



# There's no place like *Leelanau*.

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

**2021 Annual Report**



## From Your Director

*The things that make us different are what make us beautiful.* –Unknown

I think of Leelanau’s forests, wetlands, and meadows teeming with a prolific array of wild plants and animals, the family farms that help to nourish us, and our lakes and streams that sustain both people and vast aquatic freshwater systems. The eminent biologist and author, E.O. Wilson who passed away at the close of 2021, spoke of this diversity. “The assembly of life that took a billion years to evolve. It has eaten the storms—folded them into its genes—and created the world that created us. It holds the world steady.”

And the same can be said for humans—the two-legged creatures of our world. At the Leelanau Conservancy, we believe the outdoors is for everyone. We strive to honor and celebrate our community’s diversity by enabling public access to Leelanau’s special places. Our natural areas are free to everyone, welcoming people from all walks of life to connect with nature, each other, and enhance their physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Our conservation efforts preserve the Peninsula’s farms, which are locally owned and are providing locally grown produce to our community. We conserve forest lands and shoreline that are helping to keep our high-functioning ecosystems intact and the waters that surround us drinkable, swimmable, and fishable. We manage our natural areas and preserves to promote climate resilience.

When I consider the enormity of the diversity here in our little corner of the planet, I cannot help but feel a surge of emotion—of wonder and gratitude. Because of you, Leelanau—which by the way graces the cover of the latest edition of the Oxford World Atlas—remains a special place on Planet Earth. In 2021, you helped the Conservancy complete conservation projects permanently preserving no less than 11 amazing places in Leelanau County, including 4 family farms and six natural land projects in six different townships. Wow.

Our gratitude to you knows no bounds. We are doing this

together. Without a doubt, we could not achieve the success we have without you. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you.

At the same time, we are facing threats like never before in the Peninsula’s history—climate volatility, agricultural pests and diseases, economic and social pressures. Also, the pandemic- and climate-influenced demographic shifts have created a searing-hot real estate and vacation-rental market that are simultaneously squeezing Leelanau’s year-round and seasonal workforce. These forces are accelerating the need to do more to wisely conserve lands that help keep our waters clean, our ecosystems high-functioning and local food on our tables while allowing for infill development in and near our existing villages.

As we look to the future—both in the short and longer-term—your Conservancy vows to continue to step up to the challenges we face. We are saving Leelanau’s most special places at a record pace because we simply must. Failing to do so risks losing them forever. Already, we have more than 20 new projects in the works, with more to come.

The time is now. Together we will continue to take great strides forward to save the best of the Peninsula. The combination of our driving passion for Leelanau, the use of innovative approaches and good old-fashioned can-do work ethic, and your moral and philanthropic support, is a force to be reckoned with. It is yet one more difference that sets this community apart from the rest of the world and makes Leelanau truly beautiful.

Onward!



Thomas Nelson  
Executive Director



Cover photo and photo right  
by Mark Smith



## Board Chair's Message:

Agriculture is an important part of the fabric of Leelanau County, providing pastoral scenery while being an important contributor to the local economy. Our wineries and farm markets are a nice complement to our tourism industry. The Leelanau Conservancy recognizes the importance of maintaining our productive farmland and the farm community. For many years the Conservancy has been working with farmers who are interested in preserving land for future generations of farmers. This past year we were able to preserve an additional 329 acres of farmland through either the purchase or donation of conservation easements. We currently have more interest from farmers than ever before.

Leelanau's deep, well-drained soil and rolling topography situated on a peninsula on the eastern shore of Lake Michigan provide the unique combination of factors that make it such a productive site for very diverse agriculture. Lake Michigan warms our climate in the winter which helps protect fruit crops from cold injury, cools in spring to delay fruit bud development, cools on hot summer days and delays the first frosts in fall. It is this unique combination that has allowed farmers to grow several types of fruit, as well as raise corn, hay, small grains and livestock.

Farming in Leelanau County has its ups and downs with challenges that vary from year to year and over time. We have seen agriculture evolve and change with advances in science and technology. The predominant commodities produced in the county have also changed and will continue to do so.

I cannot predict what farming in Leelanau will look like in the future, but I can be certain that it will continue to evolve. An apple orchard planted in the 1950's would have had about 60 trees per acre and required tall ladders to harvest. An apple orchard planted today would likely have about 1,000 trees per acre planted on dwarfing rootstocks and supported with a trellis. Growing wine grapes in northern Michigan was unheard of until Bernie Rink planted a test vineyard in the 1960's and now grapes adorn hillsides and wineries host thousands of visitors.

Over time, crops change due to shifts in markets, technology, and economics. To help keep pace with these changes, farmers

continue to invest in agricultural research. We are fortunate in Leelanau to be home to one of the research centers operated by Michigan State University that serve the fruit industry. It is an investment that pays dividends for both the present and future of local agriculture.

There is one thing that has not changed for farmers and that is the need for good farmland. If the farmer is planning to use the land to grow fruit, then the land also needs to have good air drainage which means the sites available become even more limited. The reality is that the demand for land in Leelanau County for non-agricultural use can often price land out of reach for farmers. Establishing a Conservation Easement (CE) helps assure that the land will be available for agriculture.

So why would farmers be interested in establishing a CE if it may mean selling the farm for less? Obviously, there are multiple reasons, but there is one common thread. Every farmer in Leelanau who has signed a CE has done it at least in part because they want to see the land remain in agriculture for generations to come. I am confident of this because all CE's require that the farmer make at least a 25% donation of the CE value. Maybe they do it because of a love and respect for the land, or maybe it's sort of a way to pay forward to future generations of farmers and the community they support. But whatever the reason, establishing a conservation easement, like investing in research, is a tool that the current generation of farmers has available to help ensure the continuation of agriculture as an important contributor to the county we all love.

It is truly gratifying to be a part of an organization that is making a real difference in the lives of current farm families while doing the work to help preserve the future of agriculture in one of the most unique production areas in the world.

