



Schmidt Preserve

Project Description: The former Schmidt Property is a 26-acre parcel of farmland and associated wetlands located along Mason Creek purchased by Tall Pines Conservancy in 2019. TPC and the Oconomowoc Watershed Protection Program have been focusing on working with landowners on best practices along Mason Creek due its critical role in lowering the phosphorous laden sediment it deposits into North Lake, which then flows via the Oconomowoc River to the chain of lakes to the south. Mason Creek is one of only 3 EPA defined Total Maximum Daily Load impaired streams located in the entire Oconomowoc River Watershed. This means the creek contains so many nutrients that it cannot handle any more from the land. On a positive note, Mason Creek is also a Class One Cold Water Trout Stream—one of few in the region.

Why: Our purchase of this property along with a Lake Protection Management Grant from the DNR, will allow us to re-meander the stream, which was channelized and ditched in the 1950s, back to its natural course. This action will re-establish the historic flow of the creek as well as reconnect it to the flood plain, thereby lowering the sediment and nutrients that enter North Lake and beyond. It is also located adjacent to a 220-acre wetland mitigation project. Together over 3500 linear feet of stream will be restored.

Where: Town of Merton

Size: 26 acres

Owners: Tall Pines Conservancy

Completion: 2019

“It is our hope that our work on the Schmidt land along Mason Creek, together with the project upstream, will significantly lower the phosphorous entering the entire lake network below it.”

—Susan Buchanan, Tall Pines Executive Director

