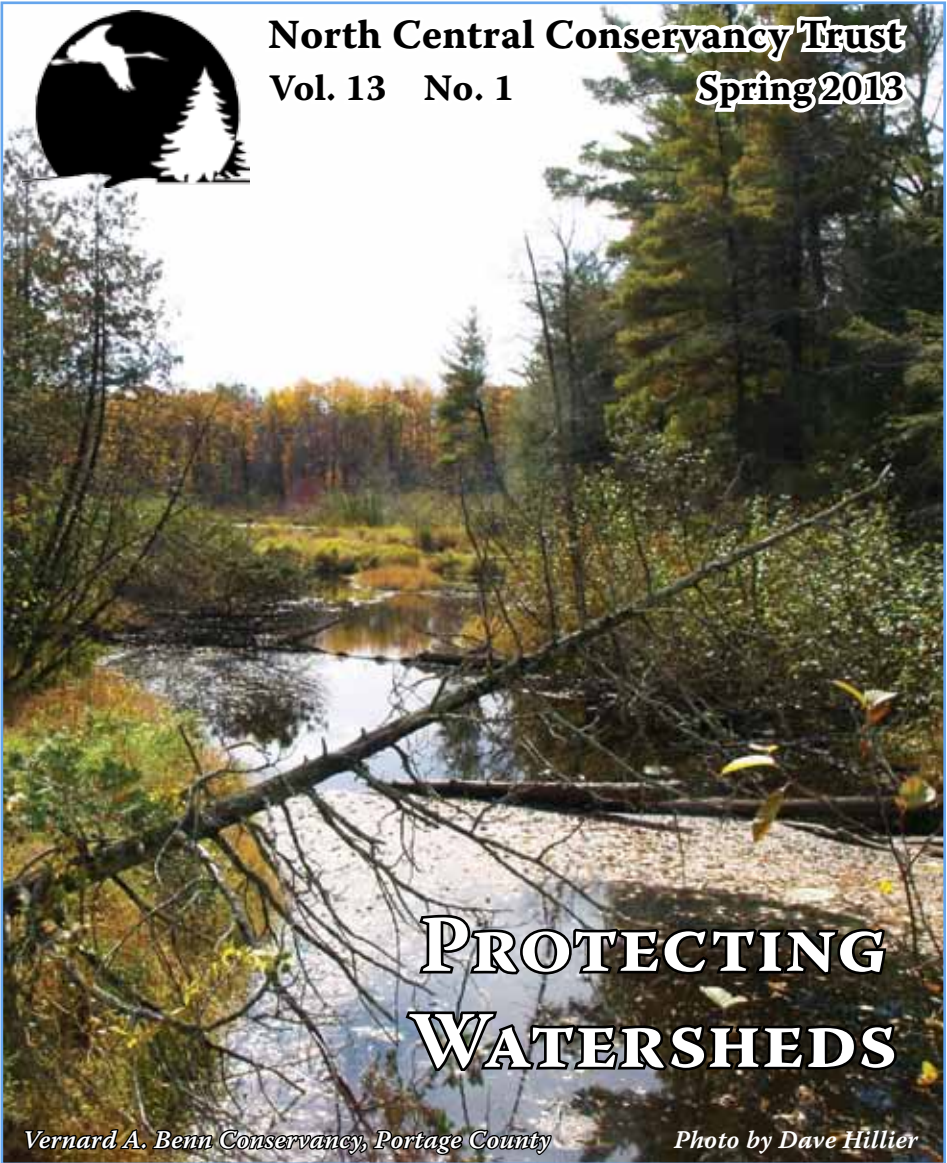




North Central Conservancy Trust
Vol. 13 No. 1
Spring 2013



PROTECTING WATERSHEDS

Vernard A. Benn Conservancy, Portage County

Photo by Dave Hillier

Business Sponsors

Community First Bank
Eco-Building & Forestry LLC
Egle Landscaping Inc
Gimme Shelter Construction Inc
International Bank of Amherst
Michael E Smith Ameriprise
Financial Services Inc

North Wind Renewable Energy
The Pineries Bank
River Valley Bank
Stevens Point Area Co-op 1% Fridays
Tom Brown Architect
The Vistas at Greenwood Hills
The Worth Company