Jim Nugent  
Board Chair

# A Tale of Two Brothers

Photo of Kiessel Farm by Mark Smith



Ed Kiessel looks across a large, snowy swath of land and squints his eyes. The sun's reflection off the ice-glazed snow is near blinding, but the view is worth fighting to look at. Snow and sky touch and stretch into a crystalline desert. In the distance, rows of young cherry trees frame the land. "They're small now. We've planted a couple thousand of them and will continue to plant more in this area. It'll be nice when they're less adorable and begin producing fruit," he grins. The land has had a long track record of successful farming, which Ed attributes to its elevation and soil quality.

This chunk of fruitful land is only 25 acres of a larger 108-acre farm property that the Leelanau Conservancy has just protected in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) through their Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP).

Brothers Ed and Don Kiessel are the proud owners of Kiessel Orchards. The first of the farms was started in 1976 by their dad Don Sr. and uncle Bill Kiessel. The family's Leelanau roots date back to the 1800s. "Our first ancestor here was Carl Edward Kiessel, who settled here in the mid-1860s just north of Suttons Bay. My grandpa Frank Kiessel Sr. married Rita Priest, and they had a family farm as well. It means a lot to us to have all of this deep history."

Both Ed and Don grew up working on the family farm. Days were spent pruning and fertilizing trees, picking up brush, burning brush piles, and staying out of their mom's hair. "Don and I are 11 months apart, we have a younger sister, and my mom was a stay-at-home mom. My dad needed the work done, and my mom needed us out of the house, so it worked out really well."

Kiessel Farms has grown to comprise a collection of smaller farms throughout the township. Some of the land is owned and some leased. They all have one thing in common,

though; they exclusively grow cherries. “Just cherries,” said Ed. “I always say smart farmers grow something else, like apples, to give a longer season for your help, more diversified income, all of that. But, it becomes about economies of scale. You’ve got to get different equipment for different trees; you need more acreage and volume to make it worthwhile.” To say it’s a labor of love would be an understatement. Like their father and uncle before them, Ed and Don work full-time jobs separate from their farming—Ed as an accountant, and Don as a lineman for Consumers Energy. They each bring their talents to the farm. Ed handles most of the business side, and Don manages the mechanical work and day to day operations. But sometimes, a situation calls for them to get back out on the farm together. “We have a crew, and last summer, the two people who run the cherry shaker were both out. Don got on the shaker side, and I got on the catch half, and we shook trees all day. You don’t forget how,” he laughs.

On a secluded road, a stretch of cherry orchard laces the edge of protected acreage. The farm borders the protected Mawby family farm as well. “It’s a detour route, a destination,” Ed said. “You’re not over here unless you live here or are on a Sunday drive. It’s really peaceful.” Over on the elevated portion of young cherry trees, one can almost get a 360 degree view of just land and trees. A collection of newly constructed homes blips the panorama. Ed, while saddened by the hardy farmland being sold off, understands the harsh realities of farming. “It’s not easy. These last three years, in particular, have been brutal. Labor is a big challenge right now. Everything we use for day-to-day operations has gone up in price.” There are also climate concerns to deal with. Over the last several seasons, late March or early April temperatures have warmed enough to cause early budding on the cherry trees. After the

warm spell is gone, another frost will likely occur, and they’ll lose a portion of their crop. Frustrating as the circumstances can get, for the Kiessels, farming is a way of life. “My brother and I knew this was good farmland. The property values in the county have gone up so much. To think that you’re going to buy property and make your money back by farming ... it’s almost impossible. To work with the Conservancy and bring down the cost basis by selling the development rights makes it all more feasible.”

The excellent soil, sloping beauty, and connectivity to other farms make this land highly attractive to developers. Ed’s and Don’s deep Leelanau roots could never have allowed it to be anything other than farmland. Their semi-retirement plans include spending more time getting back to those farming roots. There’s a checklist that’s never quite finished when it comes to chores. No matter what else is going on in their lives, there are always trees to prune, land to reshape, or a piece of equipment to work on. They wouldn’t have it any other way.

“The secret is you really have to love it,” Ed said. “For my dad, it wasn’t always about making money. He wanted to create something that the family could continue, which could add value to the place he lives and for younger generations. For us to protect this forever with the Conservancy is a great thing. I don’t know what the next 100 years will look like for farmers, but I do know that there will be good land left for them to farm.”

Photos right: Top - Cherry tree bark glows deep red in the midwinter sun. Photo by Mark Smith. Middle - Ed Kiessel (pictured left) and older brother Don Jr. Kiessel (right) have been working on a farm since childhood. Bottom - Neat rows of baby cherry trees on the farm.





# The Queen's Garden

Their finicky nature and breathtaking beauty make orchids some of nature's most admired flowers. The orchids that might come to mind are the ones we see in markets and are of exotic varieties from Asia, Australia, the Himalayas, and the Philippines. To find an orchid growing wild is to see it at its most beautiful. Juxtaposed against dark soil and fallen leaves, it is a genuine diamond in the rough.

Spotting a wild orchid holds enough star power to make any naturalist stop in their tracks. An entire woodland field is a lifetime memory and rare sight. Soper Natural Area was once home to lots of Showy Lady Slipper orchids. The natural area was protected by the Leelanau Conservancy in 1991. In 2008 an additional 38 acres were added. It was around that time that LC members Chuck and Janet Dickerson began to hatch an extended and steadfast plan to restore the Showy Lady Slippers at Soper, or as Chuck calls it, "the Queen's Garden."

Soper's namesake and first 42 acres came from Edna and James C. Soper. She donated the property to the Conservancy in honor of her late husband and with hopes of preserving the stunning 1,000 or more Showy Lady Slipper orchids that grew there. However, the number of increasing orchids began to dwindle with each passing year, and by 2002, only six bloomed. Plenty of factors have impacted their shrinking numbers. "They can get tall, around hip height. And their color is a beautiful pink that melts into white," said Land Steward Emily Douglas. "They have really robust leaf structures to them, so they look like a hardy flower, but they're not. A big reason we've lost so many is because of people poaching them. Deer browse is huge, too. They treat it like candy and just pulverize them. There could also be environmental factors going on like the canopy changing, the water table changing."

