



A NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED FOR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF TALL PINES CONSERVANCY
Fall/Winter 2019

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Tall Pines Boosts Water Quality Through Purchase and Restoration of 26-Acre Parcel Along Mason Creek

by SUSAN BUCHANAN, *Executive Director*

Background of the Schmidt Preserve
Tall Pines Conservancy is very pleased to announce the purchase of 26.46 acres of property located within the upper reach of the Mason Creek watershed, which has been identified as a contributor of sediment and phosphorus to both the Oconomowoc and Rock rivers and ultimately North Lake. Mason Creek, a Class I Trout Stream, has been designated as an impaired waterway (303(d) listed) by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The purchase of this significant parcel, now named the "Schmidt Preserve," was made possible by generous donors to the 2016 Quad Challenge Grant. Currently the property does not allow public access.

What is the History and What Does TPC Hope to Accomplish?

Excessive sediment and nutrient loading from the Mason Creek watershed led to unnatural conditions, such as increased algae blooms, deep water oxygen depletion, and water clarity issues in North Lake. This prompted local units of government and organizations to partner with State and Federal agencies to improve the water quality in the Lake and watershed. TPC designated Mason Creek as a priority area within the larger Oconomowoc Watershed Protection Program.

In response to the concerns, the North Lake Management District (NLMD) and TPC worked with the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) to develop the Mason Creek Watershed Protection Plan. This Plan identifies opportunities for stream and wetland restoration within the Schmidt Preserve to improve water quality within the watershed, enhance stream biology to support all trout life cycles, increase floristic quality and restore wildlife habitat by reducing non-native

"Mason Creek is one of the best waterways in Waukesha County to contain a naturally reproducing population of brook trout despite the extensive ditching."

—Ben Heussner,
DNR Fish Biologist

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Working Together for Healthy Lakes

Clean Water Association's 4th Annual Healthy Lakes Conference was held on Friday, June 7th at Seven Seas Restaurant. During the all-day conference, which drew nearly 100 attendees, topics included identifying (and combating) the most serious threats to our local waterways, such as aquatic invasive species, and the value of (and how to fund) natural shorelines and wetlands. There were also plenty of opportunities for networking with fellow riparian land owners, other concerned citizens and representatives from a variety of water-related businesses and agencies. The afternoon concluded with pontoon boat rides to view shoreline restoration projects on Lake Nagawicka.



The Clean Water Association hosts quarterly meetings on hot topics impacting our local lakes and rivers, such as starry stonewort. It's a great opportunity to share and learn from your neighbors on area lakes – from Friess Lake to the Genesee lakes and from Pewaukee Lake west to Golden Lake. If you would like to receive meeting notifications and other news blasts, please e-mail beth@tallpinesconservancy.org – subject Lake Country Lakes – to be placed on the distribution list. ▲

A Sneak Peak of What's Ahead

Stewardship Society members (those who contribute at the \$1000+ level) receive a special invitation to exclusive events such as the recent bus tour of NEW TPC projects. The tour concluded with a reception at the beautifully restored 19th century barn at Folk Song Farm. In this image, Stewardship Society members met with Courtney and Michael Gutschenritter (and baby Ylva) at Three Brothers Farm. The couple discussed their plans for 16-acres of pollinator cover on the southwest section of the farm that the Oconomowoc Watershed Protection Program and TPC are assisting in



funding. The family have also initiated discussion with TPC about purchasing the development rights for the 100-acre farm. Surrounded by development pressure and close to other protected lands, this farm will be key to protect. You will hear more about how you can help in the coming months. ▲

Tour sponsored by:



TPC Applies for Accreditation Renewal Through the Land Trust Alliance

The land trust accreditation program recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. Tall Pines Conservancy is pleased to announce it is applying for renewal of accreditation. A public comment period is now open. According to Susan Buchanan, Executive Director of Tall Pines, "Accreditation has affirmed that we're working at the leading edge of land conservation. It's not only about making sure we're doing things right, but also the process has made us a stronger, more relevant, land trust."

