Of Geese and Television

HeadWaters Land Conservancy had another successful year protecting northern Michigan’s precious land and water resources. For the third consecutive year HeadWaters Land Conservancy has assisted landowners in protecting over one thousand acres of land, with a total of nearly 5,000 acres to date. HeadWaters Land Conservancy has also protected over thirteen miles of water frontage that provides habitat for frogs, turtles, mink, loons and songbirds. These and numerous other species of wildlife, both flora and fauna, require these lands and waters for their survival. With your support, HeadWaters Land Conservancy has protected these properties from eventually becoming subdivisions with street names like Fox Run, Deer Trail Lane, Grousehaven Court or Eagle Point Drive. I like that. I like knowing that when I drive, float or wade past these lands in the future, they will be relatively undisturbed. A balance will have been struck between protecting the land and water resources and limited human development.

Over my thirty-plus years of working with natural resources two quotes have become personal favorites and address why I believe the existence of HeadWaters Land Conservancy is critical.

The first is by Aldo Leopold, who said:

“There are some who can live without wild things and some who cannot. Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them. Now we face the question of whether a still higher ‘standard of living’ is worth the cost in things natural, wild and free. For us of the minority, the opportunity to see geese is more important than television, and the chance to find a pasque-flower is a right as inalienable as free speech.”

The second is from John Voelker’s Testament of a Fisherman,

I fish because I love to; because I love the environs where trout are found, which are invariably beautiful, and hate the environs where crowds of people are found, which are invariably ugly; because of all the television commercials, cocktail parties, and assorted social posturing I thus escape; because, in a world where most men seem to spend their lives doing things they hate, my fishing is at once an endless source of delight and an act of small rebellion; because trout do not lie or cheat and cannot be bought or bribed or impressed by power, but respond only to quietude and humility and endless patience; because I suspect that men are going along this way for the last time, and I for one don’t want to waste the trip; because bourbon out of an old tin cup always tastes better out there; because maybe one day I will catch a mermaid; and finally, not because I regard fishing as being so terribly important but because I suspect that so many of the other concerns of men are equally unimportant – and not nearly so much fun.

Along with a needlepoint picture of a brown trout that my wife made for me, these two quotes hang on the wall above my desk, keeping me focused on the mission of HeadWaters Land Conservancy.

To some individuals, I’m sure the above quotes are at best corny, but to those who understand and can relate to what they describe, HeadWaters Land Conservancy exists for you and the values you cherish. Our board of directors, staff and supporters all believe in helping protect the “Up North You Enjoy” and we are constantly seeking new lands to protect forever.
When the HeadWaters Land Conservancy met its goal of raising $125,000 for a challenge grant, it was more than obtaining the largest contribution to date. It was the first step to a higher level of existence.

“It’s going to help us hire the staff that we need to do the land protection work that we’re being asked to do,” Fred Gottschalk, HWLC’s executive director, said.

The Carls Foundation in Detroit sponsored the grant. “We’ve worked with many conservancies all over Michigan,” Elizabeth Stieg, executive director of the Carls Foundation said. “HeadWaters showed a compelling need for the grant.”

One of the most important reasons Stieg gives for issuing the grant is the concentration of big lands in the HWLC service area. “It’s a beautiful area of the state,” she said. “Because it’s more rural, it provides a lot of opportunities to place a conservation easement.”

The grant was also an opportunity for HWLC to build its financial support capacity. “We went out and solicited individuals and businesses that were located in our part of the state and had an interest in preserving it,” Gottschalk said.

Increasing capacity was not the only goal. “A big part of it is sustainability,” Gottschalk said. “A lot of people have pledged money to HeadWaters over a period of years. That helps because we know from their pledges that we have a certain amount of funding we can count on.”

Businesses such as Weyerhaeuser and The Woodworker’s Shoppe contributed heavily to the grant. Associations such as Anglers of the AuSable and the J.A. Woollam Foundation also joined in.

“It’s really about the people who supported us,” Gottschalk said. “They aren’t interested in seeing lands turned into subdivisions and strip malls. They’re interested in seeing forest lands and farm lands, and they went the extra mile so we can continue protecting the ‘Up North’ you enjoy.”