Janet and Chuck agree that the water table has lowered over the years. The water table is the groundwater that saturates the soil, bedrock, and clay-like regolith beneath the soil surface. Groundwater

travels underground in paths that sometimes turn into lakes, ponds, and marshes when land's surface submerges below the water table. Intermittent periods of drought have impacted the marsh-like quality Showy Lady Slippers thrive in.

Chuck grew up visiting Leelanau. His parents built a cottage in Omena during the '60s, and the family would drive up from St Louis, Missouri, every summer. When Chuck and Janet married, they started a family and brought their kids up from St Louis to do the same. In 1999, Chuck and Janet retired here and live a stone's throw away from the family cottage.

A camera purchased by Janet's dad introduced them to Soper's Showy Lady Slippers. "She was busy with the children, and I had the camera. There are so many beautiful views in the county," Chuck said. "Up on Johnson Road in Northport, there was a swamp that I started going to in the '70s or early '80s. You hardly had to get your feet wet to get pictures of these Showy Lady Slippers. That swamp was across the street from what eventually became Soper."

When the Conservancy acquired Soper, it was a popular destination for its view of Showy Lady Slippers. Back then, they were accessible to see up close by a boardwalk in James Soper's honor. After a mass of Showy Lady Slippers were poached in 2002, the Conservancy removed the boardwalk and access to ecologically sensitive portions of the property.

Chuck, Janet, and Emily got to work with a restoration plan intact. Creating the deer exclosures to protect what Showy Lady Slippers were left came first. Genetic material was taken from two different orchid varieties in the county. These parent genetics come from seedpods of Showy Lady Slippers from an easement adjacent to Soper and a population growing roadside on North Lake Leelanau Drive. "Being roadside, salt and plow are part of their environment, so they looked hardy," Emily explained. This duo of orchid genetic material was chosen in hopes of creating a stronger varietal that can repopulate what has been lost at Soper. Chuck pollinated

the samples and sent them to a specialty orchid grower in Wisconsin who sowed the seeds and sent back protocorms. A protocorm is a tiny orchid seedling with a good root structure. The ones sent back to Chuck are the offspring of the two collected wild orchids. "They're so super tiny they look like spiders. The Wisconsin grower, Scott Weber, specializes in orchid seeds and sent 700 of these to Chuck," Emily said. "Chuck took them and grew them for over six years."

Showy Lady Slippers are federally listed as endangered. Their beauty, required living conditions, and complex reproductive qualities make them prone to decline. Orchids grow where they can. They need a special kind of fungus, called mycorrhizal fungi, in their soil to grow. Unlike most seeds that are equipped to nourish themselves for a time, orchid seeds have to lure fungi into feeding them until they begin to sprout and start photosynthesizing on their own. Orchids don't want to compete with other plants for water, nutrients, and sunlight. Instead of selecting areas with rich soil, they choose more inhospitable conditions like bedrock or swamp. The Showy Lady Slippers of Soper like streaky sunlight and damp soil.

In 2011, Chuck and Janet received the 700 orchid protocorms to which they would become caretakers. They painstakingly cultivated the ideal growing conditions for

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Photo left: Showy lady slippers covered in dew. Photo by Karl Hausler.

Photos right:  
 Top - A photo from the '90s shows an old sign at Soper Natural Area asking people not to pick showy lady slippers.  
 Middle-top - Existing and newly planted showy lady slippers are tagged so their growth can be tracked.  
 Middle-bottom - Land Steward Emily Douglas carefully collects seedpods to crossbreed from a showy lady slipper at Soper Natural Area.  
 Bottom - A large cluster of showy lady slippers.



# Recreating the Past

Ecological restoration is a labor of love that works to reverse time and damage that has stripped a land of its native biodiversity. Restoring an ecosystem to its natural state is a healing process that takes time, care, and intention; however, the efforts are well worth it. Restoration increases a land's biodiversity, which in turn, helps increase ecosystem services. Ecosystem services can be defined simply as the wide range of benefits humans receive from ecosystems. Things like providing quality food and water, regulating the climate, and creating healthy soil formation are all examples of ecosystem services.

Seventy-seven acres of Michael Ulrich's Empire farm have been protected by a private conservation easement (CE) that closed in early September. You won't find meticulous rows of fruit trees or other crops here. The biggest output from Michael's farm will be new farmers, and native seeds.

Michael bought his farm in 2013 to create a local genotype seed and plant nursery for local restoration projects. "I find it problematic to import seeds from Minnesota to do restoration in this region," he said. His nursery stock is based on locally collected seeds.

As a graduate student at University of Wisconsin-Madison he studied ecological restoration. While attempts at ecological restoration were first initiated in Wisconsin following the dust bowl, he noted this kind of restoration was lacking in Leelanau County.

The economic downturn of 2008 provided him an opportunity to buy affordable land in Leelanau. That opportunity came in the form of a small ranch house on 92 acres of land in Empire. With the help of a Farm Service Agency program, Michael was able to finance the property.

"I always knew that I wanted to remake nature, but I didn't know if something like that existed," Michael said. "Taking a native prairie or woods back to what it once was, that's what I wanted to do. Wisconsin has been

working on this kind of restoration for 40 years."

As a child, Michael's house was always filled with nature field guides. In an intro botany class at Northland College, he was surprised when he was the only one who could identify various woodland species in a slide show. While visiting Mount Desert Island, Maine, he saw a botanical garden that had miniature versions of the different islands' ecosystems. Michael's interest was piqued. Upon graduating from Northland, he was told about an internship at the Leopold Center. Upon discovering it was an internship for graduate students only, Nina Leopold, renowned conservationist, and daughter of famed naturalist Aldo Leopold, kindly directed him to the nearby International Crane Foundation.

The foundation's focus was on saving the world's crane species, in part, through an on-site captive breeding program. The abandoned forty-acre 'sand farm' was in its early stages of restoration. It was there that he learned to collect seeds from prairie remnants, make seed mixes, and plant them back into the ground, restoring prairies and wetlands. While not known for prairies, Leelanau possesses Great Lake Barrens, a grassland type. With a combination of these species, as well as dune and beach species, he is creating the ability for location-appropriate grassland restorations.

