



Watershed News

Spring 2021

Legacy and Sustainability by Linda Mutschler and Jaron Cook

There are a limited number of ways to make an impact that lasts beyond a lifetime. Protecting land is one of those ways.



Mueller Lane Prairie

Since 1974, the vision of the Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation (CLCF) has been to sustain the natural beauty, clean water and biodiversity of the Cedar Lakes region. With your support, CLCF has helped to protect over 2,500 acres of land.

Imagine what the Cedar Lakes region would look like if those 2,500 acres had been developed. Imagine the impact that such development would have had on stormwater runoff, water quality, wildlife habitat and the scenic beauty of the area.

You are the reason that CLCF has been successful. Thank you.

At CLCF, we are keenly aware that the responsibility of caring for the land CLCF has protected is a

timeless endeavor. Our plan is to protect that land in perpetuity for generations to come.

In CLCF's five-year Strategic Plan, adopted in January 2019, we had five primary goals. These five goals underlie everything CLCF does:

Land Protection. Protect the highest priority lands in CLCF's mission area using a diverse array of conservation tools and funding sources.

Land Stewardship. Maintain an active stewardship program to permanently protect the conservation values of CLCF properties.

Development & Finance. Maintain a diversified funding plan to meet CLCF's land protection goals, fulfill stewardship obligations, and support annual operations.

Organizational Sustainability. Engage effective people and systems throughout the organization providing direction, resources, and commitment to implement CLCF's mission.

Community Engagement. Engage people who are broadly representative of CLCF's community and foster opportunities to connect them with the land.

In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.

--John Muir

In this issue of *Watershed Events*, we want to focus on two aspects of these goals: *Legacy and Sustainability*. CLCF wants to ensure it has the financial wherewithal not only to achieve its land protection goals but also to ensure it can steward that land in perpetuity. To that end, we'll discuss the rollout of CLCF's Planned Giving Program as well as CLCF's current and upcoming stewardship opportunities.

Financial Sustainability: CLCF's Legacy Circle

Over the past several months, CLCF's Finance and Fundraising Committees have been evaluating CLCF's long-term financial strategy, including the development of a multi-year financial and fundraising plan. As part of this strategy, Kathy Klein, a member of CLCF's Fundraising Committee, has focused on the implementation of a Planned Giving Program-something CLCF has not had in the past.

That said, although CLCF hasn't had a formal Planned Giving Program in place, it has been fortunate to have been the beneficiary of a number of legacy gifts over time.

A man has made at least a start on discovering the meaning of human life when he plants shade trees under which he knows full well he will never sit.

--D. Elton Trueblood

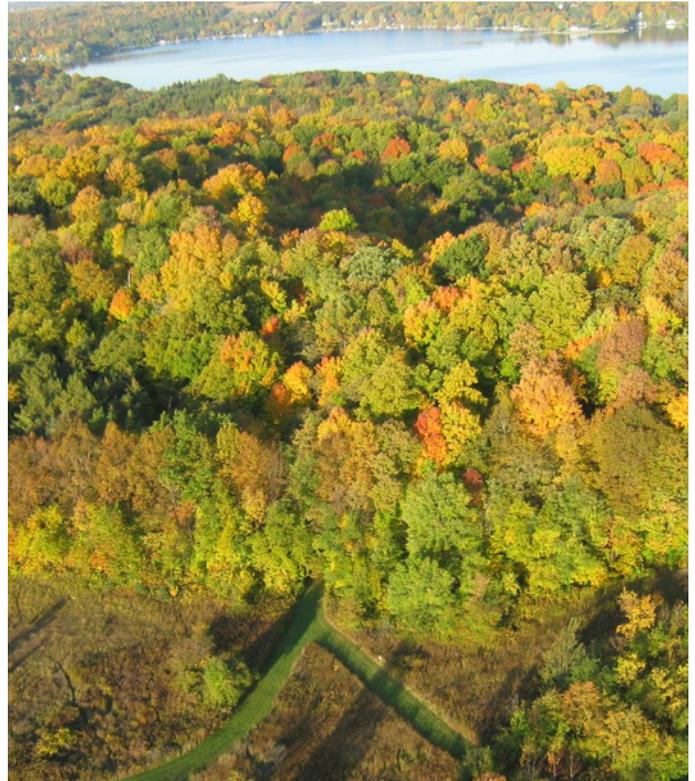
CLCF recognizes the importance of Legacy Circle gifts in helping to ensure its long-term success and asks that you consider becoming part of CLCF's Legacy Circle by making a planned gift to CLCF.

Your gift will allow future generations to delight in the breathtaking beauty of the area's rolling hills, glacial lakes, mature woodlands and prairies. As a member of CLCF's Legacy Circle, you will receive invitations to special CLCF events and name recognition on our website and in our annual report (with your permission).

Most importantly, you will have the satisfaction of becoming part of an exceptional community of land conservation supporters who are connected by a shared vision to help CLCF achieve its mission of protecting the natural environment of the Cedar Lakes region.

CLCF's Legacy Circle Bequest Challenge

To kick off CLCF's Legacy Circle, two anonymous couples have come together to offer a unique program to support CLCF's operating budget and its Legacy Circle initiative.



