



**NORTH CENTRAL CONSERVANCY TRUST**

[www.ncctwi.org](http://www.ncctwi.org)

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# A Sense of Place

*photo by Bob Freckmann*

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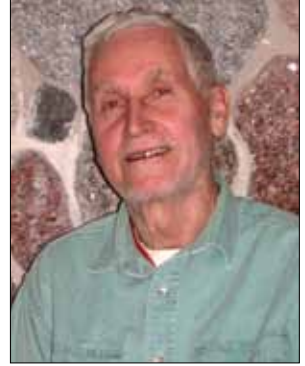
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# A SENSE OF PLACE

*Alan Haney, President*

I have come to appreciate more and more the satisfaction from looking deeply into the land that sustains us. In my youth, it was more exciting to explore new ground, always wondering what was beyond the horizon. Now I find new horizons literally beneath my feet. There is seldom a time that I visit my backyard or woods when I fail to see something new, often with the startling realization that I had overlooked it dozens of times before I really saw it. Thus, it is always with a sense of wonder and a bit of excitement that I head out the door.



As a child, I spent considerable time with my maternal grandfather, who had grown up on the same land as his grandfather, and which he continued to explore daily. I used to marvel at how he seemed to know where the wild beebone was, where the best blackberries or huckleberries could be found, or when crow-foot violets would be blooming. Within his several hundred acres of fields and forests he knew where each spring emerged cold and clear from the ground, where the morel mushrooms would grow, and where the best wintergreen berries could be found. He knew to the day when the persimmons and pawpaws would be ripe enough to eat. For several years after failing hips prevented him from hiking to the far reaches of his land, he would ask grandchildren to check and give him a detailed report.

This deeper searching is both how and why we become attached to the land. It isn't necessary that we own it, although there needs to be a long-term connection. I have returned to many of the same lakes and hills of the Quetico-Superior for 45 years, and each time, I learn something more. The richer one's knowledge, the more the land seems to offer.

In exploring land, there are nearly limitless avenues. Gardening is a wonderful way to get in touch. I like cutting my own firewood and making maple syrup, as well as photography, and walking or skiing nearly every day. Making lists of the birds or plants, taking the time to get acquainted with those you haven't previously noticed, putting up bird houses and maintaining bird feeders, planting trees, hunting, fishing, or just sitting outside without distractions are all ways to explore land. Many who make their living on the land are engaged daily, but modern farming, like all technology, separates the farmer from the land. As a young man, I liked to plow because one of my favorite smells was the

odor of freshly turned soil. Inside the air-conditioned cab of a modern tractor one cannot smell the earth, much less get one's hands into it.

It seems apparent that technology, more often than not, gets in the way of developing our relationship to the land. Traveling through land at faster than the pace of walking, or perhaps skiing, prevents one seeing a great deal. Gasoline or diesel fumes disguise the sweet smell of freshly fallen leaves or the warming mold of the forest floor in the spring. The roar of an engine or insistent buzzing of a cell phone can prevent your hearing the tinkling of water beneath the ice on a stream or the sweet song of a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Careful attention, thinking about what you are seeing or hearing, becoming immersed, are prerequisites to what several writers have called "digging in."

I've long wondered why isolated cultures have such rich traditions and why the people, living with little more than bare necessities, are often contented, if not happy. Anthropologists have documented this repeatedly. In her book, *Ancient Futures*, Helena Norberg-Hodge describes the Ladakhi people in the Kashmir region of the Himalaya Mountains. She concluded that they culturally evolved with their resource base like all people, but have remained in closer contact with the land because technology was slow to find its way into their isolated valleys. They survived only because they paid careful attention to every detail of the land in all seasons. Only by working in careful unison could they accomplish what was essential, and the close connections between one another and the land became their culture, but also the source of their contentment.