"There aren't many prairies up here in Leelanau, but there are a lot of species on the dunes that would be considered Bearberry and creeping juniper," he said. "They like these sandy areas that are super dry and super-hot. Here I am, decades later, able to have the same opportunity to restore native species."

He'll be able to give others the opportunity he had through farm internships. Making use of the designated Farmstead Complexes within his CE, Michael hopes to be able to provide housing for farm interns. Internships will span from short-term stays that last a few weeks, to longer term commitments that last up to three years. This farm incubator model will grow aspiring farmers and restoration ecologists' confidence and provide hands-on experience with what it takes to pursue their calling.

"Let's say I had someone who wanted to have a milking herd of goats. We would get a couple goat pairs, but that intern would be completely responsible for them. At the end of three years, they would get half of all the animals we have raised so they could get a business loan with experience, a business plan, and some capital."

Some of the farm will be used to grow grain and hay to provide food for livestock incorporated to eat knapweed and increase soil productivity. Produce will be grown for the farm interns, with any surplus going to a farm stand or a farmers' market. Additionally, Michael has started growing diverse kinds of fruit and nut trees to create a small food forest that will also be available to farm workers. When not being used on his own farm, harvested seeds will be used for other restoration projects, and propagation of native potted plants that will go for sale locally.

Along with attempts to restore grasslands based on prairie species that occur in the region and outlying counties, he is experimenting with other models such as permaculture, creating food forests with a mixture of tree species native to other states and lower Michigan. "I'm creating what I've termed synthetic ecosystems, which produce food and other ecosystem services without the need for annual tilling. The shade of these food forests will also assist knapweed control."

Delicate and magical looking plants abound throughout the farm. Hard to find Princess Pine laces trail edges, slow-to-grow Lichen stretches like a shag rug across various clearings, and tiny, neon orange mushrooms dot the woodland floors.

"This property hasn't been farmed since the late 50s and 60s, so these native plants have had all this time to grow."

He is experimenting with combinations of grasses, trees, and shrubs to see what works. A stroll through an open pine forest is a classroom of different kinds of growing berries. He points out common Northern Michigan berries, like raspberries and blueberries, but he's also experimenting with species that do not



grow here commonly like cranberries, honeyberries, thimbleberries, and even lingonberries. Almost all look promising, with plump green leaves sprouting.

“The blueberries are the only ones struggling, funny enough, everything else is doing great. It all goes back to the soil.”

The soil. The lifeblood of the land. Michael understands and reveres it. His farming plan is based in regenerative farming - a method that promotes soil quality by replenishing organic life back into the soil. Not only is regenerative farming better for the produce, but it also aids in reversing climate change by drawing CO2 out of the atmosphere and into the soil. Low and no till farming, composting, and crop rotation are just a few regenerative farming practices that help keep the soil healthy. Native plants also contribute to soil health, making these farming techniques an ideal addition to Michael’s ecological restoration. “When you take care of nature, nature takes care of you. Keeping this land undeveloped was something that I wanted to do anyway, but it would have been really hard for me to afford to do that. The Conservancy has helped make this all possible.”

Director of Farmland & Easement Programs Kim Hayes is happy to have such a unique and diverse farmland permanently protected.

“When I first visited Michael’s farm and talked with him about his unique farming vision for it, I felt a strong motivation to find a mechanism to assist him,” she said. “The land fully meets the farmland protection criteria of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Conservancy. The regenerative farming model which also involves farming native species was super intriguing. I cannot wait to see Michael’s vision come true.”

Funding: This farmland was protected in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) through their Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP).



Photo by Mark Smith

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Showy Lady Slippers year-round. “We put them outside in the summer and into a refrigerator during the winter. We don’t want them to freeze off,” said Chuck. “When they’re six years old, we put them in a seed starter with heat before April when we put them back outside in their critter-proof enclosures. They stay out there until winter, and then the whole process starts over again.” Out of the 700 plants, 70 survived. In 2017 those Showy Lady Slippers were planted back into the wild at Soper and in other Leelanau locations where it’s believed they will thrive. So far, things are going well. One site had all five of their new Showy Lady Slippers bloom this past summer.

It’s roughly a decade-long journey for orchids to get from seed to flower. Because of this, the restoration project at Soper is an ongoing one. “Most ecological projects should be long-running,” said Emily. “You’re working at the pace of nature.” Right now, Chuck, Emily, Director of Natural Areas and Preserves Becky Hill, and Conservation Easement Program Manager Chase Heise all have a fresh batch of growing orchid seedlings that they received in June of last year. Towards the end of the 2020s, we’ll have even more Showy Lady Slippers to place back in Soper and beyond in Leelanau. Chuck and Janet hope that the project grows more with time.

The Dickersons look forward to this resurgence of native beauty. They would like to grow a community of volunteers interested in becoming caretakers to some of these Showy Lady Slippers. They have to be babied with rainwater, enclosures, and a seasonal schedule, but Chuck believes folks out there would enjoy getting involved. “It’s an unusual Conservancy project because people don’t get to really see it,” Chuck said. “But it’s exceptional work that we hope continues long past us.” When asked why they’ve dedicated themselves so passionately to a project that’s fruits they may never see, the couple agrees that the journey has been just as remarkable as the outcome. “It’s about the impact that it makes,” said Janet. “You never know who you influence or how deep it goes.”





The Manitou Islands gaze at Leelanau like a pair of green eyes. Depending on where you are in the county, it's possible to stare back at them. High up in a cottage south of Leland, Glenn Currin can greet them whenever he wants. We're pleased to say this land will forever have that view untouched. The Currins and the Leelanau Conservancy recently protected 34 acres of wooded, ridgeline beauty with a private conservation easement.

For Glenn, this view is extra special. "My father was very interested in passive solar energy," he said. "For a time, he worked with the National Park Service and replaced old water drinking pumps with solar-powered electric pumps. He put solar panels on North Manitou Island to supplement and possibly get rid of diesel generators. That was back in the '80s. I don't know what they're doing now, but that was something my dad was pretty proud of."