A WATERSHED IS A COMMUNITY

Alan Haney

“How rich will we be when we have converted all our forests, our soil, our water resources, and our minerals into cash?” —Jay Norwood “Ding” Darling

Water fascinates us, whether a thunderstorm, a lake, the ocean, or a neighborhood creek. My brother, sister, and I spent hours following our stick boats down the small stream that ran through our backyard. Sometimes we would race to see whose stick would reach the fence bordering our yard the soonest, but often our interest was drawn only by the eddies and dips that held the sticks or propelled them downstream. Inevitably, we imagined ourselves in a boat, following the water from our small creek, to the larger stream it joined, eventually to the river, and ultimately to the ocean.



What we imagined, without understanding the landform concept, was a watershed, that unit of landscape that funnels water through a common outlet. For many ecological reasons, watersheds may be the most important way to think about land. A watershed is defined by the highest points or ridge where water on one side flows toward a particular stream, while on the other side it flows toward other streams, in different watersheds. A stream begins small, perhaps from a spring or wetland, or just a sloping piece of land where water merges into a channel that may be obvious, or not. These smallest-order channels that are highest in the watershed may contain water only in certain seasons or after heavy rains. Small channels merge into bigger channels, or higher-order streams, small streams into bigger streams, and eventually into major rivers.

Where I live in Portage County, water falling on my land drains through the Tomorrow River, to the Wolf, the Fox, and Green Bay, then through the St. Lawrence to the Atlantic Ocean. Two miles west, water drains to the Plover River, the Wisconsin, the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico. If I contaminate water from my land with wastes, chemicals, or soil erosion, it negatively affects all organisms and everybody downstream who might otherwise use or enjoy the water. Water removed reduces the flow downstream. More rapid runoff because of what I do on my land contributes to flooding downstream. This problem was recently demonstrated by an extensive study that revealed traces of pharmaceuticals in drinking water of

an estimated 41 million Americans, across the country. Prescription drugs and other chemicals, often surviving waste treatment processes, are accumulating in fish and reaching unsuspecting people downstream. Increasingly, the water we drink is not pure.

We sometimes forget that groundwater is connected to surface water. Precipitation that infiltrates through soils can carry contaminants with it. Groundwater often re-emerges lower in a watershed, as a spring that may be at the surface or which feeds a stream, lake, or wetland unseen. Removal of groundwater through high-capacity wells reduces the flow of streams lower in the watershed, as can be seen on the Little Plover River.

Watersheds are also economically and socially important because activities in the watershed affect how precipitation is received, held and discharged, and water quality elsewhere. Water problems, whether too much, too little, or contamination, change as land-use changes. Protection of water goes hand-in-hand with land and habitat conservation. Much like community revitalization, land and water conservation require cooperation from all stakeholders, and, it is easier to prevent problems than to fix them. When we protect the integrity of our landscape, we also protect the integrity of our water, and enhance the quality of our lives. This is the mission of NCCT. Please join our efforts.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

After careful consideration, our Board agreed to take a leap of faith in 2013. Our long-term financial stability is strong, but, at present, a lot of our assets are tied up in real estate. While our real estate will be protected with conservation easements as property is sold, we project a deficit budget for the next two or three years, depending on how quickly the real estate market recovers and how soon property sells. Meanwhile, requests for assistance from landowners who want conservation easements for their properties increase. To keep up with the growing demand for our help, to pursue accreditation, and to monitor the easements we hold, we elected to hire a full-time executive director to replace Jo Seiser when she retires in May. Jo worked one-third time, out of her home, and we now are establishing a new office. These changes will enable us to increase our capacity to protect habitat in Central Wisconsin, but they will put a strain on our cash-flow for at least the next two years. If you have not yet contributed to NCCT, please take this opportunity to do so. If you are a regular contributor, please consider increasing your support. If you have some time and would like to volunteer, we can use your assistance in any number of ways. Help us grow, and help us keep Central Wisconsin a beautiful and healthy place to live and work. Thank you.

TRUMPETER SWAN SONG

Jo Seiser, Executive Director

The office is being readied to pass to my successor as I prepare to share details and wisdom with the new Executive Director. I am proud to have participated in the growth and maturation of NCCT as a Board President and as the ED. Though my present role will end and my activities with the organization will be different, there are notable life experiences that will always be mine.