William Carls, founder of Numatics Inc, and his wife Marie formed the Carls Foundation in 1961. It works with many conservancies and trusts to preserve the natural beauty of Michigan.

Would You Consider Hosting A Fundraising Gathering for HWLC?

As part of our fundraising initiatives, several of our members have volunteered to host our new Big Lands fundraisers. Our thanks go to the several volunteers who have already generously hosted such events.

We have brand-new challenges ahead of us this year, including hiring new staff and expanding our workspace, not to mention some all-new upcoming challenge grants! In order to fund these new endeavors, we will need to do more fundraising, and more fundraising parties. Please call (989) 731-0573 if you would like to host one of these gatherings. Ask for Gina Scheffler.
A Second Chance To Save Land In Otsego

GAYLORD – Irene Nienabar remembers when her parents sold the farm where she grew up. “The man who bought it from my parents couldn’t keep up the payments,” she said, “and he sold it to a local businessman.” The buyer ended up subdividing the farm. Nienabar still remembers this event 80 years later, as she places a conservation easement on the 48.8 acres of land she owns. The land is on the Black River, next to the Pigeon River State Forest.

“I couldn’t do anything about it back then,” she said. “That’s part of why I want to preserve the land. I can’t imagine it cut up into lots and cutting all the trees out and ruining it.”

Nienabar’s husband, Bill, bought the land in 1940. “The guy that owned it couldn’t keep up with the taxes and offered to sell it to him,” she said. “The doctor told (Bill) to buy it so he could get fresh air and sunshine.”

The property was originally 32 acres. Bill Nienabar purchased some adjoining property in 1949. “The cabin was close to the boundary,” Nienabar said. “Bill made a deal with Nellie Guggisberg, a widow, and bought 16 acres of property that was adjacent to his.”

In 1956, Bill married Irene. They immediately took advantage of what the property had to offer.

“We spent our first six weeks there (in the cabin) until we could find a house in town,” she said. The couple also took advantage of the Black River, a Blue Ribbon brook trout stream that flows through the property. “He loved to fly fish, so when we married, I figured I’m not going to stay in the cabin waiting for him,” Nienabar said. “So he taught me to fly fish.”

Even though her husband died in 1996, Nienabar still visits the property every weekend, taking in the wildlife. “I had an eagle soar very close to me,” she said. “He was going around the big yard. If there hadn’t been a screen so close to the window, I could have touched him.”

She has also seen porcupine, rabbits, skunk, deer and elk. A wolf has also been spotted on their property.

Irene has decided to sell the property, but made sure to place the conservation easement on it before it was sold. “I want it to stay the same way as it did when I first got there after we were married,” she said. “I know how much Bill loved it, and I’m doing it because I want to, and I know Bill would want to.”
BARTON CITY – An amusement park can keep children entertained for hours, albeit at the expense of their parents’ bank account. Doug Begick and his wife, Julie, though, found a pleasant alternative – their 90-acre property north of Barton City.

“For my wife and kids, this has been a godsend,” Begick said. “It’s a good getaway, and they love it up there.” Begick’s grandfather, Adolf, bought the property in the 1930s. It has stayed in the family since.

In 1992, Begick purchased the property from his aunt and uncle. He has gotten to know the property intimately. “It’s a really diverse chunk of property,” he said. “The lowland has spruce and cedar in the swamp, which becomes poplar the higher up you go. In the high ground, you have red pine, maple and oak.”

Adding to the diversity is Buff Creek, which flows through the lowlands before it joins with the Comstock, according to Begick.

One of the benefits of such varied terrain is the wildlife it attracts. “I’ve bow-hunted bear on the property,” Begick said, “and I’ve also seen otter, beaver and deer.” Hunting is only one of the activities that the land offers. “We’ve gone birdwatching, snowmobiling, that kind of stuff,” Begick said.

However, Begick has noticed that properties like his are becoming a rarity. “The (surrounding) property was getting so chopped up, and I said ‘This has got to stop,’” he said. “I just can’t see this land being all torn up. It would be devastating.”