A honeymoon trip spent camping around Lake Superior drew Glenn's parents, Cedric and Betty Currin, to Leelanau. The newlyweds were enchanted by the woodlands, lake views, and outdoor lifestyle that the county offered. It was also not far from their home in Midland. Cedric would bring Glenn and his siblings Bruce, Eric, and Kathleen up to camp in the summertime. "Saturday morning at 8 o'clock, we'd head north. We would stop at Sleeping Bear Dunes first and get all tired out. Then in the afternoon, after a picnic lunch, we would go anywhere. When we camped, we'd stay on Good Harbor Beach at the end of 669." The kids would accompany their dad on visits to listed properties during their stays. He wanted ridgeline property that would overlook Lake Michigan and the Manitou Islands, which proved challenging to find even then. The

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore had not yet been established. Just before it was, by good fortune, Cedric and Betty bought a wooded, ridgeline property from family friends Dudley and Elise Campbell.

Cedric built the family cottage in 1975. Glenn married his wife Gail the same year. Cedric had just spent several years working in Wales for Dow-Corning and was ready to spend more time in Leelanau. The cottage became a place of joy for all of the Currins. "We grew up here, and then when my daughter was born, we were here every summer for her first ten or so years," Glenn said. "I worked for a bank and had to take two weeks off in a row, and it was always spent here. If it rained, we would go bowling or watch a movie in Traverse City, but most days we spent at the beach or walking through the woods."

Glenn and Gail have two children of their own who have memories and a special connection to Leelanau because of this property. They also have a granddaughter who's been delighted by the woods and beach that captivated her great grandparents. She and all the rest of Betty and Cedric's descendants will be able to use the property until its use runs out to them. What is there now can be maintained but not changed.

Betty passed in 2016 at the age of 84. During her time spent in Leelanau, she was a member and volunteer for the Leland Township Library and the Leelanau County Historical Society. Three years later, Cedric passed. His kids knew that his wishes included protecting the property, and Glenn picked up where his dad left off in chats with Director of Natural Land Protection Matt Heiman. Last December the paperwork was finalized.

"Helping Glenn and his family permanently protect this amazing, forested property so they

can continue to enjoy these natural wonders for generations is one of the things I enjoy most about working in land protection. Establishing their parents' legacy and passing that onto their children as a place to connect with each other and discover the woods," Matt said.

The woodlands ascend towards the sky and offer peeks of Lake Michigan through the trees. In the springtime, trillium and mushrooms grow in abundance. The land is located just a few miles from the National Lakeshore and two other Conservation Easements within the Conservancy.

Glenn, now retired, and his wife would like to move to Leelanau permanently. They're looking for a place of their own in Leelanau or Traverse City and look forward to weekend visits to the cottage. When he returned from his work assignment in Wales, Cedric bought a sailboat, and Glenn can't wait to get back out on the water with it.

The cottage and surrounding land hold many memories for the Currin family. Like the land, the cottage is seemingly untouched by time. Blue-green shag carpet pads the living room floor, and a house phone nearly 50 years old still rings. A small kitchen table sits in front of a window overlooking the Manitou Islands. The view hasn't changed. Glenn and his siblings take comfort in knowing that it never will. Glenn spots a pair of eagles among the trees gazing out at the Manitou Islands together. "My parents traveled the world over, but they always came back to northern Michigan. They raised us as environmentalists and conservationists, and taking care of this property was important to them. It's something they wanted to pass on and preserve, and that's our belief too. This place is a gift, and in our short time here, we wanted to leave it protected and unspoiled."

## Help From Our Friends

Our lives are made up by what we do with our time. There are the necessary allotments like work and sleep, but where we truly live is in the in-between spaces. The stretch of time between getting off work and sitting down to dinner, or late mornings on the weekend, is where we choose to daydream, draw, read, walk, or any other luxury undefined by time. To spend some of that time serving others or a cause is a gift of magnitude.

Our volunteers are an integral part of what makes the Leelanau Conservancy great. For many, volunteering is their first experience engaging with the Conservancy, and there are plenty of ways to get involved. Our trail stewards do the vital work of making the trails a pleasant place for folks to enjoy time and again. The Wildflower Rescue team ensures that precious native species are preserved and re-homed when development looms. The exciting trail system at Palmer Woods is looked after by a fun-loving group known as the Palmer Woods Trail Crew. Our streams are monitored by dedicated samplers. And of course, our Docents have a deep wealth of knowledge of our Natural Areas. They have no shortage of fascinating facts on led hikes to delight hikers with. We're so proud and grateful for all the people who choose to spend some of their time volunteering for the Conservancy, and we'd like to introduce you to a few.

Photo by Mark Smith



### Erika Ferguson, Wildflower Rescue

"I have become the Lady Slipper Lady, so to speak. I keep our lady slipper rescues on my property during the winter. This isn't how I got started with the Conservancy, though. I got started here by stuffing envelopes. I don't remember when I first heard about the Conservancy, but we moved here in 2001, and obviously, you get made aware of what they do. I was interested in helping. When I found out about digging for Wildflower Rescue, I signed up for it because we had a whole bunch of trillium and Jack-in-the-pulpit blooming where our house was going to be. Before I had even heard of the Wildflower Rescue, we had dug up all of the plants in harm's way and moved them. I've always been interested in saving things, and I've always been a gardener, so it was natural for me to join the group. It has been such a joy. You get to experience beautiful areas in nature that you wouldn't normally get to. I'll never forget when we were digging south of Maple City, and we went into the woods. It was the most lovely sight of wild ferns that I have ever seen. It's a wonderful feeling to be able to say that I've helped rescue populations of native plants and flowers. I have made lifelong friends through doing this, and I'll keep doing it for as long as I can."



