

Our mission is to preserve our rural heritage by protecting remaining farmland, water resources, natural areas and open spaces adjacent to and impacting Northwestern Waukesha County.



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Tall Pines Conservancy Announces Executive Director Retirement, Names Successor Statewide leader in land preservation plans for the future as it marks 25th anniversary

Nashotah, WI, October 8, 2024 -- Tall Pines Conservancy, one of the state's leading non-profit land trusts, announced today that its long-time executive director Susan Buchanan will retire yearend and has named Rebecca (Becky) Fedak to succeed Buchanan. Tall Pines, which marks its 25th anniversary this year, focuses on preserving farmlands, water resources, and natural spaces in Waukesha, Dodge, and Washington Counties. The land trust currently has nearly 3,000 acres under protection. Land trusts are private, community-based, non-profit organizations established to protect land and water resources for public benefit and from future development.

Buchanan was First Executive Director

Buchanan was hired in 2008 as the organization's first executive director. Under her leadership, Tall Pines achieved national Land Trust Accreditation, the highest national mark of distinction, and increased the number of acres under its protection from about 200 to more than 2,700 today with another 1,600 acres forthcoming. Buchanan also formed a number of critical partnerships and programs at the state and regional level including the Oconomowoc Watershed Protection Program, Lake Country Clean Waters, and Farmers for Lake Country. Additionally, she has secured more than \$11 million in private, state, and federal funding for farmland protection and developed the annual Ride to the Barns bicycling fundraiser that brings hundreds of riders each year to area farms.

"With Susan at the helm, Tall Pines has evolved into one of Wisconsin's most well respected and successful land trusts and has garnered both a national and statewide reputation as a leader in land protection," said Tall Pines Board of Directors Chair Kyle Zwiig. He is the co-owner of Zwiig's Maple Acres, a sixth-generation family farm.

Outside of Tall Pines, Buchanan has served on Boards and in other important roles for a number of organizations including the National Agricultural Land Network/American Farmland Trust, Gathering Waters -- Wisconsin's Alliance of Land Trusts, and Lake Country Clean Waters. She and her husband own two farms, one in Wisconsin and the other in Connecticut.

New Executive Director Joins at Crucial Time

Fedak starts her role as Tall Pines' next executive director later this month and will work alongside Buchanan through yearend to ensure a smooth leadership transition. She's a seasoned sustainability, conservation, and engineering executive.



Tall Pines Conservancy is a 501 (c) (3)
tax exempt organization

Most recently, Fedak was the Lake Michigan Unit Manager for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Office of Great Waters where she managed dozens of environmental restoration projects in partnership with agencies, nonprofits, and private entities at the federal, state, and local level. Additionally, Fedak is a farm owner. She and her husband, together with her parents, steward a nearly 100-acre farm where they are actively restoring wetlands, meadows, and prairie while also working with Tall Pines to preserve the property.

“Becky’s professional expertise, preservation experience, and personal background make her extremely well-suited to lead Tall Pines going forward and intuitively connect her to our mission to protect land and water,” Buchanan said.

“Having grown up in Hartland and through my work professionally and as a farm owner, I’ve seen firsthand the accelerating loss of open spaces in our region and how our landscape has transformed,” Fedak added. “I’m deeply committed to Tall Pines’ mission and working with our board, staff, volunteers, and partners to support our property owners and communities while also preserving the natural areas that define Lake Country.”

Before joining the DNR in 2019, Fedak was a Partner and Senior Engineer for Brendle Group, a Colorado sustainability consulting firm where she led the water and climate practice areas. Prior to that she was Co-Founder and Technical Director for Running Water International, a social enterprise that brings open source water and sanitation technologies to developing countries. Fedak began her career as a Water Resources Engineer for MWH Global (now Stantec). She earned her MBA in Global Social and Sustainable Enterprise from Colorado State University and her undergraduate degree in Environmental Engineering from University of Wisconsin-Platteville.

“Becky is the ideal individual to help Tall Pines ‘Keep the country in Lake Country,’” Zwiag said. “We have the highest project load ever in our 25-year history because communities believe in our mission and see the benefits of our work. Becky will help us expand our capacity to complete these projects and protect a growing number of acres.”

Most of the property under Tall Pines’ protection is through conservation easements granted by land owners. Conservation easements are permanent, legally binding agreements that restrict use of the land to protect its natural features and assure the land will be protected forever regardless of who owns the property in the future. [Learn more](#) about land trusts and conservation easements.

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