There are stories that involve several generations and lifetime plans. Thinking about a conservation easement is a family affair. It takes time for a landowner to learn about the easement—its restrictions and reserved rights, to understand how this applies to the landowner’s particular situation such as how the woodlot and pasture gets used, and the creek shore and big old white pines stay untouched. Often the offspring see it another way. There have been times when work on an easement is delayed or stopped as family members have different views.

There are other times where adult children bring the idea to their parents to consider. In some of these cases I have seen the heirs give a gift to the parents. They say “this is how you have raised us to love and preserve this land beyond even our time.”

I have learned from wise people lessons gained from their own aging and the need to make decisions now to plan for the future. A great pleasure, though usually delayed, is observing the results of early discussions where I did not know what the caller was pondering. I have found that people have investigated NCCT by reviewing the website, and requesting financial statements. Some have called references—such as other NCCT easement donors. They have evaluated the long term prospects of the organization.

One person asked whether we are bringing in younger people. Another asked if we would accept a land donation and own it ourselves. (NCCT would prefer to sell the land to a conservation buyer.) After discussions, more than 30 landowners have felt confident to pursue easements. In several cases there have been land donations where the donor trusted NCCT to sell their land responsibly, preserving the conservation assets. It has been rewarding to be one of the key people to speak for the land trust to express the decisions and aims of the Board.

From the earliest days with no mailing list of friends and supporters, with a generous start up financial donation from the founders, but no ongoing support strategy, and from before the first conservation easement, it has been a challenge and a pleasure to work with the volunteers of NCCT.

JO SEISER TO RETIRE

No one has been more involved with NCCT than Jo Ellen Seiser. Jo has served as board member, secretary, president, and executive director during her nearly 14 year association. She has had a direct hand in each of the 39 easements we have completed. As secretary, she signed our first easement, the Mumford easement in Marathon County, and she coordinated the signing of our most recent, the Robertson easement in Waushara County.

NCCT was formed in 1996 by a group in Marathon County who wanted to protect the conservation values of land in their Weston neighborhood. A similar initiative was begun two years later in Stevens Point. In 1999, the Stevens Point group joined NCCT. Jo was elected secretary of the expanded NCCT organization that then served both Portage and Marathon County landowners. The following year, our first easement was signed. In 2001, Jo was elected president, a position she held until 2006 when her board term was up. During this period, NCCT grew rapidly, reaching out to friends and neighbors. A support group was developed, and it continues to be the core of our financial stability. NCCT was confirmed as a publicly supported organization, meriting its non-profit status with the IRS, and qualifying easement donors for significant tax benefits. Several more easements were completed as NCCT expanded to assist landowners in eight counties.

In 2007, Jo left the board and was hired as an independent contractor. She essentially ran the organization, reporting to Kathy Powell who was then president. In 2010, Jo was hired as a part-time executive director, a position she has held until present.

Jo will officially retire in May. A gala wine-and-cheese reception is planned in her honor at Gallery Q, 1108 Main Street, Stevens Point on Monday, 29 April, 5:30-7:00. We hope that all of Jo's many friends, associates, and landowners with whom she has worked can stop by to wish her well in the next phase of her career.

Trumpeter Swan Song continued

They have made up the Properties, Public Relations, and the Finance Committees, and the Board—people with talent, commitment, and some with excellent baking skills!

In everything there is a season. Now is my time to support the new Executive Director and the broad mission of the Board. I plan to do this at the gourmet potlucks where I will listen for the new stories of people involved in NCCT. See you there!

NCCT GROWS WITH NEW EASEMENTS

Stevenson Easement

Farmland dominates the upper two-thirds of the Mill Creek watershed. Mill Creek originates on the south side of Marshfield, and flows for nearly 25 miles east and south, reaching the Wisconsin River beside Rusty's Backwater Saloon, a few miles west of Plover. The lower third of the watershed is nicely wooded, and the stream is remarkably picturesque, and bold enough to float a canoe. It is in this area, on 40 forested acres along the east side of the Creek that Nancy Stevenson settled in 1967 with her late husband.