### Ann McInnis, Docent

"As a keen outdoor and nature enthusiast and science teacher, I became involved, along with my husband Doug, with education and advocacy as a board member and docent volunteer guide for the North Oakland Headwaters Land Conservancy downstate. Upon moving to Leelanau, it was a no-brainer to become involved with the Leelanau Conservancy as a volunteer and as owners of a 40-acre Easement, which is part of the cross-Peninsula Wildlife Corridor concept bordering Leelanau State Park developed by the Leelanau Conservancy. Leelanau Conservancy was a perfect match for my passion for sharing, not only my keen wonder of the natural world and the opportunity for continued learning but also for using my strong science background in educating and advocating about the need to appreciate, care for, share, enhance and protect those special natural areas in Leelanau that still retain some of the amazing ecological diversity representative of Northern Lower Michigan. I especially love the Conservancy staff and members who have made conservation and preservation their life's mission along with fellow docents who gladly share their love of Nature and the LC's mission with the thousands of curious and receptive folks who have chosen this region for visitation, recreation, and permanent residency."



**Mike Scharpf, Cedar River Preserve Trail Steward**

“I didn’t grow up here. I was here stationed in Empire for the Air Force. I was going to go to college and pursue a different career afterward, but I was offered a job the day after my last day with the Air Force. After being here, staying here is all I really wanted to do. For me, living across the lake was perfect. As far as the Conservancy goes, I first got involved when I was interested in protecting a piece of land. Volunteering with them as a trail steward has been rewarding. I’ve gotten to meet so many great people, even beyond Leelanau Conservancy people. People will see me working on the trails, and their reactions are inspiring. They’re so kind and grateful for the efforts, and it makes me glad to be able to give back like that, in a way that enhances something about their everyday life. I was nervous that I’d be bored in retirement, but that hasn’t been the case so far. My career wasn’t labor-intensive, so this isn’t necessarily something I was used to, but it’s easy to get the hang of. Signing up to dig ditches might not sound like a fun time to most people but seeing the impact of your work up close is such a great feeling. Really gratifying.”



**Kathy Draper, Palmer Woods Trail Crew**

“My grandsons were 11 and 9 at the time, and so I took my street bike with them, and we rode the easy trail at Palmer Woods. They were done in about 15 minutes, and I never saw them after the beginning. It took me about 45 minutes to finish, and they had started walking the trail to see if I had fallen off a cliff or something. So, I thought, I’d better pick up my game a little bit. When I saw that the Conservancy had volunteer opportunities to work on the trail, I thought, ‘I’m going to do that so I can keep up with my grandsons.’ The first time I went, we were lugging five-gallon buckets of clay up a hill to fix a berm. Truly, it was hard to carry up. But the next time I went, they were looking for someone who wanted to weed whack wild raspberry bushes along the trails. I enjoy it and have my own weed whacker, so that’s been my main assignment. You get into the mindset, do it for a couple of hours, and then go home to have pizza and ice cream. There’s a mishmash of people, and we have fun. Lindy lets us all know what’s going on when. Chad is the head of the group, so we see him every week, and we spend time working with the AmeriCorps members. Not all of us are bikers, but the ones who do enjoy talking about some of their bike adventures. They do a nice job of showing us how to work and maintain the trail for what they’re trying to do. Sometimes, we’ll have a cookout after work, kind of spur of the moment. I’ll go out for a ride some evenings, but I avoid the more difficult trails, and it doesn’t take me 45 minutes.”



**Julie Kueck, Stream Sampler**

“My family had a cottage built up here in the ‘70s. I grew up in Grand Rapids but spent time coming up here as a kid. I always felt such a strong connection to Leelanau. A few years ago, I moved to Leland, and it’s been so wonderful. Moving here, I knew that I wanted to get involved in helping the local community. Sometime, somewhere, I donated to the Conservancy and started getting their flyers in the mail. All of these different volunteer opportunities were listed, and I was interested. I got ahold of Chase Heise because I wanted to become a stream sampler. I’m a nurse and I wanted to do something where I could spend more time outside. So, for the past six years, Greg Vogt and I have been stream sampling throughout Leelanau. I spend a lot of time indoors and in fast-paced situations for work. Sampling is so simple and quiet. Sometimes my daughter comes with me. We also like hiking Conservancy properties together; our favorite is Whaleback. The view of the water down the ridge is so beautiful. I’m grateful that we have these places to escape to and opportunities to join in, and to the Conservancy for providing them to us.”

# 2021 At a Glance

1. We welcomed our 2022 AmeriCorps team this past December. They will be helping us with all sorts of stewardship and conservation easement projects. Pictured from left: LeighAnna Peck, Katelyn Maylee, Emma Somers.
2. Stites Natural Area in Suttons Bay got an autumn sprucing in October thanks to Ray and Jan Pezzi, who graciously donated the beloved natural area.
3. Our youngest Leelanau Conservancy member joined us, Earth-side. Land Steward Emily Douglas introduced sweet Ezra to the world and he is exploring and fascinated by nature already.
4. Board Member and videographer Nick Loud captured a young mountain biker breaking in the newly opened beginner trails at Palmer Woods. The two new loops include Ursa Minor, a one-mile warmup loop, and Ursa Major, a three-mile cross country loop.
5. Our annual autumn event Fall For Leelanau ended with fellowship and live music at Tandem Ciders in Suttons Bay. We toasted to Leelanau and all its endless seasonal beauty.
6. The Fern Garden has a new boardwalk that takes folks on a tour of varying, native fern species within Palmer Woods.
7. Volunteers helped at a Chippewa Run workbee to combat invasive autumn olive trees.
8. Property and Trail Maintenance Specialist Chad Jordan and his wife Heather Jordan enjoyed a twilight paddle at Cedar River Preserve during a video shoot. Plenty of wildlife and peaceful ambiance made for a perfect evening wind-down.
9. Our annual chainsaw safety workshop is always informative and well attended.