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, conducts an extensive review of each applicant's policies and programs.

The Commission invites public input and accepts signed, written comments on pending applications. Comments must relate to how Tall Pines Conservancy complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust. For the full list of standards, see www.landtrustaccreditation.org/help-and-resources/indicator-practices.

To learn more about the accreditation program and to submit a comment, visit www.landtrustaccreditation.org or email your comment to info@landtrustaccreditation.org. Comments may also be faxed or mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments: (fax) 518-587-3183; (mail) 36 Phila Street, Suite 2, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866.

Comments on TPC's application will be most useful by December 29, 2019. ▲

Local Businesses Support Water Quality Initiatives With Fun Family Events!

Paddleboard Specialists hosted its annual **Midwest Paddle Festival** on Saturday, July 13, 2019, at the Fowler Lake Town Green in downtown Oconomowoc. ALL proceeds from the event benefited the **Clean Water Association**, Lapham Peak Snow Making and the Oconomowoc Sports Booster Club. The general public was invited to participate in a variety of workshops and demonstrations designed to introduce them to the fun and fitness benefits associated with stand-up paddle boarding (SUP). SUP enthusiasts could register to compete in a 3-mile sprint style race, featuring lots of buoy turns, or a 6-mile race with a super lap.



Photo by Doug Vojtk

Thank you, Susanna and Cris Rosario, and your generous event sponsors and participants, for your dedication and generosity in supporting local organizations!

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OWPP in the Community

by TOM STEINBACH, OWPP Program Manager

The OWPP has had another busy season with training events and erosion control projects throughout the watershed and beyond. Our educational events included: presenting an update to the Richfield Village Board on May 16th, assisting with the Healthy Lakes Conference and Clean Water

Festival in June, our 5th Annual Paddle Event on July 13th on Fowler Lake, a Soil Health Day completed in conjunction with UW Extension on August 17th, and our OWPP Tent presentation at the Richfield Thresheree and Harvest Festival on September 21st. In August, we also participated in the Oconomowoc School District's Summer Water Focus Program at the Ixonia Middle School, where we explained the importance of using water wisely and making sure polluted water is treated properly. The students were allowed to view live organisms that are used to treat wastewater at wastewater treatment plants. We also assisted the Cambridge School District on September 19th with a "Pontoon Boat Classroom" on Lake Ripley.

Erosion control measures include the securing of 36 acres of long term prairie planting and harvestable buffers on several farms, completing an important ditch repair project, installing a series of scrapes in the city for storm water control, and our 3rd Annual Aerial Seeding cover crop project. Our aerial seeding project covered over 2200 acres, most of which was planted by helicopter. For the first time, the seed planted in the project was harvested almost entirely by our farmers in the watershed. Our producer-led group, Farmers for Lake Country, provided significant leadership and on the ground assistance to make this important seasonal cover crop project happen.

On July 13th we held our **5th Annual Paddle Event** at the boat launch on Fowler Lake (*right*). Free lunch of hotdogs and brats was followed by presentations on OWPP and TPC news by Tom and Susan. We then enjoyed presentations by two Oconomowoc High School students on the importance of our monitoring program and by Boy Scout Troop 359 of Hartland speaking on the topic of proper disposal of waste products. The Scouts collected debris along the shoreline near the event and explained the impacts these materials have on water quality and habitat. After a great paddle on the lake we tutored the youngsters of the group on how to perform several simple tests on water from our lakes and rivers. Sample kits were provided for these water advocates of the future. ▲



TPC welcomes our new Ride to the Barn hosts Glenn and Mary Welles. Photo by Lisa Lauerman



Team Tour de Friends riders at Monis Farm hosted by George and Elaine Monis. Photo by George Monis



Team Stein at Serenity Farm hosted by Paul and Laura Phelps. Photo by Lisa Lauerman

Annual Ride to the Barns To Be Featured on Discover Wisconsin!