To prevent his land from suffering the same fate, Begick placed a conservation easement on his property, with the help of the HeadWaters Land Conservancy. “It was a great experience,” he said. “I loved working with (Executive Director) Fred Gottschalk.”

Begick’s family has approved of the conservation easement on the property. “My wife feels the same way as I do, which is cool,” Begick said. “My dad initially had mixed feelings, but I explained to him how it worked, and he’s warmed up to it.”

Preserving the property ultimately means preserving experiences, according to Begick – both in the past and the future. “We have a lot of memories here, all good,” he said. “God willing, there’s a lot more to come. It’ll be great for my kids and my kids’ kids to see wide open spaces.”

What is a conservation easement?

A Conservation Easement (CE) is a voluntary act by a land owner to impose permanent restrictions on land for its preservation. Restrictions are personalized to the land and the owner. The right to enforce the restrictions is held by a Land Conservancy. Each CE is different, just as parcels of land and their special values are different.

A CE usually qualifies the land owner for an income tax deduction equal to the difference in value of the land before and after the CE. To qualify for an income tax deduction requires compliance with IRS rules which are strict but easily complied with.

A deduction in excess of $5,000 must be substantiated by a “qualified appraisal.” Even if the donor does not qualify for an income tax deduction (because of small size, few restrictions, etc.), the donor can still give a CE which will be forever enforceable to preserve the land and its conservation values – the things about the land that made it special in the first place.
ALPENA – A conservation easement is worth more than a hill of beans.

In the case of Doug Elser’s land in Alpena County, it’s about 240 acres’ worth of property, purchased from the Frutchey Bean Company. “My father worked for Frutchey Bean Company for over 30 years,” Elser said. “He started going to the Frutchey property in 1938 or 1939.” In 1968, Elser and his father bought the property. According to Elser, other people had been involved in the purchase, but “they drifted off after five or six years.”

The land has plenty to offer. “We used to hunt turkeys and deer up there, although now I’m at the point where I call them in and try to take their pictures,” said Elser. “If I’m not doing that, I just walk around and marvel.”

One of the property’s marvels is the forest, with white pine that is at least 100 years old. It also boasts a spectacular view. “You can stand on the northeast corner of the property and see the highway up to a mile and a half away,” Elser said.

A mobile home has been set up on the property. It doesn’t see much use, however. “All it does is give me cover when I’m up there if I have to sleep,” Elser said. “I’m usually outside all the time.”

Unfortunately, Elser has seen a disturbing trend among other landowners. “I’ve seen what’s happened around me,” he said. “People buy the land and the first thing they do is cut down all the trees and parcel it up.”

The trend was not one Elser or his father wanted to happen to their property. “Neither of us wanted the place to be developed or taken apart,” Elser said, “but at the time we didn’t know how to go about it.”

Eventually, they discovered conservation easements and contacted the Headwaters Land Conservancy. “I went to the first Big Lands meeting in the area, and I knew what I wanted to do,” Elser said. “I decided to get it done this year.”

His experience with HWLC has been overwhelmingly positive. “I would recommend it for anybody,” Elser said. “The people who put together the report of the property in particular did a great job.”

Since Elser is a CPA, he is well aware of tax breaks he will get for placing a conservation easement on his property.

However, he has an even better reason. “It’s a beautiful piece of property, that’s all I can say,” he said.
MIO – As Executive Director of HeadWaters Land Conservancy, Fred Gottschalk regularly sings the praises of conservation easements. However, the job has left him little time to actually place a conservation easement on his own property. That changed in January.

“We have 80 acres, and we put the whole thing under an easement,” Fred said. The property was originally a farm, according to Fred. “There’s still a ten-acre clearing that remains,” he said.

Other features of the land include a forest with oaks and maples, interspersed with aspen and pine, which attracts all kinds of wildlife.

“One of the neatest things is the affinity it has for pileated woodpeckers,” Fred said. “It seems like you can’t go through a day of deer hunting on the property without having a pileated woodpecker land in a nearby tree searching for insects.”