It appears that the more we have, the more we want. Those who are part of the surviving ancient cultures have little beyond bare necessities, but the security of knowing that they can provide what they need. People who have much, want more, but suffer the insecurity of not being able to get it, or fix it when it breaks. I see an important connection between a strong connection to the land, a sustainable culture, and contentment. Although as I get older I find myself with more questions than answers, one thing seems abundantly clear: if we are to have a chance for a sustainable future, we need to protect the land and our bonds with it. That is our mission at NCCT.



photo by Bob Freckmann

## PLOVER RIVER PRIORITY

*Jo Seiser, Executive Director*

Last week I hiked three segments of the Ice Age Trail (IAT) in Marathon County along with 100 other people participating in the 2011 Annual Ice Age Trail Conference. The snow was melting and streams were full. The hike along the upper reaches of the Plover River was especially beautiful. Stevens Point city water comes from groundwater wells adjacent to the Plover River as it meanders through Portage County to join the Wisconsin River. The Plover is one of central Wisconsin's precious resources, and protection of this watershed is a priority for North Central Conservancy Trust.



The IAT Alliance is also a land trust that holds 54 easements with landowners who generously allow the Trail to cross their property. In addition to formal easements, the Alliance also purchases property and sometimes makes agreements with just a handshake. This national scenic trail passes through Waushara, Portage, Marathon, Lincoln and Taylor counties where NCCT also works with landowners to protect properties with easements. Our work is perfectly compatible with that of the IAT Alliance. While the IAT is interested in easements only in the Trail corridor that has been carefully developed, NCCT is happy to discuss an easement with any landowner in central Wisconsin who wants to permanently protect their property from abuse. We are, however, especially eager to work with landowners along streams such as the Plover River.

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### CELEBRATE NCCT'S 15<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY HELP SUPPORT OUR "SENSE OF PLACE"

Nearly all who ask us to help them with easements on their property do so because they love the land. They are connected to the place, like Bob and Sally Freckmann, whose easement we signed in December (see article in this newsletter). Bob and Sally have devoted years to collecting and cultivating rare and interesting plants that they lovingly placed into the landscape around their house, in the woods, and the restored prairie. Long after they no longer can oversee this beautiful property within the city limits of Stevens Point, their conservation easement will ensure their property continues to be protected from abuse or exploitation. There are similar stories about the connections between owners and the land with each easement.

We all profit from a "sense of place," whether with our own land or that of neighbors. It is because people love the land and treat it accordingly that Central Wisconsin is one of the best places to live. We need your help to continue assisting property owners with the protection of the places they love.

Permanent protection of land is expensive, and getting more so all the time. Many people who would like to have a conservation easement simply can't afford the few thousand dollars it costs. NCCT has received over \$60,000 to assist with easements, but this is only the beginning. Because every easement makes Central Wisconsin a more attractive and healthier place for everyone, we hope many of you are willing to help us. This year is our 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We want to celebrate by starting the "***New Easement Fund***" to assist landowners with conservation easements when necessary. If you can, please consider a special donation to this Fund. ***Of course, we also need your continuing membership to help with our operating expenses.*** Every dollar contributed helps protect another special place. Either use the enclosed envelope or make your donation on-line. Through our website, you can spread your donation with a monthly contribution if you choose. Please help. Support NCCT with a spring donation.

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## ANNUAL SPRING PRAIRIE BURN YOU'RE INVITED!

Come celebrate spring by participating or observing a controlled fire on one of the prairies on the Byron and Margaret Shaw Easement in Portage County. A 20-foot wall of wild-fire rolling across a landscape can be terrifying, but fire renews prairie ecosystems. Properly controlled, prescribed fire replaces the wild-fires that historically shaped the vegetation of central Wisconsin.



We plan to burn on Friday April 29, or if weather is not acceptable, either Saturday April 30 or Friday May 6. The burn will probably take about one to one-and-a-half hours.

We will start burning at 5 pm. All participants or observers should arrive by 4:40 for instructions and assignments. All vehicles need to park facing east on the South side of our driveway (Shaw Drive). We will not be burning the fields along this road. Clothing should be work type leather boots, natural-fiber long pants and long-sleeve shirts (no nylon!). Smoke can get fairly thick, so a dust mask or bandana is advisable.

