



## Mason Creek Ribbon Cutting

by SUSAN BUCHANAN, TPC Executive Director

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on September 23rd to celebrate the successful completion of the Mason Creek Re-meandering Project and to thank the many partners, adjacent landowners and other stakeholders for their commitment. Fifty people attended, including representatives of most of the stakeholders. Following the ribbon-cutting, the group was led on a tour guided by several experts who outlined the significant challenges during construction and the positive benefits the project presents to water quality, wild and aquatic life.

various areas of concentration. TPC and partners began chipping away at installing buffers and removing culverts, among other things, to address these concerns. Eventually it was determined that the creek north of County Highway CW was responsible for the highest proportion of sediment and nutrients entering into the lake. The team decided to direct their attention to this area.



Photo by Eddee Daniel.

Over a decade ago, representatives from TPC met with the Chairman of the North Lake Management District over concerns about sediment and nutrient levels in the lake, which can be detrimental to water quality and aquatic habitats. The district had funded a study by UWM that identified Mason Creek, one of four feeder streams to the lake, as a significant contributor.

Tall Pines contacted many riparian landowners in the area and were able to strike a deal with members of the Schmidt family to purchase twenty-six acres of farmland along the creek for purposes of re-meandering the stream back to its natural course and re-connect it to the flood plain. Grants

Fast forward, the district received a DNR grant to hire the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission to complete a River Management Plan. Four years later, a plan was finished that identified

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# Volunteer Stewards Make a Difference One Acre at a Time

by PAUL MEUER, TPC Land Protection Manager

Perhaps you've noticed another area cleared of invasive buckthorn at one of our preserves, or maybe you observed hundreds of newly planted native prairie grasses at Mason Creek, or you may have noticed trail improvements at the Oconomowoc River Conservancy Park.

All this work was made possible by our Volunteer Stewards – folks like you and I who have a passion for conservation and put in the hard work to enhance and improve the places that Tall Pines Conservancy protects.

To date, some of the achievements of the Volunteer Stewards Program include clearing nearly three acres of invasive brush; planting over 2,000 native prairie grasses and forbs; building and maintaining over a mile of hiking trails – and the work will continue this winter as we again begin focusing on invasive brush clearing at different protected sites throughout the greater Lake Country area.



*After a very productive day at the Oconomowoc River Conservancy Park, these volunteers stopped for a well-deserved break. The enthusiastic crew removed invasive species and worked to clear trails in preparation for the guided walk that was held on Saturday, July 8th.*

Anyone is welcome to join the Volunteer Stewards Program and no previous experience is needed. We provide the necessary tools and technical guidance. Beyond supporting boots on the ground conservation efforts, the program also provides an opportunity to learn about land management practices and gain hand-on experience that you can apply elsewhere, such as future career choices or restoration efforts in your own backyard. Plus, it gives you an opportunity to explore some of the unique habitats and special places that are otherwise inaccessible at other times of the year.

Volunteer Steward Program events are typically offered twice per month, often times on a weekday and weekend date. Stay tuned to the Tall Pines Conservancy e-blasts and social media for event announcements, and we look forward to seeing you out there! For more information or to register as a Volunteer Steward, please email Paul at [paul@tallpinesconservancy.org](mailto:paul@tallpinesconservancy.org). ▲

## Mason Creek Ribbon Cutting... (from PAGE 1)

were obtained through the DNR by the North Lake Management District, accounting for approximately seventy-five percent of the construction cost, with the remaining twenty-five percent coming from generous donors. The project cost was \$300,000, and the estimated improvement is 102 pounds of annual phosphorous reduction. Additionally, water temperature is a critical aspect of healthy waterways. Many native species such as brown trout require cold water and the new creek restoration helps keep the temperature low.



*Photo by Eddee Daniel.*

The major partners were Tall Pines Conservancy, the Oconomowoc Watershed Protection Program, North Lake Management District, Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources, Stantec Engineering and Wondra Construction. Additional partners included Trout Unlimited, Waukesha County, the Town of Oconomowoc, Town of Merton, Field & Stream and the Corp of Engineers.

Future projects include ditch plugs along the northwest branch of the creek, and continual work with landowners in the area on best management practices. ▲

# Farmers for Lake Country Showcases Innovative Land Practices that Protect the Environment

by BETH HOEFER-JEZO, TPC Director of Outreach & Development

This year, FFLC launched its popular Field Signs Program, which encourages local producers to share their support of the organization while taking pride in the conservation practices in place on their farms.

