

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



FALL/WINTER 2009

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TPC CONDUCTS FIRST MONITORING TRAINING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OWLT

by Susan Buchanan

A dozen volunteers from both Tall Pines Conservancy and Ozaukee Washington Land Trust (OWLT) participated in our first formal monitoring training on Saturday, October 31st at Camp/Quad. Tall Pines conducted the 3 hour session in partnership with OWLT. The morning started off with Susan Marguet, Attorney for Weiss Berzowski Brady, providing an overview of Conservation Easements. Susan Buchanan, TPC Director, and Shawn Graff, OWLT Director, thanked and welcomed the group while outlining the importance of monitoring activities. Susan Buchanan then explained why and how we do baselines and Steve Henkel, Land Protection Specialist for OWLT taught proper monitoring procedures to the group. The morning session ended with a brief monitoring exercise out in the field at Camp/Quad. A great BIG thank you to the first class of monitoring graduates, and to OWLT for working with us! ▲



TPC conducts monitoring training for 12 volunteers in partnership with OWLT at Camp/Quad.

NASHOTAH PARK—A JEWEL OF CONSERVED LAND

by Amy L. Peterson

Land conservation is “in” right now, considered to be a correct and necessary part of our increasing attempts to save our planet. As the phrase goes, “Think Globally, Act Locally.” However, longtime

area residents might recall that the idea of county parks only took hold in the 1960s. According to Park System Manager Duane Grimm, it was then that officials began “to make sure good places were set aside.”

“Interested parties began discussions on where to put parks,” says Grimm. “Nashotah Park was then mostly owned by Edwin Gallun, with some land owned by the Milwaukee Archdiocese. The county purchased Gallun’s land in 1972. Today, the park is 444 acres, including two lakes and eight distinct ecosystems.”

Managing the park is a fulltime job. “We’re trying to encourage native species in the park, whether plant or animal. We’re also responsible for keeping the park accessible to the public, with well-groomed trails and picnic areas. In the winter, there’s over six miles of cross-country ski trails. Ski enthusiasts have high expectations and it’s our job to meet those.

“Most of the marked, four-season trails go



*“In recent years, we have seen a growing demand from our residents for places to exercise their dogs and this park is a reflection of that demand,”
said County Executive Dan Vrakas.*

(continued on page 2)

ask THE EXPERTS Q&A



By Eric Parker, GRAEF

QUESTION:

WHAT DOES RESTORATION MEAN IN LAND CONSERVATION?

ANSWER:

As you are likely aware, Tall Pines Conservancy's mission is "to preserve our rural heritage by protecting remaining farmland, water resources, natural areas and open spaces impacting Northwestern Waukesha County." While recognizing the importance of the entire mission statement, the focus of this article is protecting restorable natural areas that have been degraded due to disturbance and unhealthy processes. These processes include years of intensive cropping and plowing, erosion, grazing, lumbering and the unchecked invasion of invasive species.

Restoration is "the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged or destroyed" [Society for Ecological Restoration].

This is a big next step after taking the first step to protect land from development. I hope to make the case in this article that restoration is an essential element in "protection."

The ease or difficulty to restore land to its condition prior to human alterations varies greatly depending on the degree to which the alteration has taken place and the length of time that has passed since the original alteration. For example, restoring a farm field—that was created in the late 1800's and plowed annually to present—back to its original prairie or woodland status ("de novo" restoration) would be difficult, if not impossible to do within several hundred years.



In contrast, if a woodlot or wetland has never been cleared, plowed or grazed, a remnant group of flora and fauna may still exist allowing for a relatively simple restoration plan. Lands with undisturbed soils are considered "remnant" natural areas, containing a high percentage of pre settlement plants and associated soil micro-organisms. Often times these remnants contain healthy seed sources to utilize in restoring the neighboring lands back to pre settlement vegetation. Remnant natural areas may also contain endangered and critical species of state and national significance.

Soil disturbance is the most subtle of all disturbances. An untold diversity of microscopic fungi, bacteria and animals co-existed and evolved within the topsoil of our natural areas. Each cubic foot held a unique assemblage. These "unseen" components are the first to die when land is plowed, excavated, filled or paved. Land that was grazed or has undergone vegetative alterations but lacks significant soil disturbance may have some of these micro-organisms remaining.

The introduction of plants and animals from overseas and other parts of the U.S. has forever changed our landscape as some species have become "invasive." Common and glossy buckthorn, garlic mustard, reed canary grass and purple loosestrife are examples in our area.

The good news is that our remnant natural areas, many of which remain unrecognized on private land, continue to this day to possess at least some of their original diversity including the microscopic elements discussed above. These can be recognized by observing an area where there is a diversity of native plants. ▲

Eric Parker is a senior scientist with GRAEF. GRAEF is a multi-disciplined consulting firm based in Milwaukee, WI with eight offices around the U.S.

NASHOTAH PARK— A JEWEL... (from page 1)

through the park's primary environmental corridor. Hikers and skiers can enjoy the park's cedar glade, old-growth oak forest, and the shorelands along Grass Lake and Forest Lake."