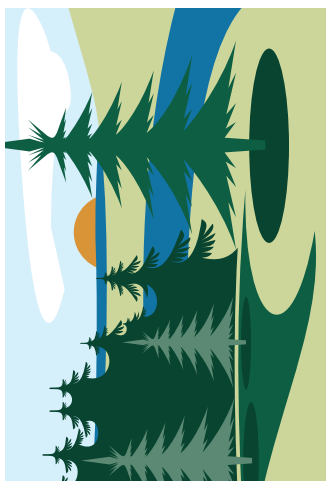
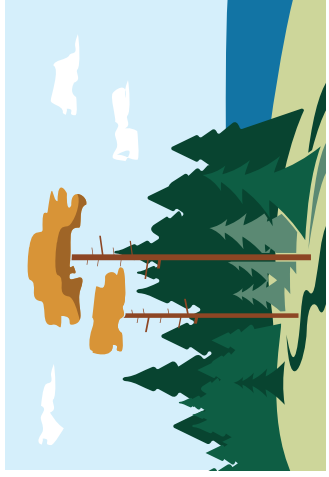
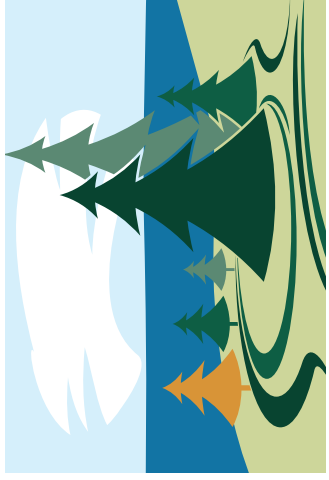




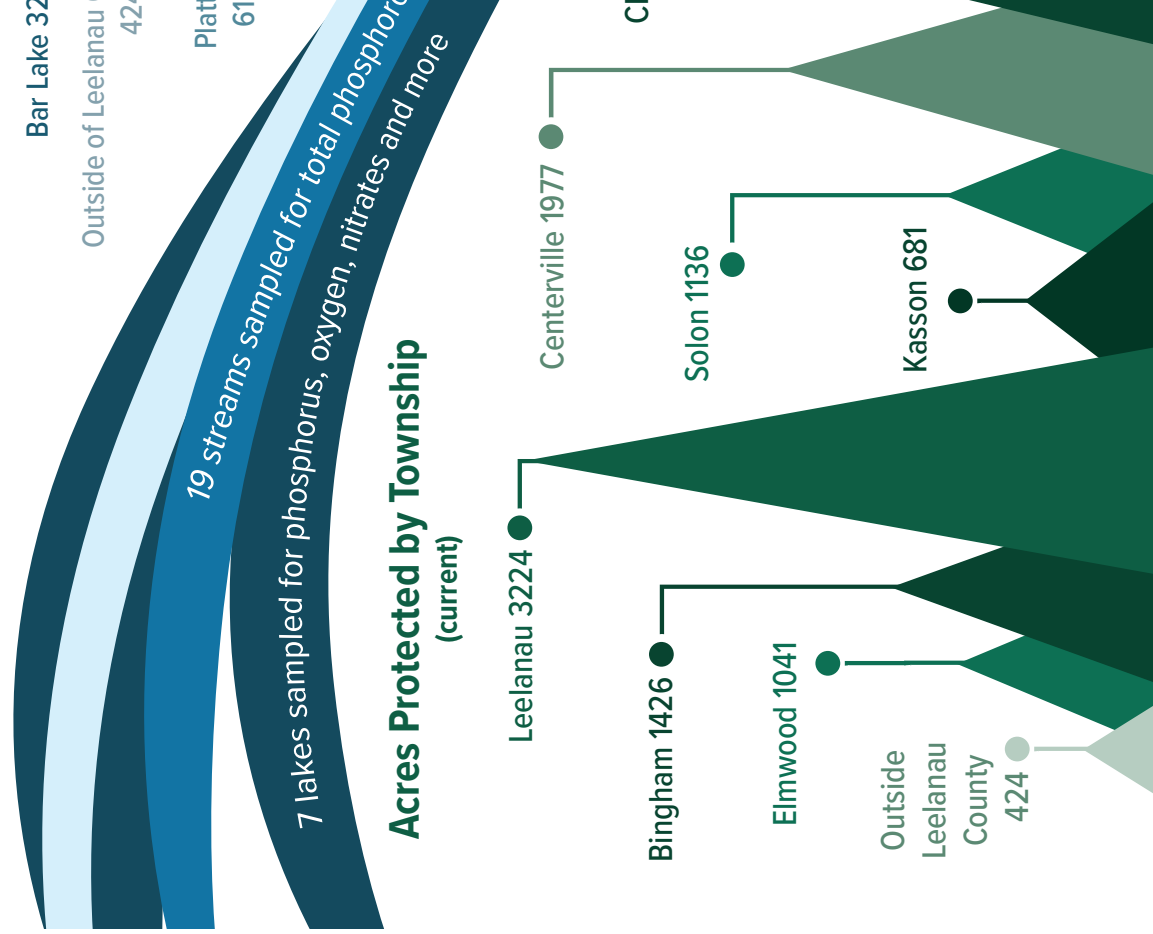
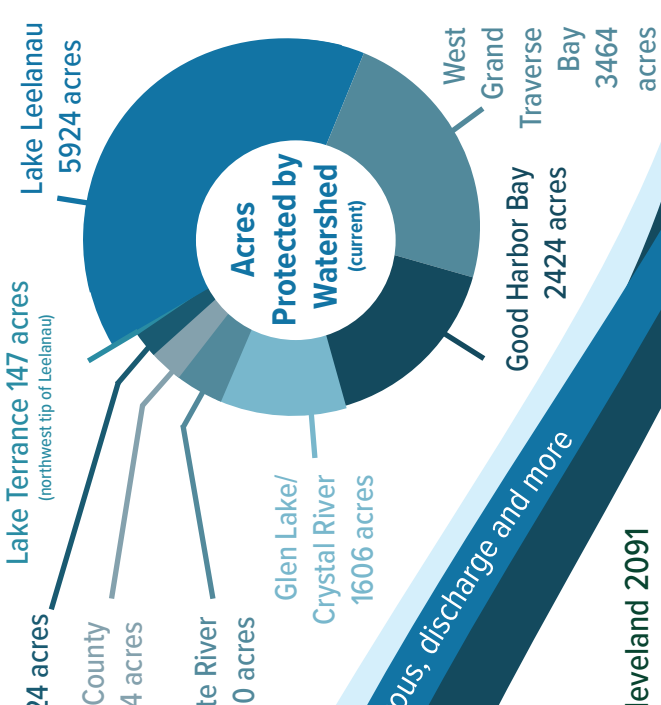
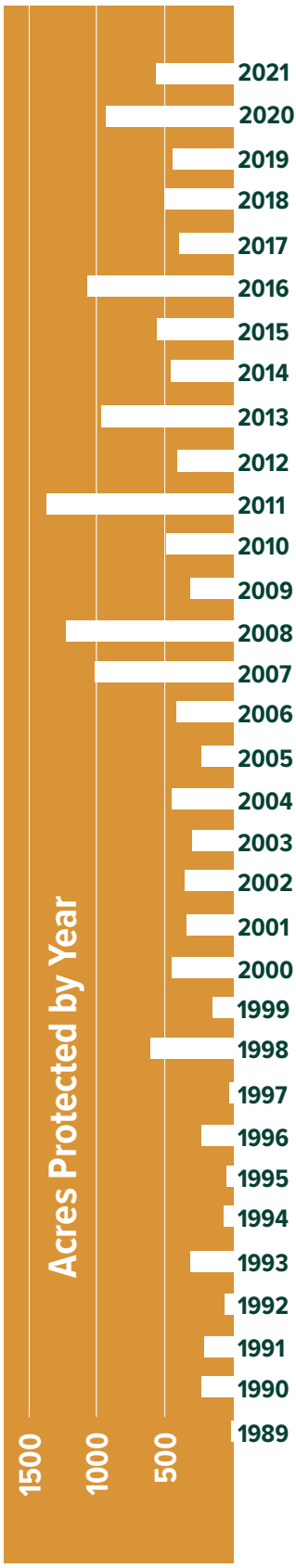
10. Director of Natural Areas and Preserves Becky Hill found this large, frozen dew drop decorating a pine tree at Swanson Preserve.
11. Lion's Mane mushroom found at Krumwiede Forest Reserve. This mushroom is uncommon and grows out of dead hardwood. Instead of a cap, it has a cascade of white 'teeth' and no stem. They grow back in the same spot every year and are praised for their medicinal qualities.
12. 2021's Sustainers Circle events were a fun and welcome way to celebrate Leelanau and mingle with friends old and new. Pictured: French Valley Vineyard.



