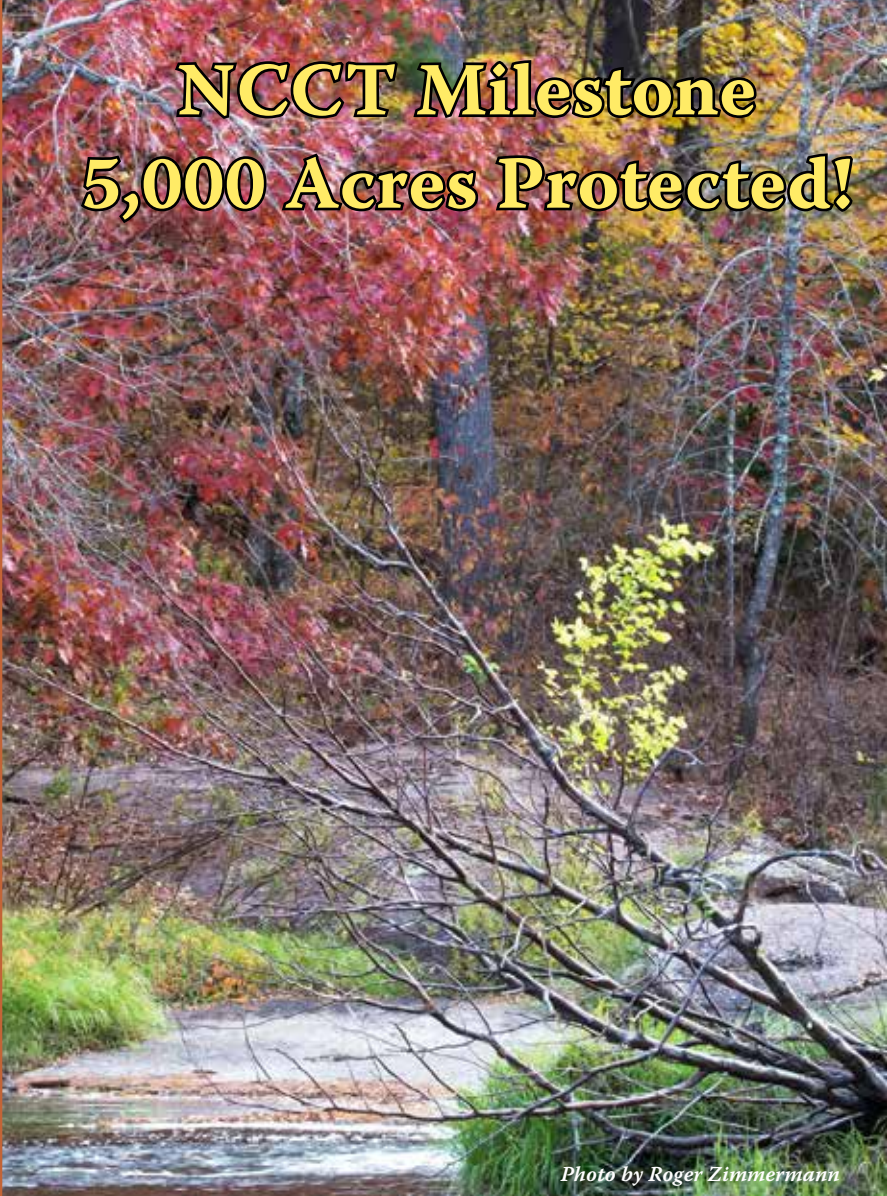


# NCCT Milestone 5,000 Acres Protected!

North Central Conservancy Trust  
Newsletter Vol. 22 No. 2 Autumn 2023



*Photo by Roger Zimmermann*

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*By Jill Falstad*

Hello, and happy fall to everyone! I am honored to begin my term as the new board president. I have been on the board for three years serving as a member, then as vice-president. Prior to my retirement, I served the public through a career in the legal profession in Marathon County. My interest in serving now shifts to volunteering with NCCT to preserve the natural heritage of Central Wisconsin through the protection of land.



This is an exciting time to be part of NCCT and the community of landowners protecting properties with beautiful rural landscapes including wetlands, shorelines, prairies, forests, and even habitats critical to the survival of endangered species! We recently reached an amazing milestone in the nearly 30-year history of this organization when we signed a conservation easement on David and Barbara Barker's 240-acre property, putting us at a total of over 5,000 acres protected in Central Wisconsin. The Barker property is special because the family ownership dates to the 1850s. It consists of some agricultural land and over 200 acres of forest that will be protected in perpetuity thanks to the generosity of the Barker family.