The lakes within Nashotah Park are unique in Lake Country because they are undeveloped. This allows for a truly natural interaction point between land and water, which provides a healthy environment for shoreland species. The lakes also provide safe places for birds to nest and thrive.

Bruce Stichmann is the foreman of Nashotah Park. He sees to the hands-on business of keeping the park at its best.

"We depend on volunteers as well as staff to manage the park," says Stichmann. "Our greatest problem is buckthorn, an 'exotic' species which doesn't belong in the ecosystems, but is tough, hardy and invasive. Exotic isn't a good word in an environmental setting. Buckthorn was brought from Europe because it was traditionally used for hedges there. Here, it's just a nuisance.

"And that battle, simply put, describes much of our efforts. We're trying to balance interests the public may not see or understand. We're cutting down and using herbicide on a bad plant, but a visitor to the park sees us 'destroying the wilderness.' The park isn't a wilderness, but we're working as hard as we can to simulate what it once was.

"We're also watching our ecosystems evolve in ways that just may be nature at work. Maples are increasing their presence in the oak forest. Unless someone's going to declare maples to be weeds, we're just going to observe the process, only removing trees if they're potentially harmful. By which I mean a tree that's fallen in such a way that another tree is at risk of damage. And one plus from the maple canopy is that it helps to kill the buckthorn.

"We're also very sensitive to the bird population in the park. They are the primary residents. We don't do any big mowing projects or controlled burns during nesting season. Even when we do mow, we have a special 'bird friendly' pattern which gives birds optimal time to escape.

"While the lake shores are natural, there's still ground water seepage which may not be clean, so we monitor the water and water's edge to make sure there's no contamination. Because the lakes are undisturbed, they attract large amounts of birds. In the autumn, Grass Lake in particular is a staging point for goose migration. They arrive in small groups, gather and then leave in large groups. It's fascinating to watch.

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SNAP SHOTS—3RD ANNUAL DINING SERIES

Once again, Tall Pines is proud to have continued into our third year the very successful dining series! The generosity of all our wonderful hosts helps provide TPC the support it needs to further its mission of preserving natural areas in Northwestern Waukesha County. We're now offering our dining series each year as a unique opportunity for gatherings reaching a wider audience and attracting more friends of TPC. If you were unable to attend any of the dinners, we still have one more event remaining in the series—TPC Winter Games II. See the ad on page 4 for more information. Together we can, and do make a difference!



Ride to the Barns • September 19, 2009

The first annual Ride to the Barns featured 20-mile and 30-mile routes with rest-stops to taste local food at the Zwiieg Farm, in Ashippun, the Schultz Farm in Oconomowoc, and at Purity Farms, Chenequa. John Koepke, of Koepke Farms, hosted cheese tasting at happy hour.



Tuscany Tonight • August 2, 2009

It was a gorgeous evening on Beaver Lake where guests got a taste of Tuscany hosted by Barb & Jeff Farnham and Nancy & Sam Bradt. Before dinner, guests were treated to a sunset pontoon boat tour of lovely Beaver Lake.



SNAP SHOTS—3RD ANNUAL DINING SERIES



Polo Game & Dinner • July 10, 2009

80 guests learned more about polo at a Milwaukee Polo Club game hosted by Michele and Derek Deubel and Barbara & Tim Michels.



Kayak/Canoe Tour & BBQ on Pine Lake • June 20, 2009

Hosts Anne & Fritz Seidel and Julia & Ted Rolfs toured guests around Pine Lake and its wonderful island by kayak. A delicious backyard patio BBQ completed the evening.

Sunday, February 28th 2010

TPC Winter Games II

Join Nancy & Sam Bradt and Katie & Charlie Brumder for winter sports and refreshments by the fireplace. Enjoy an afternoon of cross country skiing or snow shoeing (bring your own equipment), then relax near a warm fireplace. Or, choose to enjoy the warm fireplace while others play in the snow.

\$100 per person
30 guest maximum
3:00pm Winter Sports
Dinner Buffet to Follow

~Menu~
German Fare

Camp/Quad • Town of Erin

To reserve your spot, please
call 262-369-0500 or email
info@tallpinesconservancy.org



SNAP SHOTS— FALL HARVEST



Fall Harvest • October 17, 2009

This year's Fall Harvest was a big success! Approximately 120 guests tasted locally grown food from various local farmers who displayed their product at the event, and was prepared by Chef Jack Kaestner from the Oconomowoc Lake Club. **Thank you to our co-hosts Carol & Tom Ehrsam and Lara & Hank Ehrsam.** To see more Fall Harvest photos, visit our website at www.tallpinesconservancy.org/event.htm.

NASHOTAH PARK— A JEWEL... (from page 2)

“Winter is a busy season for park management. As well as maintaining the ski trails, we can work on dormant plants, spraying, mowing, clearing. We’re setting up for the spring, trying to give the native species their best chance.