There, they raised three sons who, along with their parents, grew up with the land they came to love. Neither Nancy nor her family could abide the thought that someone in the future might develop or abuse the land to which so many good memories were tied. Therefore, in December, Nancy signed a conservation easement that permanently protects this 40-acre property, a beautiful piece of the Mill Creek watershed.

Nancy, a local bird authority, has kept a faithful record of birds using the property. Her 45-year record includes 88 nesting species among a total of 179 species. This represents perhaps the longest and most complete record of a bird habitat in central Wisconsin. Thanks to Nancy, we know more about the birds this portion of the Mill Creek watershed than any place in central Wisconsin. Now, because Nancy has placed an easement on her property, it will be permanently protected for the birds, for people who enjoy paddling Mill Creek, for her neighbors, and for all property owners downstream. Nancy's infectious enthusiasm for nature and for the land is a gift she freely shares, and we're richer for it.

Vernard A. Benn Easement

A lovely 35-acre forest with fragments of oldgrowth bordering Flume Creek was donated to the Rosholt School District in honor of Dr. Vernard A. Benn, the doctor who served the Rosholt area for 49 years. The property, adjacent to Rosholt School, was donated to the School District by Dr. Benn's son, James, and daughter, Louise, to honor their father. It has been used by the School as a natural area and outdoor classroom since 1994. In February, North Central Conservancy Trust signed a conservation easement with the Rosholt School District to permanently protect the natural area. The property will be known as the Vernard A. Benn Conservancy. Dr. Benn passed away in September 1993. He is well remembered by people in northeast Portage County, having delivered over 5,000 babies, as well as providing surgical and other medical services to people in the area from 1936 until his retirement in 1985. The dedication of the Benn Conservancy
Spring 2013

will be April 22, at 1:00 in the Rosholt School Auditorium. Jo Seiser will speak briefly on behalf of NCCT.

Although the primary purpose of the conservation easement is to secure the resource for the School in perpetuity, the property is open to the public for daylight use if such use does not interfere with school activities. Dr. Benn appreciated nature and the out-of-doors. He frequently exhibited dahlias from his garden at the Rosholt Fair. "Providing such a wonderful natural area, that includes protection of Flume Creek leading into the mill pond, is a particularly appropriate way to honor the man who devoted much of his professional life to serving families in and around Rosholt," noted Alan Haney, president of the Conservancy. "We are proud to be a partner with the Rosholt School District in such a worthy cause."



Vernard A. Benn Conservancy

Photo by Dave Hillier

Robertson Easement

On April 23, NCCT and the Robertson Family Limited Partnership will sign our latest easement. The 218-acre property is located in the Town of Marion, Waushara County. This easement pushes the total acreage of land protected by conservation easements held by NCCT to well over 3000, a major benchmark in land conservation for central Wisconsin. The Robertson property is a working farm, with 148 acres in Managed Forest Law Program. The easement contains a sylvan lake with undeveloped shoreline surrounded by more than 60 acres of relatively undisturbed native forest and savanna. The Robertsons have been excellent stewards of their land and are pleased to know that the conservation easement will protect it in perpetuity.

GREEN PROPERTY FOR SALE

At present, NCCT has four properties for sale for the purpose of supporting our work. These represent an opportunity to own a piece of central Wisconsin at a reduced price because they will be sold with conservation easements. If any of these is of interest, please contact the realtor listed with the property.

1. Eleven-acre wooded parcel between Clear and Halfmoon Lakes in Lincoln County. Good road access. No building will be permitted, but there is a power stub and the easement allows temporary parking of a camper. Contact Larry Jacobsen at Town & Country Realty, Tomahawk, WI 800-473-1029.
2. Thirty-eight acres on Rice Lake in southeast Marathon County. Rice Lake is a pristine lake with no development. There is excellent road access to the meadow. No building can be constructed on the property, but there is a power stub and a camper can be parked temporarily. Contact Todd Reilly at Coldwell Banker, Stevens Point, 715-340-8345.
3. Forty acres in Adams County along SR21. Excellent hunting property. Much of the land is wet meadow with nice oak-wooded high ground. Easy access. Contact Todd Reilly at the above number.
4. Two-hundred sixty-three acres in Adams County off a secondary road with easy year-round access. Property is all wooded with a few small wet meadows. Good woods roads throughout. Contact Todd Reilly at the above number.