Program participants are able to showcase up to four environmentally friendly strategies, including:



Eloise Harris and Katelin Hermanson install a field sign at a local farm.

- **Reduced Tillage** – Low-till agriculture minimizes soil disturbance and erosion but allows for some tilling for weed control and planting.
- **No-Till** – No-till agriculture allows the soil structure to stay intact, increasing the amount of water that infiltrates into the soil, soil retention of organic matter, and nutrient cycling.
- **Nutrient Management** – In developing their detailed, individualized plans, farmers identify and integrate

management practices that help keep nutrients on and in the field.

- **Prairie Planting** – The deep root systems of these native plants help hold topsoil together, reducing soil erosion and helping to protect water quality.
- **Planting Green** – Corn or soybeans are planted directly into a growing cover crop, usually rye or wheat. The benefits include erosion control and better weed management.
- **Planted Buffers** – Trees, shrubs and groundcover are planted on areas taken out of production to catch sediment and other pollutants before they reach streams, rivers or lakes.
- **Cover Crops** – FFLC first offered the cover crop seeding program using helicopters to complete aerial seeding. For the past two years, drones have made this process more efficient and environmentally friendly!

Be sure to look for these signs as you travel around the greater Lake Country area – and thank your local farmers for their commitment to improving the quality of our waterways. ▲

*Farmers for Lake Country programs are made possible through USDA-NRCS-RCPP funding and support from the City of Oconomowoc and Tall Pines Conservancy.*

*The USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.*



## Farmers for Lake Country

FFLC successfully applied for and received grant funding from DATCP for 2024. The amount we received exceeded our award for 2023, despite a more competitive application pool of 47 groups this time around!

Farmers for Lake Country completed its 2023 Aerial Seeding of Cover Crop in September when nearly 1000 acres of aeri ally applied seed was spread using drone technology. Getting the cover crop seed on the ground before the primary crop is harvested allows an earlier start for the seeds to germinate and produces deeper root structures compared to a drilled cover crop completed weeks later.

Cover crops often reduce the need for herbicides and other pesticides. And, they typically lead to improved crop yields by enhancing soil health. Cover crops also hold soil in place, which in turn prevents soil erosion while reducing non-point source pollution caused by sediments, nutrients and agricultural chemicals. ▲

# What a Year! Looking at 2023 —

## Pine Lake Event

In June, TPC and the Oconomowoc Watershed Protection Program were pleased to participate in Pine Lake's Natural Shoreline Event, hosted by the Pine Lake Conservation Committee. The evening's agenda focused on the value



of shoreline restoration strategies and long-term natural landscape maintenance on our lands and lakes. Looking for a speaker to lead a customized presentation at your next lake meeting? Contact TPC at 262-369-0500.

## OWPP Paddle

Nearly 100 water recreationists gathered on the shores of North Lake for the 9th Annual OWPP Paddle. Along their journey, these outdoor enthusiasts explored the three tributaries entering the east and west corners of the lake and checked out the newly dredged mouth area of the Oconomowoc River. Naturalists from the Schlitz Audubon Center were on hand to share information about lake ecosystems. Many thanks to the North Lake



Yacht Club for serving as our event host. Their beautiful clubhouse was the perfect place to enjoy a post-paddle lunch before heading off to nearby Oconomowoc River Conservancy Park for a nature hike guided by TPC's Paul Meuer.

## Pop Up Prairie Walk

Did you know that members of the TPC Stewardship Society receive invitations to annual Members Only events? This year's exclusive excursion was an early evening prairie walk at a property on Pine Lake protected through a conservation easement with TPC. Steve Banovetz of Field & Street Restorations served



as our tour guide, helping with plant identification and providing insight on land restoration strategies. How do YOU become a Stewardship Society member? You are automatically enrolled in this select group when you make an annual donation of \$1000 or more to Tall Pines.

## Quad Week

In July, TPC hosted its first twilight summer hike at Camp Quad and yoga session. Guests were greeted by the sounds of nocturnal birds and animals as a colorful sunset transitioned to a star-studded evening sky. What a wonderful opportunity to explore the unique terrain of this 325-acre property! We hope to offer this excursion again in 2024 – so watch for details!