We have most of the equipment needed, but if you would like, you could bring a metal leaf rake or flat shovel. Other things you may want would be a water bottle, camera.

I would ask anyone planning to participate in the burn to let me know via email at least two days prior to April 29. To RSVP, or to find out more information about the event, please contact Byron Shaw, (715) 677-3867, or email [bmshaw@wi-net.com](mailto:bmshaw@wi-net.com).

## FRECKMANN EASEMENT MARKS THE BEGINNING OF OUR 15TH YEAR



Dr. Robert Freckmann was one of the early volunteers of NCCT, and he has worked with dozens of landowners to help them with conservation easements. Therefore, we are especially pleased to have completed an easement on the property Bob and his wife, Sally, own within the city limits of Stevens Point.

An authority on vegetation in the Midwest, Bob Freckmann is an emeritus professor of biology at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. For 33 years, Bob and Sally have collected interesting plants that are incorporated into the 32-acre landscape around their home in Stevens Point. Botanical forays to the Freckmann property are common occurrences. The botanical collection of living plants at the Freckmann home has enriched the education of thousands of students who took his classes, as well as many others. While the Freckmann property is not regularly open to the public, Bob and Sally are proud to show off their gardens on request.

The Freckmann easement ensures that the diverse property will be protected. It is Bob's and Sally's hope that the years of work they have invested will continue to enrich the botanical interests of people in Central Wisconsin for all time.

"This unique property is like none other we have yet protected with a conservation easement," according to Alan Haney, President of NCCT. "Not only is it 32 acres of greenspace within the city, but it contains over a 1000 species of plants, most native to North America. It is very unusual for a city the size of Stevens Point to have a botanical garden this rich."

*(Ed. note: See our cover photo for a look at this lovely easement.)*

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### SUMMER AT THE FRECKMANNS'

Saturday, August 6, 2011 at 11am

Come join us at the Bob and Sally Freckmann household for a potluck lunch and tour of their urban conservation easement. We plan to gather at 871 W Oak Ridge Lane, on the west side of the Wisconsin River in Stevens Point. There will be an update of NCCT easements, and review of the Freckmann easement restrictions and reserved rights. After a potluck lunch, we will enjoy a tour around this 32-acre property with over 1000 plant species.

An update about the event will be on the website [www.ncctwi.org](http://www.ncctwi.org). Make a note on your calendar to attend the Freckmann Easement Event.

## KRENZ EASEMENT SIGNED IN LINCOLN COUNTY



*L-R Kerry Brimmer,  
Vilas Krenz*

How would you protect a property in which you've invested careful stewardship for more than five decades, and want to see it kept in much the same condition after you are gone? Vilas Krenz knew how. He contacted North Central Conservancy Trust and asked for help developing an easement. The easement was signed on 25 March 2011 in the historic Lincoln County Courthouse in Merrill. Vilas purchased the 40-acre forested property in 1957 for \$600.

As with most property owners who invest themselves in the care of their property, it became more than a home.

It became an extension of Vilas and mirrored his values. When asked why he bought it, he replied, "I thought I would peel aspen and take some stumpage." He managed the woodland carefully with harvest of firewood and periodic timber sales. He said "It wasn't long before I knew there were easier ways to make a dollar," but he continued to cut his own firewood until he was no longer able to do so. The property reflects his care and pride. Vilas decided on an easement because he "wanted to make sure whoever ended up with the property would play by the rules that he set up." Those "rules" are clearly stated in his easement, which are binding on all future owners of the property. NCCT is proud to have developed a partnership with Vilas.

We will continue to monitor the property annually to ensure that it is managed as Vilas intends. NCCT volunteers frequently mention that their greatest reward is meeting and working with people who love their land. Vilas Krenz is certainly near the top of our list.