More than 450 enthusiastic riders enjoyed sunny skies, warm hospitality and delicious food as they participated in the 11th Annual Ride to the Barns on Saturday, August 17th. We are thrilled that our event was chosen by the producers and writers of Discover Mediaworks and the staff of Gathering Waters as one of four to represent Wisconsin Land Trust Days on the Discover Wisconsin episode scheduled to air on June 13, 2020! Be sure to tune in, you just might see yourself on TV!

This event would not be possible without the support of our generous hosts, sponsors, partners, volunteers and of course our loyal riders! ▲



Dukelow Farm hosted by the Dukelow family. Photo by Lisa Lauerman

Thank You to Our Sponsors



Thank You to Our Partners





Composting at Camp/Quad Keeps 15 Bags of Garbage from Entering the Landfill

Feeding hundreds of riders generates a lot of waste in the form of plates, napkins and cups. This year, TPC was determined to put a meaningful dent in our refuse pile by utilizing compostable food service items for the post-ride party at Camp/Quad. As you can see, the efforts of our team of volunteers from Quad, led by Patti Kaufmann, paid off in a big way. We couldn't have done it without Patti and Quad along with Purple Cow Organics, who took our bags of compostable materials and transformed them into products like organic fertilizer and potting mix.

Speaking of Recycling...

In April 2019, employees of Quad were invited to bring from home any old computers, cell phones, printers and shredders – items that are typically challenging to recycle and often wind up in a landfill. Ten tons of material (that's equal to 5 Ford F-150s!) was collected. From there, Heartland Business Systems recycled the waste, harvesting precious metals and other components for re-sale. The profits associated with the recycling of these materials were donated by Quad to Tall Pines Conservancy! Thank you! ▲

Thank You Farmers!

On July 17th, the contributions made by our local ag community were recognized as Farmers For Lake Country hosted its first Farmer Appreciation Dinner. The event, which was held at the town of Oconomowoc Community Center, celebrated the good work being done by local farmers to improve our local waterways. For example, did you know that area cover crops prevented 2400 lbs. of phosphorus from entering the waterways? That equates to 1.2 million lbs of algae! ▲



12TH ANNUAL 2020

Ride to the Barns

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15TH

SAVING LAND... FOR TOMORROW

TALL PINES

CONSERVANCY

ONE ACRE AT A TIME

PRESERVE where you RIDE

**BIKE TOUR OF LAKE COUNTRY
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TASTE LOCAL FOOD**

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Every Sunday • November 30, 2019 through March 15, 2020
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FARMERS FOR LAKE COUNTRY'S NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Friday, December 13, 2019 • 9a–2:30p
Hands on training for your plan.

WATER QUALITY & YOUR WATERSHED

Thursday, February 20, 2020 • 6p–8p
Oconomowoc Community Center

TPC 20TH ANNIVERSARY GALA

Thursday, September 17, 2020

For more information on any of these events, please call 262-369-0500 or visit tallpinesconservancy.org

Be in the Know About the OWPP!

The Oconomowoc Watershed Protection Program recently unveiled its first newsletter! It's full of valuable information about what's being done to combat phosphorus in our waterways, including updates on the work of Farmers for Lake Country. If you'd like to receive this thrice-yearly newsletter via e-mail, please e-mail beth@tallpinesconservancy.org – subject OWPP Newsletter. ▲

Tall Pines Preserves Land Next to Lapham Peak

Tall Pines Conservancy recently received a generous donation of land from Chloe and Ross Wandschneider (*right*). Known as Audley Creek Preserve, the approximately 13-acre property is located directly adjacent to Lapham Peak State Park in the City of Delafield.



Photo by Jill Bedford

Audley Creek transects the property flowing from south to north. The headwaters originate from a large wetland complex south of the property in the Lapham Peak State Park. The creek was channelized into a deep ditch by the Army Corp of Engineers in the 1930s to drain the wetland for agricultural purposes. The agricultural practices were abandoned and since then the land has reverted back to wetlands and vernal ponds.