“If you look closely while hiking the park, you can see evidence of past land use. Red cedars were planted where people settled. There are remnants of the church’s camp cottages on the west side of Forest Lake. And it makes the point that this isn’t a wilderness. We already messed with it; now we’re trying to help it back.”

The latest chapter in Nashotah Park’s history began on September 9, with the grand opening ceremony for the dog exercise areas. “In recent years, we have seen a growing demand from our residents for places to exercise their dogs and this park is a reflection of that demand,” said County Executive Dan Vrakas, who attended.

The dog exercise areas are two parcels, a 6-plus-acre area for small breeds and an 8-plus-acre area for large breeds. The “dog parks” are securely fenced and double gated. They are located at the northeast corner of the park, outside the environmental corridor, on land that used to be softball diamonds.

“The response has been excellent,” says Grimm. “Most people are very accepting of the idea and we saw an immediate increase in the purchase of annual park passes.”

Park fees, for county residents, are \$3 per week day per vehicle, \$5 on weekends, and there is no extra charge for the dog park. Annual passes are \$25 for unlimited access. After mid-September, the annual fee is cut in half for the balance of the year. There is also a senior discount. Fees offset only about 30% of the park’s operating costs and the county received much support from its surrounding communities and residents in developing the exercise areas. Contributions came in from City of Delafield, Village of Hartland, Towns of Delafield, Merton and Oconomowoc, as well as local veterinarians and private vendors.

In barely 30 years, Nashotah Park has grown into what Grimm refers to as one of the jewels of the county system. “Our work is to keep the bulk of the park natural, to offer a glimpse of how this area ‘has always been.’ But opening a portion of the park for the dogs is proving to be a great choice. We’re all pleased by the chance to offer this new use for Nashotah Park.” ▲

FROM THE... EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A VICTORY FOR WORKING LANDS MEANS A VICTORY FOR US ALL

“Wisconsin’s population is growing steadily therefore we have growing conflicts over land use. Our farmland is being permanently lost at an alarming rate. We as a state must save key agricultural resources on which our future depends. When conflicts over land use arise, we have to work with the building industry and other groups. Most importantly, we need agricultural lands for food, quality of life, a healthy environment, a strong business climate, water quality, flood prevention and Wisconsin’s emerging renewable energy industry.”

-State Representative Amy Sue Vruwink, District 70



Susan Buchanan

Well said. Farmland is important to our Wisconsin economy, our food supply and our rural character—our quality of life. As of Monday, June 29, 2009, Wisconsin put in place statutes that expand and modernize the 30-year-old Farmland Preservation Program and provide new opportunities for Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEA) and Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE). Upon signing the budget, Governor Doyle stated that the Working Lands Initiative “encourages the long-term preservation of Wisconsin’s fertile farmlands and supports commitments by farmers to manage their land in an environmentally friendly manner.” The goal of the Working Lands Initiative is to achieve preservation of areas significant for current and future agricultural use through successful implementation of these components.

Tall Pines is working with the Towns of Oconomowoc and Ashippun to facilitate a proposal for designation of an Agricultural Enterprise Area. What is an “AEA” and why is it important? An “Agricultural Enterprise Area” is a contiguous land area (preference given to 1000 or more acres), devoted primarily to agricultural use and designed as such by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). It is locally targeted for agricultural preservation. Local governments and land owners play the leading role in planning and designing an “AEA.” Farmers in the designated area may enter into voluntary farmland preservation agreements with DATCP and in turn receive income tax credits for keeping their land in agricultural use for 15 years. Farms covered by certified farmland preservation zoning ordinances are eligible for even higher tax credits.

No one is getting rich here folks, but a \$7.50 to \$10.00 tax credit per acre can add up, and helps the farmers stay in business as well as keeping the land preserved for at least 15 years—with the idea that if they can stay in business—keeping farming viable, then future generations will do so as well and the land will be preserved for even longer.

An added tool for preserving land in the new budget is Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE). The State has set aside \$12 million for the purchase of agricultural conservation easements from willing landowners. The easement restricts non-agricultural development of the land, but the farmer retains ownership. The point being that farmers can augment their income while continuing to farm the land. These two tools (AEA & PACE) can work together, ideally, as DATCP may give priority to land in the AEA for the PACE program. DATCP will work with local governments or non-profit conservation organizations (e.g. Land Trusts) to purchase easements under the new program, but require a 50% match.

The ins and outs of these programs are too many to detail here, but if you visit DATCP’s Working Lands Initiative website at www.datcp.state.wi.us/workinglands/index.jsp you can view numerous fact sheets. Many people and organizations including Gathering Waters and Tall Pines, among others statewide, worked very hard to have the recommendations of the Working Lands Initiative included in the state budget. Now we have the tools we need to begin the important steps to preserve farmland and thereby the rural character of this unique area that we so treasure. ▲

Executive Director

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**Cynthia & Jeff Harris
MERAGANSER FUND**

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At Fall Harvest, guests enjoyed music by our local blues and jazz talent—The Danny Miller Band.

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