And speaking of generosity and support, our recent Annual Dinner was truly a success. Not only did we have a great turnout, we were captivated by the excellent presentation of Craig Thompson of the Wisconsin DNR Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation. Craig spoke of critical migration routes and birds in North and South America, and included our spaces right here in Central Wisconsin, such as NCCT's island near Bukolt Park and the Rice Lake property, that preserve critical habitat for migrating birds as well as local bird populations. To top it off, the event had one of the top financial outcomes ever for NCCT, again, thanks to our generous and committed supporters!

As we head into the holiday season, please know that we are thankful for your generosity and support over this past year that helped us reach an amazing milestone of 5,000 acres of land protected in 29 years! We still have much work to do with several more projects underway. With your continued support, these special places will be protected as well.

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*By Chris Radford*

First and foremost, let's all give a big round of applause to David and Barbara Barker for permanently protecting their 240-acre property in Portage County with a conservation easement! Thank you for this incredible gift; we welcome you to NCCT's family of conservation easement donors.



There are so many things to be thankful for as we look towards the end of another exciting year at NCCT. We have continued our ongoing pursuit of high-quality land-protection projects, as well as accreditation through the Land Trust Alliance, we now own four properties that are open to the public, membership and support are at an all-time high, new interest in land protection continues to grow, and possibly the most wonderful news of all, we have permanently protected over 5,000 acres!

Some of you have been with NCCT since the organization's inception in 1994, and for those of you who are just joining the organization, we welcome you! For the last 29 years, all of you have been a part of NCCT's momentous achievements, and I am always proud to let folks know that NCCT started as an all-volunteer organization and is still largely driven by dedicated volunteers, landowners, and supporters. It is because of the generosity and hard work from all of you that we can collectively reach such incredible milestones and accomplishments, offering lasting generational benefits to our environment and all the plants, animals, and communities that benefit from these incredibly important endeavors.

As you read through this issue of NCCT's newsletter, please remember that these are just some of the wonderful things we chose to highlight; there is plenty more happening each day and it's all thanks to your dedication and support. As we look forward to a big year in 2024, please consider NCCT in your year-end giving plans if you are able so we can keep this positive momentum going!

Thank you everyone! Happy Holidays!



## NCCT MILESTONE: 5,000 ACRES PROTECTED!

*By Becky Wadleigh, Outreach & Development Coordinator*

The passion that built NCCT began in Wausau in 1994 when our founders, Mary Clare and D. J. Freeman, recruited the help of their conservation-minded neighbor, Jane Raymond-Wood, to protect their forested property from the construction of a municipal sewer line. In 1996, the group grew and officially formed the North Central Conservancy Trust, a non-profit organization that could hold conservation easements. Subsequently, the Freemans protected their 41-acre property with an easement held by an outside organization, and donated it to NCCT.

In the meantime, a group of like-minded individuals had been meeting in Portage County to explore the idea of forming a land trust. With help from Gathering Waters Conservancy, the Portage County group joined NCCT in August 1999, and NCCT as you know it held their first annual meeting in November!

While the Freemans' property was held by NCCT for a time, the newly formed organization wouldn't complete its first conservation easement until 2000, when Luigi Mumford and her late husband, Manly, decided to protect their 160-acre property in Marathon County. Extraordinarily, Luigi donated this beloved property to NCCT nearly two decades later, and it became our first public nature preserve!

By 2013, NCCT had protected its 3,000<sup>th</sup> acre of land, and by spring of 2017, NCCT had worked with generous landowners to protect its 4,000<sup>th</sup> acre. At that time, staff and Board Members reflected on the elements key to completing projects and passing important conservation milestones: local action, volunteers, donors, and caring landowners.

Today, these four elements remain the driving force behind the momentum that helped NCCT reach its most recent milestone of 5,000 acres protected! We need local advocates to share the benefits of conservation, volunteers to help run the organization, members/donors to support our growing efforts, and caring landowners who want to benefit their communities in perpetuity by protecting their land.

On behalf of NCCT, thank you for all that you do to make this important work possible, steward these crucial efforts, and ensure that future generations get to share your joy in our environment! Over NCCT's 29-year history, you have helped to protect more than 5,000 acres of land and 10 miles of shoreline in north-central Wisconsin, build a robust body of volunteers, and grow a supportive membership. Now, on to the next 5,000 acres!