"We realize that the purpose of our journey on earth is to be temporary custodians of the planet. This donation provides preservation assurance – forever – for the land, the creek, and all the wonderful critters and wildlife that inhabit the land."

—Chloe & Ross Wandschneider

On the north end of the property, the creek takes on a more natural meandering flow pattern where it exits the property and continues to flow east and north draining into a large wetland owned by Waukesha Land Conservancy called Frog Hollow. From there, the creek enters Lake Nagawicka.

By preserving this land in the Lake Nagawicka watershed, we are protecting the water quality in both the creek and ultimately Lake Nagawicka.

Property Near Beaver Lake Launch is Now Protected

TPC is also the recipient of a conservation easement generously donated by John Taylor. The 1.10 acre property is located in the Village of Chenequa near Beaver Lake. It may be small, but it's important! The ecologically rich land is located in a primary environmental corridor as identified by the Village of Chenequa Open Space Plan 2000. It also contains a portion of high-quality wetland, which makes it valuable for water recharge, aquatic habitat and likely host to endangered, threatened or rare species or remnant natural communities. Large oaks and hickories grow on the slope from Highway 83 down to the wetland. ▲

Sharing Passion in Conservation

This summer, TPC was fortunate to have Maya Peske (*right*) as our summer intern, supporting outreach activities and assisting with the promotion and coordination of our 11th annual Ride to the Barns. Maya is a senior at Cornell College in Mt. Vernon, Iowa, where her coursework is focused on Environmental Studies and Political Science. During the 2019 fall semester, Maya is completing an internship in Costa Rica. As part of her project, Maya is sharing her passion for protecting the environment by teaching school-aged children – in Spanish – what materials can be recycled. Thank you Maya, and best wishes! ▲



Local Businesses Support Water Quality Initiatives...

(from PAGE 3)

Lake Country Family Fun presented its annual Swim With A Mermaid at Goldfish Swim School in Brookfield on Saturday, September 21st. Twenty-five percent of all event proceeds were donated to Tall Pines Conservancy to benefit the Oconomowoc Watershed Protection Program! Additionally, SUGAR Spun organic gourmet cotton candy contributed 20% of their proceeds from event sales to the program. Thank you! ▲

Tall Pines Boosts Water Quality... (from PAGE 1)

cover and establishing self-sustaining native plant communities.



Key stakeholders met at Mason Creek to discuss engineering plans. Photo by Jill Bedford

Portions of Mason Creek within the Schmidt Preserve were historically ditched to enhance drainage. A self-sustaining population of brook trout are known to occupy the un-ditched portions of the East Branch of Mason Creek upstream of the site. Enhancing the stream will provide additional suitable habitat, increase water quality and minimize sedimentation.

In tandem with the land acquisition, Tall Pines Conservancy applied for and received a highly competitive \$50,000 DNR grant to complete engineering for the restoration plans, including the re-meandering of the creek back to its natural course. Goals and objectives for this project include: 1) baseline data review and site surveys; 2) stream design and documentation; 3) education and outreach; 4) water quality and biological monitoring, and 5) remove barrier for fish passage and other stream debris and install native perennial buffer.

The Future...

The Schmidt Preserve is contiguous with a 220-acre private wetland mitigation bank to the north, which is also proposing restoration of approximately 2,200 linear feet of the East Branch of Mason Creek. Together, these properties present a significant opportunity to recover healthy stream function to degraded portions of Mason Creek, including re-connecting the banks to the wetland, thus cutting down on erosion of the banks causing sediment build up and

flow into North Lake. The re-meandering of the channel and introduction of in-stream habitat features will improve the aquatic habitat development process and provide for a self-maintaining stream that provides natural riffle, run, pool, and glide facet sequences. The proposed project will enhance stream biology by improving habitat for macro-invertebrate and native fish populations, and by restoring aquatic habitat that can support all trout life cycles. **Healthy habitat translates into a viable stream that will positively affect the water quality in North Lake and the lakes beyond.** ▲

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