to where they were needed. Volunteers then hauled heavy buckets to places along the trail where sand had "puddled up," creating obstacles for riders. After dumping their loads, they packed the soil in with special tools to prevent future erosion and minimize accidents.

"This is a big job all done with hand tools and it's an ongoing task," says Lindy. "Our

small crew got so much work done but we are going to need so many more people given our plans to expand the mountain biking trail system in the future with the new 350-acre addition."

Lindy will continue to have help from the group's chief organizer and recruiter, Chad Jordan. Chad was recently hired as our new Property Maintenance Specialist (see page 15). In addition to trail running and surfing, mountain biking is one of Chad's passions too. Last fall, says Lindy, Chad told her that he had come to look forward to the trail work and maintenance as much as riding.

At the end of the season on a beautiful evening, volunteers gathered for a socially distanced celebration. Ryan Wainwright, a weekly regular, made the medallions pictured and handed them out to his fellow volunteers.

"It was a really special evening," says Lindy. "Part of our responsibility is upkeep and maintenance. We're hoping that we will be able to ramp up our volunteer ranks with the help of Bike Leelanau and Norte. Being part of this crew and at Palmer Woods weekly was fantastic – their energy is contagious. There's a job for everyone. Anyone can participate whether you are in Leelanau just for a week or here year round. You don't have to be a mountain biker— just someone who enjoys nature and wants to help."



Your Volunteer Connection

Meet/contact Lindy Kellogg, Event and Volunteer Manager with any questions: lkellogg@leelanauconservancy.org.

Learn about various volunteer opportunities and fill out a volunteer interest form online: https://www.leelanauconservancy.org/support-leelanau/volunteer/

Be sure you are on our email list to be made aware of volunteer opportunities: https://www.leelanauconservancy.org/newsletters/

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We are grateful to everyone who made a gift to honor or remember a loved one in 2020. Gifts such as these are directed toward the care and maintenance of our natural areas and preserves.

Memorials

January 1- December 31, 2020

Gifts were made in memory of the names shown in bold.

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George Zink

Kathleen Zink

Beth Zinman

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names shown in bold.

Janet H. Kelley

Michele Groene

Steven Ald

January 1- December 31, 2020

Gifts were made in honor of the

Mr. & Mrs. Weston W. Adams. III

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All photos by staff except kayakers on the Cedar River by Ed Ketterer

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