## FFLC Shed Talk

Farmers For Lake Country held its August Shed Talk at the Lofy Farm in Richfield. The well-attended gathering included a demonstration of an aerial drone seeding application and discussions on cover crops, water quality strategies and more. Area farmers are working hard to integrate farming techniques that limit soil erosion and nutrient runoff for healthier water here in the greater Lake Country region.

## Healthy Lakes Conference

Stephanie Prellwitz, CEO of the Green Lake Association, was the enthusiastic keynote speaker for the 2023 Healthy Lakes Conference. Representatives from nearly 40 different lake associations and organizations gathered to learn more about topics ranging from phosphorus reduction and early AIS prevention to community activation. Don Wiemer and the Village of Oconomowoc Lake were presented with the 2023 LCCW Lake Leadership Award. Jerry Heine was given the first Lifetime Achievement Award for his many years of service to the North Lake Management District. ▲





## Annual Ride to the Barns

The 15th Annual Ride to the Barns was held on Saturday, August 14th and was a sell-out success! We are very grateful to our many enthusiastic riders, hard-working volunteers, and our welcoming hosts: Paul and Pam Conway; Friends of Dodge County Parks; Bob and Gina Magnus; George and Elaine Monis; Paul and Laura Phelps and St. Paul's Church – Ixonia. ▲



Ride to the Barns photos by Frankie Garr of Next Stop Photography.

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**16<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL**

**Ride to the Barns**

**AUGUST 10<sup>TH</sup> 2024**

A FUNDRAISING  
EVENT TO BENEFIT  
LAND CONSERVATION

TALL PINES  
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where  
you RIDE**

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A UNIQUE  
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# Tall Pines Internship Teaches Invaluable Skills to Jumpstart Student Careers

by EMMA HEINRICH



Hello! My name is Emma Heinrich and this summer I returned to Tall Pines Conservancy as a sustainability intern. I am a senior at UW-Madison this year, studying Environmental Sciences & Studies, Sustainability, and Public Policy. After graduation, I plan to enter into the field of environmental policy, focusing on renewable energy.

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing policymakers, businesses, and individuals; it is something we need to face directly. I've always loved the outdoors and would hate for future generations to not have the opportunity to explore.

Over the summer, I helped execute several of Tall Pines' events and projects.

Starting with the OWPP Paddle, I immediately felt the community that Tall Pines and the Oconomowoc Watershed Protection Program have built. I loved learning about the watershed and North Lake while paddling, even if we couldn't get our canoe to go straight. Throughout the summer, I decided to continue my Instagram summer series, but this time highlighting Wisconsin's many unique natural spots. I really enjoyed doing this series, I've learned a lot about the places I call home. For example, my family has been going to Door County since I was young, but I never knew about the Ridges until this year. The Ridges hosts unparalleled biodiversity, a very unique landscape, and fun fact – The Ridges Sanctuary is Wisconsin's first land trust. Ride to the Barns is always the highlight

of my summer internship! This year, I completed some of the more behind the scenes work as well as preparing some delicious sandwiches at the Conway Farm! Some of my favorite projects were the new passport and the poster featuring our live auction items.

TPC continues to do environmental work in its purest form, creating a community of environmental enthusiasts. I grew up in Lake Country so supporting their mission is something I'm proud to do. ▲



by KATELIN HERMANSON

My name is Katelin Hermanson, and this summer I had the privilege of serving my Individual Placement through WisCorps with both Tall Pines Conservancy and the Waukesha County Land Conservancy. I am currently in my final year at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. I am pursuing a degree in environmental science with an emphasis in conservation and resource management. My journey into this field was inspired by memories on my grandparents' dairy farm in New Glarus,

Wisconsin, where I developed a deep appreciation for nature and sustainable farming practices. As I've progressed in my education, I've discovered a passion for studying soil health and nutrient management.

During my time as an AmeriCorps member, my main responsibility was trail maintenance and managing invasive species. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to work with Erik Joost, OWPP Program Manager, conducting water and soil sampling. I thoroughly enjoyed being a part of Tall Pines' vibrant summer events calendar. I particularly enjoyed assisting with Farmers For Lake Country's aerial seeding application processing and being able to attend the summer meetings. The most impactful part of the summer was working with Paul Meuer, TPC Land Protection Manager, as he showed me, from first site visit to written agreement, the full process of land conservation. This hands-on experience was something I never could have achieved inside the classroom. ▲

**Luminary Walk**  
at Camp Quad  
Saturday, February 3rd

candlelit stroll  
gourmet chili  
created by Chef Earl Gesling  
of The Natural Way  
hot apple cider & s'mores  
outdoor bonfire

Adults: \$10  
Kids 12 & under: \$5  
(2 yrs & under: free)

Register at:  
[tallpinesconservancy.org](http://tallpinesconservancy.org)  
or call 262-369-0500

Hosted by: **Quad**



**LUMINARY WALK**

Saturday, February 3

Camp Quad

See details below on page six.

