



North Central Conservancy Trust
Vol. 15 No. 1 **Summer 2016**



TRANSITIONS

Bunchberry

Photo by Roger Zimmermann

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A CALL TO LEAD

Aaron Thompson, President

Take a moment and really think about what calls us all together to protect land in central Wisconsin. NCCT's volunteers, staff, and donors often discuss their deep connection with nature while acknowledging the broader goal of improving the quality of life for members of their community. At NCCT, our mission "to protect the worthy, scenic, working lands, and environmental resources for the benefit of the people of central Wisconsin," recognizes that the task of protecting critical conservation lands before they fade into memory begins with building relationships and inspiring people to act.



Conservation begins with people, and this year has been a period of transition for NCCT as we undertook a national recruitment process to select a new executive director. I am pleased to announce that Janet Smith will join NCCT as our next executive director beginning on August 1. Many of you know Janet from her extensive involvement with our organization (or in her previous position as an Environmental Specialist with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation); however, it is her partnership-driven approach and desire to serve the people of central Wisconsin that really makes this an exciting hire for NCCT! Janet described the opportunity to lead NCCT's conservation mission as a challenge that she's been waiting for her entire career, and her past success here in central Wisconsin suggests that we can expect great things moving forward. We have been blessed by some amazing executive directors and Janet certainly continues this tradition of finding the right person at the right time to grow and expand the reach of our organization. I'd also like to acknowledge the service of Sharon Schwab, our interim Executive Director, whose efforts have ensured that NCCT's conservation work remained on course this year. Sharon's dedication to land conservation and community service is the perfect example of what makes NCCT's work possible.

It all starts with you! Now, more than ever, NCCT is in need of your time, talents, and financial support to help grow our organization. As a non-profit organization, our members are critical to our success, and your contribution of land, cash, or other financial support can help us to protect central Wisconsin's special places before they are gone!

MOVING FORWARD

Sharon Schwab, Interim Executive Director

It has been an honor to serve as your part-time Interim Executive Director for the past six months. During this time I have learned both the challenge and the joy of this important position...

It is a challenge to wear so many hats. I'm not sure how our former Executive Director Betsy Kerlin did it so well! In this role one has to be: office manager and front-line staff—managing emails, calls, conferences and piles of paperwork; financial officer—managing invoices, checkbook, income/disbursements; outreach and education coordinator—giving presentations, sending out materials, updating social media; stewardship director—overseeing landowner contacts, baseline documents and conservation easements; legal assistant—scrutinizing the minutiae of important documents and conferring with legal counsel; and counselor—comforting and reassuring landowners who want to protect their land but don't know when, how, have no financial resources, or can't get along with family members to share similar goals for protection.

Our natural resources are precious and protecting them in perpetuity is the mission of this organization. The joy of this job is when that actually happens. This spring two wonderful things did. First, the signing of the StarPoint Conservation Easement (CE) and the accompanying baseline document. The latter was prepared by Betsy and former Properties Committee member Dr. David Hillier. The final version of the CE was hammered out by the Properties Committee and then the Board of Directors. To do so however required deciphering the meaning of words like "remodel" and "residential" so that we were all clear, in perpetuity, what they really mean. Congratulations to all involved in these important documents, and to members of the Aldo Leopold Audubon Society, who will hold the CE until the property is sold.

In early May, a Gift Agreement was signed between the Mildred E. Bagley Trust and NCCT. This beautiful Adams County property will be conveyed to us following a final CE and pending baseline document. The land melds a mix of primarily old oak forest with high-quality cropland, plus a two-acre building zone. Our appreciation is expressed to the Bagley family and their counsel who have been a joy to work with.

I've thoroughly enjoyed my short stint here as Interim Executive Director, but am happy to toss the baton to my colleague, peer, and friend Janet Smith. I wish her the best. It was important for me to understand the challenges and experience the joy. Time to move forward!

With deepest appreciation, Sharon

WELCOME TO NCCT'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JANET SMITH

In my early years, summers were spent with my maternal grandmother at our family cottage on Big Hills Lake near Wild Rose and my grandma's home in Neenah. My grandma was a bird lover and an early member of The Nature Conservancy. My dad loved being outdoors, and my mom loves being on the lake at our cottage. Those summers on the lake inspired in me a deep love of Wisconsin, and a determination to live here one day.



That day eventually did arrive, and after working at the Indiana Dept. of Environmental Management, biological and environmental work in Ohio and Michigan, I moved to Wisconsin in 1992. I held a patchwork of jobs while raising my two daughters in Stevens Point: teaching wildlife biology at UWSP, wetland consulting, and a stint at Ft. McCoy doing all sorts of biological projects. I finally obtained a secure, permanent position in 2000, as the Regional Environmental Analysis & Review Specialist and Wetland Specialist Lead with the Wisconsin Dept. of Transportation.