# Leelanau Conservancy 2021: Year in Review



## 644 Acres Protected in 2021, 16,234 Total Acres Protected (all time)





3593 acres of land open to the public

4 new farms protected, totaling 329.63 acres

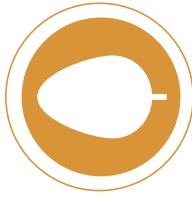
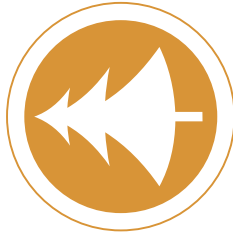
35.14 miles of public trails maintained

104,689 visitors to our natural areas

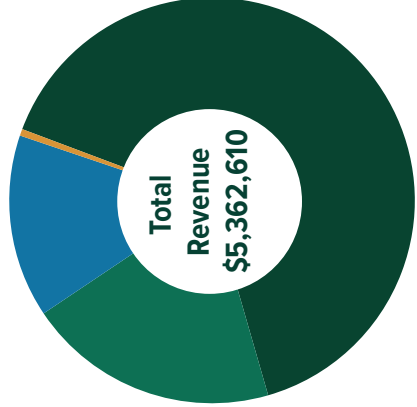
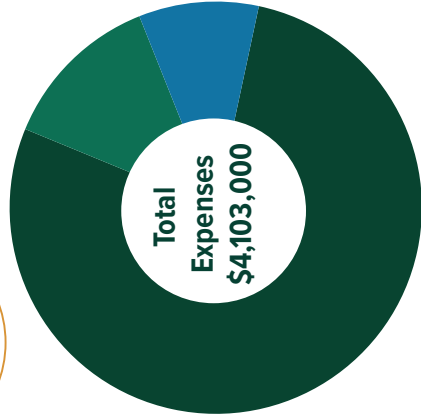
28 Natural Areas as of 2021

14.04 miles of mountain bike trail open to the public

9 new Heritage Society members joined



193 conservation easements monitored  
8025 trees planted



(Land Projects & Stewardship)  
 Programs \$3,195,000  
 Administration \$522,250  
 Fundraising \$385,750

Private Cash Donations \$3,475,490  
 Private Gifts of Land or Development Rights \$1,076,000

Public Grants \$782,500  
 Other (Merchandise Etc.) \$28,620

General Endowment \$5,329,034  
 Stewardship Endowment \$4,339,271



3338 donors gave

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January 1- December 31, 2021

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*Finance & Administration*  
Kathy Birney  
Molly Crimmins

*Charitable Giving*  
Meg Delor  
Stacie Longwell Sadowski  
Sara Michael  
Gayle Egeler

*Communications*  
Claire Wood  
Brigid Driscoll

*Land Protection*  
Matt Heiman  
Kim Hayes

*Stewardship*  
Becky Hill  
Emily Douglas  
Chase Heise  
Chad Jordan

*Volunteers and Events*  
Lindy Kellogg

*AmeriCorps Members*  
Katelyn Maylee  
LeighAnna Peck  
Emma Somers



Photo by Mark Smith



At the Leelanau Conservancy, we believe the outdoors is for everyone. We strive to honor and celebrate our community's diversity through our work. Our mission to conserve the lands and waters of Leelanau County can only be realized through a steadfast commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in conservation and stewardship and in our relationships and business practices. We recognize and celebrate that the well-

being of nature and people cannot be separated. The Conservancy commits to including, supporting, valuing, and welcoming all people with whom we work and serve, now and in the future. By including all people in conservation regardless of culture, race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, abilities, or age, we can help shape a more inclusive, more equitable, and more vibrant future for Leelanau.