**ARBOR DAY TREE GIVEAWAY**

Friday, April 26

**OCONOMOWOC**

**FARMERS MARKET**

Saturday mornings

May through October • 8a–12p

Bank Five Nine Campus Lot

155 W. Wisconsin Avenue

[oconomowoc.org](http://oconomowoc.org)

**OWL PROWL AT CATHOLIC**

**ECOLOGY CENTER**

Saturday, May 18

Registration coming soon to

[catholicecologycenter.org](http://catholicecologycenter.org)

**LAKE COUNTRY**

**CLEAN WATER FESTIVAL**

Saturday, June 22

Pewaukee Lake

[cleanwaterfestival.com](http://cleanwaterfestival.com)

**10TH ANNUAL OWPP PADDLE**

Saturday, June 29

[oconomowocwatershed.com](http://oconomowocwatershed.com)

**16TH ANNUAL RIDE**

**TO THE BARNS**

Saturday, August 10

**TPC 25TH ANNIVERSARY**

**CELEBRATION**

Sunday,

September 15



## ARTservancy Program

TPC is thrilled to continue our partnership with the ARTservancy program by hosting artist-in-residence Meg Muthupandiyani. Meg, an Assistant Professor of Writing at UW-Superior, is a multi-media artist-educator who uses poetry, illustration, film and photography in her study of human relationships to land communities. During the summer, Meg visited a number of TPC farm easement properties, taking photos and doing field sketching. Part of her project for TPC is the creation of several 2' x 3' quilts that contain clothing worn by members of farm families, volunteers and others who are actively involved in the mission of TPC.



Meg Muthupandiyani

ARTservancy is a partnership between Gallery 224, located in Port Washington, Wisconsin, and several area land conservancies. Artist Residents create a body of artwork inspired by the property or properties they've selected, culminating in a month-long exhibition at Gallery 224. Programming is offered throughout their residency year, include an ongoing blog featuring the artist on A Wealth of Nature, on-site tours, performances, workshops and demonstrations. ▲

## LCCW Quarterly Meeting December 7, 2023 – 6pm via Zoom

### Have You Ever Wondered What Happens to a Lake When it Freezes?

If the answer is "Yes!" you won't want to miss LCCW's final quarterly meeting of 2023 – "Lake Responses to Wisconsin's Changing Winters" – which will be conducted via Zoom on Thursday, December 7th at 6:00pm.

Phenology is the study of cyclic and seasonal natural phenomena, especially in relation to climate and plant and animal life.

Zachery Feiner, an assistant scientist for the Center for Limnology at the University of Wisconsin and Wisconsin DNR, will share what changing snow and ice conditions mean for lakes and how changing ice phenology affects lakes and the fish that live in them.

Visit [lakecountrycleanwaters.org](http://lakecountrycleanwaters.org) to complete the fast and easy registration process.



SAVE  
THE  
DATE!



TALL PINES  
25TH ANNIVERSARY  
CELEBRATION  
SUNDAY, SEPT. 15, 2024

## Will You Help?

This year's annual appeal is an opportunity for you to help **preserve local farmland** so that it will remain productive – generation after generation – and never be developed. Plus, protecting important local land will help to **safeguard the quality of the lakes, rivers and streams** that define our community.



Even as development pressures continue to grow, and the cost of local farmland reaches an all-time high, Tall Pines is excited to report that the momentum is quickly building to protect even more local farmland. And, that means more and more farmers are asking for your help. We want to be ready to provide the support they need to protect their land. **Will You Help?**

Please make your year-end contribution using the enclosed envelope. Or, provide your donation to Tall Pines Conservancy by credit card. You can make a one-time online donation or arrange for a recurring contribution of support on a monthly basis.

Simply visit [tallpinesconservancy.org](http://tallpinesconservancy.org) and click on the **green** donate button. **Thank you!** ▲

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