Now that my kids are adults, and my husband is retired from teaching, I have more time to pursue my true passion: conservation! I have been a member of NCCT's Properties Committee for the past 3 years, and was on the Board from January this year through May. At that time, I decided to apply for the Executive Director position, and was just thrilled and honored to be selected for the job. I am incredibly excited to start my "second career" as Executive Director of NCCT; I love helping preserve the beautiful landscape and habitats of north central Wisconsin, and working with like-minded conservationists. I also look forward to meeting NCCT's members and easement holders. My favorite activities, when not volunteering for conservation causes, are reading, cross-country skiing, hiking, birding, botanizing, kayaking, and exploring nature whenever I have the opportunity.

Continued from page 5

simultaneously. When we're lucky, we sometimes even get a home-cooked meal."

The Land Conservation Society is active throughout the school year, and looks forward to continuing a tight partnership with their friends at NCCT.

LAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY PARTNERS WITH NCCT

Genevieve Adamski and Brewster Johnson

Land trusts today need young, educated leaders with experience in the field, the lab, and the office to carry out their missions and to be adaptive. The Land Conservation Society, a student organization of UW-Stevens Point, strives to give students the opportunities to gain these skills. This young organization has already been working with a variety of land trusts, land owners, and other conservationists to help further their missions, while providing the experience needed for students to become leaders in the field of private conservation.

From day one, NCCT has been the primary partner of the society due to its proximity to campus and its local resources. This mutualistic relationship improves both organizations by connecting LCS with easement owners and other organizations while providing NCCT with additional volunteers.

For instance, last April, approximately 18 members of the society drove out to one of NCCT's easements southwest of Amherst to remove invasive species and learn about the property. Doug Henderson, a retired UWSP psychology



professor and avid member of NCCT, owns the land. Henderson gladly welcomed the rather large group to his property, mainly to help remove a section of autumn olive, an invasive shrub that grows in shaded areas.

During their visit, members of LCS learned a lot more than just how to identify and remove this invasive. Henderson, having taught for 25 years, had no issue sharing the history of his property, as well as his management successes, goals, and obstacles. For example, members learned that Henderson's easement was also enrolled in the Managed Forest Law program. Therefore, he receives a check when the Department of Natural Resources harvests timber that they manage on this land.

When asked to sum up the field work that LCS does, President of LCS Brewster Johnson answered "At the end of the day, we make cross-generational friendships and protect privately conserved lands

Continued on page 4

NCCT'S NEW BOARD MEMBERS

DAVID JAMES



My love for the outdoors began with my childhood trips to Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area. I continue to enjoy fishing, hunting, camping, and, most recently, cross-country skiing. Most of my outdoor time is now spent introducing my two young daughters, Clara and Lyla, to the things I love. While fishing with worms and bobbers doesn't have quite the same allure as fly fishing, you simply cannot beat watching your daughter reel in a 5-pound bass!

I graduated from UWSP in 2001 with a dual major in Wildlife Management and Biology. During my time at UWSP, I had the distinct pleasure of serving as an intern to the Wisconsin DOT District 4 Environmental Coordinator. (We know they only hire the best and brightest for that position!) Working on DOT wetland mitigation projects is one of my fondest memories from that time of my life. As an undergraduate, I also served as President of the UWSP student chapter of The Wildlife Society, and served a very brief stint on Wisconsin's Conservation Congress.

I entered law school at UW-Madison in 2002 and graduated in 2005. Although I started law school with intentions of practicing "environmental law," I soon found I really enjoyed business law and tax courses. After graduation, I joined the Anderson O'Brien law firm, where I have focused my practice on business- and estate-planning work. As a business advisor, I have helped many businesses and non-profit organizations with a myriad of legal issues. Non-profit work has included formation, corporate governance, 501(c)(3) applications, general program administration, and fundraising.



Summer 2016

JACOB PRATER



Jacob Prater with easement donor Barbara Curwen

Jacob Prater is an Assistant Professor of Soil and Waste Resources at the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point. He is active in teaching and research with courses including: Agronomy, Soil Management, Soil Physics, Integrated Pest Management, and Introduction to Soil and Water Resources. Jacob's passion is Soil Resource Sustainability or as he likes to put it "Building Soil". Jacob's research interests are varied and include Soil Health, Soil Quality, Agricultural Sustainability (Environmental and Economic), and Contaminant Fate and Transport. He currently has recent projects investigating the effects of fire frequency on forest soil quality/health, managing phosphorus fertility when using gypsum, and transport of ethinyl-estradiol and bisphenol-A in soil. Previous research has been in the areas of phosphorus fertility and management (including tillage, runoff, and crop use), soil amendments (biochar), and endocrine disruptor (estrogens) fate and transport in soil. Jacob has also actively engaged in outreach to local entities through service learning opportunities with his students. This outreach has included local farmers and conservation groups. Beyond his professional activities, Jacob is a chicken farmer, gardener, woodlot manager/woodworker, and fisherman. He is a family man and is connected to his local and statewide community.

Continued from page 8

so much for NCCT, because NCCT has given me more than I can express. It has been a rewarding experience to have done what I did at NCCT and in which I feel like my footprints in the sand would stay regardless of the crashing waves.