Deer, squirrels and grouse also populate the woods.

“As a hunter, I enjoy those,” Fred said.

Sweet fern is also abundant on the property, which Kathy enjoys. “They say sweet fern is the smell of the north woods, and when I walk out there, that’s how I feel. It’s like mother nature’s aromatherapy.”

The previous owners of the property were a couple named Waldschmidt, Kathy said. Fred and Kathy first saw the property in 2000, after Mrs. Waldschmidt visited Kathy’s antique shop and mentioned the property was for sale.

“We visited it on an October day when the colors were just beautiful, and Kathy fell in love with it,” Fred said.

However, Fred has fallen in love with the property too.

“I’ve developed such a relationship with it that I could never sell it,” he said. “I love walking out on it and looking at the trees. It’s a place I go when I just need to relax and commune with nature or slow my world down.”

With such a strong attachment, a conservation easement was an obvious step.

“I would have done it even if I weren’t associated with Headwaters,” Fred said. “It’s what makes sense for the property. I see so many larger tracts get turned into five and 10-acre parcels, I just know this is the right thing to do.”
THANK YOU

HeadWaters Land Conservancy
& J. A. Woollam Partner Again

The partnership between the J.A. Woollam Foundation and HeadWaters Land Conservancy grew this year. A $10,000 challenge grant has been offered by Woollam, with a Dec. 31 2006 deadline. As before, all supporter contributions can be applied to this grant. The J. A. Woollam Co. is a manufacturer of spectrocope ellipsometers for non-destructive thin film and bulk material characterization. Dr. John A. Woollam founded the company in 1987. It is located in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Thank You to the following:

- The Americana Foundation for their $30,000 grant.
- The Mott Foundation for providing HWLC with a scholarship to attend the National Land Conservation Conference Rally 2005.
- Verizon, for providing a $100 matching gift for employees.
- Monarch Welding and Engineering for their generous contribution of $500 towards our Big Lands Initiative.
- The Woollam Foundation for their $10,000 challenge grant.
- The State of Michigan for grant monies received as part of the Clean Michigan Initiative toward work on the AuSable, Manistee, Ocqueoc and Thunder Bay rivers.
- Michigan Department of Environmental Quality for grant monies.
- Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG) for grant monies.

Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op’s Christmas Present to HWLC

HeadWaters Land Conservancy received a very nice Christmas gift in December when Presque Isle Electric and Gas Co-op gave them a check for $3,000. The check was part of their Community First fund.

“The program has been in place since 1998,” Alan Joppich, the fund administrator, said. “It’s funded by a voluntary roundup on members’ utility bills to the next highest dollar. Then a nine-member volunteer board distributes the money to assist the community.”

With so many organizations vying for awards, why did HWLC stand out?

“I’m a firm believer in (HWLC’s) objectives,” Pete Petoskey, a member of the board of directors, said. “Conservancies are very important, as far as I’m concerned.”

“I think it’s a natural combination,” HWLC Executive Director Fred Gottschalk said. “We’re both here to protect the natural lands that people enjoy.”

PIE & G member Pete Petoskey presents Fred Gottschalk with the check from the Community First Fund. The fund is distributed to community-minded organizations.
Stephen Small Seminar
At The Otsego Club

Tax law has never been easy to understand. However, at the Otsego Club on Sept. 19 and 20, landowners and land professionals received help from the best expert possible. That source was Stephen Small, the attorney who wrote the Tax Code on conservation easements for the IRS.

Small talked to landowners on the first day of the seminar. He discussed how conservation easements preserve land, the income and estate tax benefits of conservation easements and tax planning strategies for property owners.

On the second day, Small spoke to legal professionals and advisors. He covered tax rules and benefits regarding land conservation, technical details of preserving land and advanced planning issues. The audience was very receptive.

“I’m glad they brought in a national expert like Stephen Small close enough so I could get to hear him,” said Pat Toczydlowski of the Keweenaw Land Trust in Calumet. “(Tax and conservation law) is a complicated field and he can simplify it.”