Starpoint

Photo by Lora Hagen



Mill Creek

Photo by Anne Graham

MILL CREEK WATERSHED INITIATIVE

Using some residual funds from our LEAP Grant, we teamed with Friends of the Mill Creek Watershed to inform landowners how conservation easements could assist in their mission to protect and enhance Mill Creek in western Portage County. A newspaper layout was prepared with photos and brief articles about the watershed, NCCT, conservation easements, and how water quality as well as recreational use of a stream is enhanced by protection of surrounding land, as well as the agenda for their annual meeting. The brochure was sent to over 900 property owners in the watershed, which stretches from Marshfield to the Wisconsin River between Wisconsin Rapids and Plover. The meeting was held at the Big Eau Pleine town hall on March 4, where we presented a brief program about NCCT and the importance of conservation easements for watershed protection. This watershed approach will be the primary way NCCT establishes priorities for land conservation.

“Believe one who knows; you will find something greater in woods than in books. Trees and stones will teach you that which you can never learn from masters.”

- St. Bernard de Clairvaux

MEET OUR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The NCCT Board is pleased to announce that Elizabeth (Betsy) A. Kerlin has accepted our offer to become the next Executive Director, beginning May 6. Betsy follows Jo Ellen Seiser, who is retiring after 14 years of association with NCCT in a variety of capacities. Betsy is currently Senior Grants and Contracts Administrator at North Kentucky University. She previously was Environmental Educator and Grant Consultant for the Ohio River Foundation. Following completion of her M.S. in Forestry from Pennsylvania State University, Betsy became Conservation Coordinator for the Land Conservancy of Adams County (Pa), where

she was the only full-time employee and responsible for easements, fee land management, and monitoring, as well as principle public relations and fund-raising coordinator. She was very successful in raising money through gifts and grants for several major projects. Betsy resigned from the Adam County position when her husband, Steve, got a faculty appointment at Northern Kentucky. Steve recently received an appointment at UW-Stevens Point, which opened the opportunity for Betsy to apply with NCCT and get back into the kind of work she most enjoys—land conservation. We are very excited to have the talent and experience that Betsy brings to central Wisconsin.

SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR SUMMER GATHERING!

Saturday, 24 August, at the residence and easement of Jack Scholz, 2804 N. 97th St., Wausau, Wisconsin.

Hike through beautiful oldgrowth hemlock and hardwoods along Prohl Creek, meet Betsy Kerlin, our new Executive Director, and share a potluck lunch with friends of NCCT.

Details will be mailed a couple of weeks before the event.



NCCT MEMBERSHIP

Yes! I want to join or renew my membership

Individual \$25 ___ Key Donor \$100 ___ Protector \$500 ___

Preserver \$50 ___ Sustainer \$250 ___ Trustee \$1000 ___

\$ _____ Special donation as a tribute for _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/zip _____

Email _____

MC Visa _____ Exp Date: _____

Donations are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.

Make check payable to NCCT, and mail to: NCCT:

PO Box 124, Stevens Point WI 54481-0124



NORTH CENTRAL CONSERVANCY TRUST
PO BOX 124 STEVENS POINT WI 54481-0124
www.ncctwi.org info@ncctwi.org

Board of Directors

Alan Haney, President
Aaron Thompson, Vice-President
Kerry Brimmer, Secretary
Jan Seiler, Treasurer

Lauren Ebbecke
Reesa Evans
John Houghton
H.B. Pomeroy
David Worth

Active Emeritus Directors

Robert Freckmann
D. Joe Freeman
Mary Grossnickle
Tuck Mallery

Executive Director

Jo Ellen Seiser

Graphic Design

Lora Hagen



NORTH CENTRAL CONSERVANCY TRUST
PO Box 124
Stevens Point WI 54481-0124
www.ncctwi.org

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 19
Stevens Point, Wisconsin

In this issue: Protecting Watersheds
Jo Ellen Seiser Retirement
Elizabeth A. Kerlin Appointed ED
Three New Easements
Watershed Initiative

Working to protect, worthy scenic, working lands and environmental resources for the benefit of the people of central Wisconsin.