Fox Hill Nature Preserve (Photo by Gary Britton)

These two couples have created a \$20,000 fund, of which \$1,000 will be released to CLCF's operating budget for every family who joins CLCF's Legacy Circle and fills out a non-binding Bequest Challenge Notice of Intent.

Legacy Circle Donors Mary & John Emory



Long time CLCF supporters Mary and John Emory have included CLCF as an IRA beneficiary.

According to Mary, "Leaving a percentage of our IRA to CLCF is an easy way to continue our longtime support for this important organization."

Here's How the Bequest Challenge Works

Step 1: Name CLCF in your will or living trust or as a beneficiary of your retirement or financial account. New commitments and upgraded previously established bequest plans qualify.

Step 2: Complete the Legacy Circle Bequest Challenge Notice of Intent form available on CLCF's website and return it to CLCF, P.O. Box 347, West Bend, WI 53095.

Step 3: Once CLCF receives your form, \$1,000 will be immediately released from the Bequest Challenge fund to CLCF's operating budget in your honor. That's it. It's that simple!

If you have already included CLCF in your estate plans, you too are included as part of this Bequest Challenge. Just return the Notice of Intent form, and we would be thrilled to welcome you to CLCF's Legacy Circle and to extend our sincere thanks.

Bequest Options

When providing for CLCF in your estate plans, you can leave an unrestricted gift, or, if you desire, you may direct your gift to the following options:

Conservation Support

Gifts directed to Conservation Support will be used for all facets of CLCF's operations, including land acquisition, organizational development and stewardship. CLCF's Board of Directors will direct your gift toward the area of greatest need.

The Founders Endowment Fund

The Founders Endowment Fund, named for CLCF's visionary founders, ensures that CLCF will be able to steward its lands into the future. The interest and appreciation from this permanently restricted fund will help support CLCF year after year.

Ways to Give

There are a number of ways to designate a Legacy Circle gift. These include:

- A bequest of cash
- A 401(k) or IRA beneficiary designation
- A life insurance beneficiary designation
- A gift of real estate
- A charitable trust

Legacy Circle Donors Bev & Jeff Kenkel



Jeff and Bev Kenkel have been involved with CLCF for many years, with Jeff having served on the Board and as Executive Director following Geoff Maclay's retirement. Jeff's parents, John and Jean Schumann, donated conservation easements to CLCF covering 114 acres of land between 2003 and 2007.

Jeff's grandparents, Morris and Gladys Rosenheimer bought several acres of land adjacent to their home on Big Cedar Lake which was donated to CLCF in 1991.

Jeff and Bev are continuing the family conservation legacy by listing CLCF as a beneficiary of their trust.

Since estate giving can be complicated, we suggest that you consult with a legal and/or financial advisor who can provide professional advice. If you have any questions regarding CLCF's Legacy Circle or would like more information about the different gifting options, please feel free to call Linda Mutschler at (414) 614-5084 or send an e-mail to lmutschler@theclcf.org.

Thank you for considering this most worthy endeavor. You'll be receiving more information in the mail shortly. Thank you to our anonymous Bequest Challenge couples for their amazing support.

Stewardship and Sustainability:

As mentioned earlier, CLCF's mission is to protect the natural environment of the Cedar Lakes region. This means not only conserving the land but also stewarding the land for generations to come. The past year has been an incredibly busy time for CLCF's Land Stewardship Committee. Under the leadership of PT Ziegler, during 2020, CLCF drafted land management plans for all its fee simple properties for the first time. 2021 brings the implementation of those plans. Areas of focus during 2021 include monitoring all CLCF's fee owned properties (similar to the monitoring we do for our conservation easements), marking boundaries on our fee owned properties, and continuing our work on invasive species management.

Prairie Burn at the Joan M. Pick Nature Preserve

A larger project this spring is the burning of the southern two-thirds of the prairie at the Joan M. Pick Nature Preserve. This is the first burn at the Preserve since it was planted six years ago, and we couldn't be more excited!

By burning just two-thirds of the prairie, we provide refuge for animals on the remaining one-third. Other preparations and planning include the mowing of firebreaks around the prairie's perimeter and scheduling the burn on a low-wind, high-humidity day.

CLCF will be hiring a crew trained and certified to carry out prescribed burns in order to ensure the safety of the property and the properties around the Preserve.



2014 Prairie Burn at the Fox Hill Nature Preserve

Why Do a Prairie Burn?

Prescribed burns are a landscape disturbance that is critical to sustain fire dependent ecosystems like prairies and savannas. In Wisconsin specifically, Tallgrass Prairies and Oak Savannas require frequent, (usually) human-induced, burns to maintain the full extent of the flora and fauna.