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### MEET THE MARATHON COUNTY NCCT MEMBERS

Sunday, May 22, 2011 4-6p

NCCT has many supporters from the Wausau area and it is time for us to get together. Board member Kathy Clark-Girolamo has offered her abode as the meeting place, 1058 DuBay Drive, Mosinee, 54455. There will be light refreshments and excellent weather with everyone on their way home before dark. Invitations to Marathon County residents will be sent, but please save the date. Why gather? Is this a fundraiser? All of you have already been generous supporters, so it is time to simply appreciate you, your commitment to NCCT and land conservation. This event will appear on the website, [www.ncctwi.org](http://www.ncctwi.org) for more information.

## NCCT WELCOMES NEW DIRECTORS

We welcome five new directors on the Board for 2011. They are Kerry Brimmer, Lauren Ebbecke, Elmer Fournier, Lora Hagen, and Meleesa Johnson.

Kerry Brimmer is a new face, but well known, as he has been on the board in the past, filling out two full terms, until NCCT Bylaws required him to leave the board. Kerry continued to work on the Properties Committee during his break year. He supervised the WisCorps Project on buckthorn removal and is especially experienced in meeting with landowners considering an easement or land donation.

Lauren Ebbecke is a science teacher at Wausau East High School. She has training and skills in conservation and environmental education, and has been the force behind wind turbine renewable energy at the School. Lauren is active on Properties, and has grant-writing and fund-raising expertise she is sharing.

Elmer Fournier is well known for his steadiness on the Stevens Point Area School District Board to which he was recently re-elected. NCCT is glad to capture his attention to the NCCT Board too. Already as the At Large representative to the Executive Committee, Elmer has helped manage the endowment monies for perpetual support of easements. Elmer has been a member of NCCT for many years.

Lora Hagen is new to the Board, but has been active as the NCCT newsletter publisher. She has wonderful skills in art (she is a potter) and graphic design. Her first assignment with NCCT was to “make us look good in print,” which she has done admirably. Lora said, “My particular interest in land conservation is to make an effort, however small, to ensure that the open spaces and beauty of central Wisconsin are protected. We are lucky to have the beauty of the land, and the diversity of wildlife. As urban development encroaches, those are threatened.”

Meleesa Johnson, Marathon County’s Solid Waste Director brings complex resource management skills of managing a landfill, recycling programs, composting and waste-to-energy to the Board. Meleesa embraces the mission of NCCT to preserve worthy natural resources in partnership with landowners.

NCCT welcomes these new directors and appreciates their commitment. Lauren said, “Successful land conservation requires action and initiative at all levels as we strive for a sustainable way to live in harmony with the land.”

*Subtle Biological Effects of Pesticides and Other Environmental Chemicals*  
Monday, May 9, 6:30PM Laird Room, Dreyfus University Center Stevens Point

NCCT is co-sponsoring this program about the effects pesticides in modern life.

Prof. Warren Porter, Zoology Department, UW Madison, speaker

## NATIVE HILL

“...We have lived by the assumption that what was good for us would be good for the world. And this has been based on the even flimsier assumption that we could know with any certainty what was good even for us. We have fulfilled the danger of this by making our personal pride and greed the standard of our behavior toward the world—to the incalculable disadvantage of the world and every living thing in it. And now, perhaps very close to too late, our great error has become clear. It is not only our own creativity—our own capacity for life—that is stifled by our arrogant assumption; the creation itself is stifled.

We have been wrong. We must change our lives, so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to *know* the world and to learn what is good for it. We must learn to cooperate in its processes, and to yield to its limits. But even more important, we must learn to acknowledge that the creation is full of mystery; we will never entirely understand it. We must abandon arrogance and stand in awe. We must recover the sense of the majesty of creation, and the ability to be worshipful in its presence. For I do not doubt that it is only on the condition of humility and reverence before the world that our species will be able to remain in it....”

“Native Hill,”  
*Recollected Essays 1965-1980*  
Wendell Berry  
North Point Press  
San Francisco 1981



Above: (l-r) Elmer Fournier, Lauren Ebbecke,  
Kerry Brimmer, Lora Hagen

Right: Meleesa Johnson



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*Working to protect land in central Wisconsin*