As the project comes to an end and my path with NCCT diverges, all I can express is a simple "thank you". Thank you for everything you have given me in terms of learning, experiencing, and living. My path with a career in conservation continues in June as I will be moving to Washington, D.C. to live with my darling boyfriend, Devin Murray. NCCT has given me the foundation in which I needed to keep pursuing my passions and saving the environment. As much as I would like to continue my support for NCCT, I have all the faith in the world that it will continue to grow and preserve more land forever. And so I say one last time a sincere "thank you" to so many names and faces I will always remember.

Summer 2016

PERSONAL TRANSITIONS

I've known since I was very young that I needed to be tied with the environment and to somehow protect all of the hidden beauty that the eyes sometimes cannot see. It was two years ago around this time of the month of May in which I received a call from the former executive director of NCCT, Betsy Kerlin. She offered me the summer internship position as the Arc-GIS Conservation Specialist. It was a moment, of which the full impacts and lessons are yet to unfold, turned my future into endless paths. Having the chance to work with an inspirational leader, learning the value of the land from conservation easement land donors, and preserving land for forever made it possible for me to feel as if I was doing my part in society; it has been an enduring effect in my life.



As the summer came to a close that year, Betsy and I decided to write another grant to continue my experience as an intern throughout my senior year at UWSP. Fortunately, it was successful and I continued to learn, grow, and experience this immense passion I had for land conservation. It was a bitter-sweet moment when I graduated and acquired new work serving as the County Planner for Wood County Planning and Zoning. I knew, however, that since I was still so close to the NCCT office I couldn't end my time with them yet, so I decided to volunteer with them on the Public Relations Committee.

Moving forward, it was close to November, and it was remorsefully announced that Betsy would be leaving NCCT to live a new path with her family. It was also announced that a \$10,000 River Grant from the DNR was secured, thanks to Betsy's remarkable grant writing abilities, to produce a project protecting land near and/or on the Plover River Watershed. It was an odd feeling because my inspirational leader was leaving a place we both had passion for and yet there was more work to be done.

In December, I excitedly took on the role of Project Director for this grant and have been enjoying every minute of it. One of the projects this grant has funded is a high-gloss magazine article. I have been scheduling interviews with current land easement donors, taking photos of their land, and learning about what it means to be a true steward of the land. This experience has been fueling my childhood memories of protecting all of the hidden beauty. It is an understatement when others have said I've done

Continued on page 7
Summer 2016

BAGLEY GIFT AGREEMENT, EASEMENT, AND BASELINE SIGNINGS



*NCCT Board of Directors looks on as President Aaron Thompson signs the Mildred I. Bagley Living Trust Gift Agreement on May 3, 2016.
L-R around table: Intern Sean Piette, John Houghton, Roger Zimmermann, Interim Executive Director Sharon Schwab, H.B. Pomeroy, Jacob Prater, Kerry Brimmer, Greg Dahl, Janet Smith, Aaron Thompson*



*Front row: Joel and Kay Aanensen (trustee of the Mildred I. Bagley Living Trust)
Back row: H. B. Pomeroy, Sharon Schwab, Aaron Thompson*
Summer 2016

PLOVER RIVER PROJECT

Encompassing over 200 miles and four counties, the Plover River watershed is home to many landowners and wildlife habitats. It is classified as a Class 1 trout stream from the headwaters in Langlade south to County Highway N. A \$9,911 grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources will help landowners living along the Plover River conserve their natural property for future generations. The grant allows North Central Conservancy Trust to continue a Plover River lands initiative project in Portage and Marathon Counties. The goal of this project is to develop and distribute materials and educational programs that inform as well as encourage private landowners to utilize voluntary conservation options as a means of protecting priority lands near the Plover River. This would provide permanent wildlife habitat, ecological services, and recreational opportunities to the area.



So far, Sean Piette, NCCT's GIS intern, has developed land criteria essential to knowing which landowners might be on and/or near the Plover River watershed. His research thus far proved to be of great interest and quality at the University of Wisconsin's Stevens Point 2016 Student Research Symposium where he received honorable mentions for his oral presentation and Highest Honors for his poster presentation. Sean continued to gain interest at the UW-System Research Symposium on Earth Day, which was very fitting for conservation. His success and research will provide vital data for educational outreach to potential landowners. Project Director, April Opatik, has organized interviews with seven conservation easement donors of NCCT. These interviews will be featured in a high-gloss article describing the importance of their land, answering some of NCCT's most frequently asked questions, and nature photographs taken by April Opatik and Roger Zimmermann. The descriptive narrative of these stories is a really important part of NCCT's story moving forward and successfully achieving the mission.

April Opatik, Project Director

NCCT MEMBERSHIP

Yes! I want to join or renew my membership

Student \$10 ___ Key Donor \$100 ___ Trustee \$1000 ___

Individual \$25 ___ Sustainer \$250 ___ Fellow \$5000 ___

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Make check payable to NCCT, and mail to:

NCCT, PO Box 124, Stevens Point WI 54481-0124



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Plover River Planning Grant

Project Director: April Ann Opatik
Project Intern: Sean Piette



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In this issue: New Executive Director
New Board members
New easements
Cooperation
...and more

Save the Date!
Annual Meeting
Oct 20, 2016



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