“I think Steve is great,” said Scott Howard, an attorney in Traverse City. “Not only does he have a good grasp of the issues, he conveys them in a very understandable way.”

The event was sponsored by a grant from the Americana Foundation.

New Office Manager Joins HeadWaters Land Conservancy

GAYLORD – Callers to the HeadWaters Land Conservancy will be hearing a new voice on the other end – Kathy Kost, HWLC’s new office manager. A solid background in the outdoors makes Kost very qualified to work with HWLC. She has been a park ranger at the Lake Michigan National Forest Campground and a member of the Young Adult Conservation Corps. She is also a certified master gardener. Kost’s outdoor expertise is balanced by her skills in administration. She was an inventory manager at Latitude 45 Cycle and Sport and a circulation librarian at the Otsego County library.

“I’m looking forward to learning more about HeadWaters,” Kost said. “I think I’ll be able to organize it so that (the staff) will be able to do their jobs better.”
THANK YOU

HeadWaters Contributor
Recognition Third Quarter 2005

We would like to thank the following friends who have contributed to HeadWaters Land Conservancy.

Steward (up to $999)
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Carls Foundation
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Opportunities to Support Local Land Protection Work

General Supporter
As a Supporter of HWLC, you join us in preserving the “Up North” we all enjoy by protecting natural areas, waterfront, wildlife and farmland in Northeast Michigan. Your support is vital for HWLC’s land protection and education projects. All supporters receive our informative quarterly newsletter and invitations to annual meetings and special events.

Land Patron
A Land Patron is a special supporter who makes a monthly gift to HWLC, usually through the automatic withdrawal option. The Land Patron community was created as a vehicle to increase the organizational capacity of the Conservancy, while allowing a feasible alternative to one significant contribution. This reliable and continuing source of financial support allows HeadWaters to continue in our vital conservation efforts.

Sustainers Circle
The Sustainers Circle of HWLC is a very special group of people who are committed to the long-term goals of the Conservancy. Members of this group have pledged to contribute a minimum of $500 annually to support the operations of HWLC. The Sustainers Circle provides us with the kind of financial support that ensures current success and future stability. While the general operation of the Conservancy’s programs is made possible by annual membership contributions and extra donations, it is the regular annual contributions of this special group that will sustain our special efforts on behalf of northern Michigan’s land and wildlife. Sustainers also have the option of donating their annual pledged amount in smaller quarterly contributions.

HWLC’s Legacy Fellowship Program
HWLC has established a Legacy Fellowship to honor individuals who have planned a gift to HWLC in their wills or living trusts, retirement plans or life insurance policies or another life income arrangement such as charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts or charitable lead trusts. When you make a legacy gift to HWLC, you join a growing number of special supporters who are committed to preserving the beauty and natural resources unique to Northeast Michigan. These attributes simply will not be here for future generations to enjoy if we do not act NOW. If you have included HWLC in your estate plans, please let us know so that we can welcome you to our Legacy Fellowship. Thank you for your interest and support. For additional information please contact our office at (989) 731-0573.
Check Out Our Gifts!

Know anyone suffering from winter blues?

Brighten their year with a gift membership to HeadWaters Land Conservancy. This is a gift to the land that will continue to give for years to come and for generations to follow.

HWLC also offers some colorful gifts. We have a collection of items that highlight the exceptional talents of some of Michigan’s finest artists including photographer Carl Sams II and writer Bob Butz.

For a complete list and description of these gifts, visit our website at www.headwatersconservancy.org. Remember, all proceeds go toward the Conservancy’s land protection programs.

W I S H L I S T

- **Seeking office furniture!** HWLC is moving into a new office. If you have any office furniture or equipment, please let us know. We’re looking for file cabinets, shelves, and maybe even a microwave for the kitchen space. Please call us at (989) 731-0573 if you want to help.

- **Get your business noticed by sponsoring our monthly ad in Traverse Magazine.** $595/month for 1/3 page b & w ad; $1500/month for a full-page color ad.

Thanks to our members...

HeadWaters Land Conservancy has now protected over 5,000 acres and more than 14 miles of shoreline throughout our service area.

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