Geoff Maclay & Keith Franz at the 2014 Prairie Burn

Early European accounts document the frequent burns carried out by Indigenous peoples of North America, and archaeological evidence and oral traditions suggest that fire has been used by humans to shape the landscape of North America for at least the last 10,000 years. While there is certainly variability as to the method, frequency, and reason for burning among different groups of people, it is generally agreed that one of the practical reasons for burning is that savannas and prairies are more bountiful and diverse in terms of plants and animals than a purely forested landscape. As Native Americans were removed from the land and as perennial Tallgrass Prairie and Oak Savannas were converted into annual row crops, fire disappeared from the landscape of Wisconsin. With the absence of fire, land that wasn't converted into agriculture succeeded into closed-canopy forests.

Regeneration Through Prairie Burns

To explain the role of humans and fire in prairie ecosystems, we need to look at some of the key abiotic (that is, non-living) and biotic conditions that characterize prairies. Anyone who spends time walking a prairie that hasn't been burned in a few

years will notice a considerable amount of thatch—the stalks of past years' grasses and wildflowers.

While some thatch isn't bad—too much thatch shades out low growing plants, prevents seeds from making the soil contact needed to germinate, and smothers plants that don't have strong stems to break through. In fact, a diagnostic symptom of a prairie with too much thatch is an overexpression of strong-stemmed species like Goldenrod and Big Bluestem. One of the many roles of fire is to burn off the thatch so that the prairie can sustain a more diverse set of plants.



The Prairie at the Joan M. Pick Nature Preserve

Over time, prairie species have evolved and adapted not just to survive burns but to thrive with them. Wildflowers respond to burns with synchronized, vigorous blooming. The strategy is that all of the individuals in a species bloom at once with a larger number of flowers so there is a greater chance for successful pollination to occur. For example, it's more likely that the same bee visits two different Prairie Dock flowers when all of the prairie docks bloom at once. This way, wildflowers are dropping a larger number of seeds in a year when their seeds have the best chance to make soil contact—when thatch has been removed following a burn.

In any given ecosystem, there is generally a nutrient that limits the growth of biomass. Most often this limiting nutrient is nitrogen or phosphorus, and prairies themselves are nitrogen-limited ecosystems. Fire plays an integral role in restoring the soil chemistry of prairie soils. When a prairie is burned, up to 80% of the nitrogen that is bound up in the soil and thatch is volatilized as nitrogen gas

(N₂) due to nitrogen's relatively low volatilization point of 200° Celsius (392° F). This means that when the prairie is burned, the useful nutrients like carbon, calcium, iron, and phosphorus are retained, but the excessive nitrogen that gives weedy, annual species a competitive edge is removed.

We invite everyone to come and visit our prairie at the Joan M. Pick Nature Preserve throughout the spring and summer to watch the charred ground transform back into an oasis of wildflowers. We believe that these activities on the prairie are a testament to the crucial role that active stewardship plays in sustaining some of our most beloved Wisconsin landscapes. If you have any questions about the prairie burn at the Joan M. Pick Nature Preserve, please don't hesitate to call Jaron Cook at (262) 353-4866.

CLCF Stew Crew Upcoming Events

One of the most impactful ways to give to CLCF is through your time. We are lucky to have a hard-working group of volunteers known as the CLCF Stew Crew. The Stew Crew is an integral part of stewardship projects like trail maintenance and construction, invasive species management, and tree plantings. We invite you to check out our 2021 Stew Crew event schedule to find a day to give back by getting outdoors!

If you are interested in volunteering, head to the volunteer page on CLCF's website at <https://www.conservecedarlakes.org/support-us/volunteer/> to RSVP for Stew Crew events and to download the volunteer waiver.



CLCF Stew Crew Coordinators Joe & Meg Jankys

Get Your CLCF Logo Wear!

CLCF's online store will be open between March 22 and April 2, 2021. We've chosen selections with nature and the outdoors in mind. Shop the store for men's, women's and children's clothing that will be a perfect fit for hiking trails or enjoying a sunset.

It's a great way to support CLCF. A portion of each purchase benefits CLCF's programs and also gets you ready for spring. Orders are sent directly to your home. Here is your CLCF shopping link:

<https://clcfsping2021.itemorder.com/sale>



Snowshoe Shuffle

Despite the frigid cold, 33 brave souls came out for CLCF's Annual Snowshoe Shuffle and X-Country Ski. Due to Covid-19, we were unable to host our annual chili dinner but hope to in 2022. One of these years, we are going to have great snow and temperate weather at the same time!

Thanks to Chuck McGrady for organizing the event and to Mary Beth and Buzz Carr, Kelly Egan, Mary Emory, Meg Jansky, Camille McGrady, Cindy Mestan, Cindy Rusher, and Susan and Rory Wright for all their help with treats and tent set-up/take-down. Thanks also to Jerry Gensch for making sure the trails were in wonderful shape!



Lori Steinbach, Chuck and Camille McGrady

Save the Date for CLCF's Annual Kayak Tour!

On Saturday, June 5, 2021, CLCF will be hosting its Annual Kayak Tour at Silver Lake. Please go to Activities & Events at www.conservecedarlakes.org to reserve your spot. Even if you aren't interested in kayaking, we'd welcome you to join us for some social-distanced coffee and doughnuts to learn about CLCF and to meet some of your Silver Lake neighbors!

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CLCF's office is located at the Joan M. Pick Nature Preserve, 5975 County Hwy Z, West Bend, WI.