## DAVID & BARBARA BARKER CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROTECTS 240 ACRES IN PORTAGE COUNTY

*By Chris Radford, Executive Director*

On October 27, NCCT signed our latest conservation easement, forever protecting 240 acres of private land owned by David and Barbara Barker. The easement was generously donated by Mr. and Mrs. Barker and is located in southern Portage County. The signing of this easement puts NCCT well over the milestone of 5,000 acres of permanently protected lands in the organization's 29-year history!

Mr. Barker and his ancestors have owned the now protected property since the 1850s. It consists of over 200 acres of forest and 35 acres of farmland. The forest consists mostly of oak, maple, aspen, and pine, and contains relatively few invasive species making for excellent wildlife and forest habitat. The property is mainly surrounded by large scale agriculture operations, and the high-quality forest provides a much-needed habitat refuge for local plants, animals, and migratory wildlife.

Conservation easement projects like this are central to NCCT's mission to conserve the natural heritage of Central Wisconsin through the protection of land. We couldn't be more grateful for the Barker's gift, along with the other generous landowners and volunteers who helped NCCT surpass 5,000 acres of permanently protected lands!

NCCT's President Jill Falstad adds, "the Barkers' property is unique in that it has been owned by the family for close to 170 years. A portion was converted to farmland, like most of the surrounding properties. However, over 200 acres were left as intact forest with beautiful trees, including oak and maple. This landscape stands out in the area for the beauty it provides and for the wildlife it supports. We appreciate the Barkers' vision for keeping this impressive forest preserved for centuries to come."

Thank you to the Barkers, and welcome to NCCT!



*L-R: Kay Meyer, Barbara Barker, Bob Freckmann, David Barker, Jill Falstad, Chris Radford, Anna Haines, Nicole Tennies*

## WELCOME TO THE TEAM, NICOLE!

*By Nicole Tennies, Land Protection Assistant Intern*

Hello! My name is Nicole Tennies, and I have joined the NCCT team as Land Protection Assistant for an internship from August through December of 2023. I am from Campbellsport, Wisconsin, and am a senior currently studying Natural Resource Planning at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, with a minor in Sustainable Energy and a Professional GIS Certificate. I will graduate in December, 2023. I enjoy hiking, working out, and spending time with my friends in my free time. I am grateful to be part of a team that is protecting the natural environment of Central Wisconsin, which I have grown to love over the past three years living in Stevens Point. I am so appreciative of the chance to collaborate with and gain knowledge from individuals who share a profound dedication to preserving our land for the benefit of future generations.



During my semester with North Central Conservancy Trust, I have participated in a diverse array of projects and gained valuable hands-on experience. I have engaged in a wide range of novel experiences, including involvement in outreach events, property monitoring, and participation in board- and committee meetings. My time with the organization so far has been impactful, marked by a series of engaging and educational opportunities. Throughout my time at NCCT, I have not only developed professional skills but also fostered a deep connection to the mission of the land trust. My experiences have enriched my understanding of the vital role that non-profits like NCCT play in preserving our natural heritage. This internship has undoubtedly left an indelible mark on me, equipping me with both the knowledge and passion to continue advocating for the protection of our natural landscapes.



## STEWARDSHIP DEPARTMENT UPDATES

*By Nicole Tennies*

With big help from our growing group of volunteers and partners, NCCT held several successful invasive species workdays this year!

- 2 spring workdays at our property north of Bukolt Park with Pacelli Catholic Middle School and NCCT volunteers to pull garlic mustard and buckthorn.



- 1 summer workday at Suszko Ridge in Waushara County with NCCT volunteers to pull spotted knapweed.

- 1 fall workday on Bukolt Island with UWSP's Women in Natural Resources (WiNR) and Golden Sands RC&D to treat buckthorn. Read more about it below!

On October 21, a workday took place at NCCT's Bukolt Island property to remove invasive buckthorn. Buckthorn poses a threat by outcompeting native vegetation. NCCT worked with UWSP's WiNR, Jacob Fluor from Golden Sands RC&D, and volunteer Scott Rifleman, who ensured smooth transportation to



and from the island using his personal boat. WiNR volunteers learned about the mission of land trusts, the history of Bukolt Island, invasive species control, and buckthorn treatment and removal with the broader goal of preserving native plants. The invasive buckthorn removal day on Bukolt Island showcased the outcomes that are achievable when individuals and organizations work together towards a goal. These committed groups emphasized the impact of community cooperation in environmental conservation!

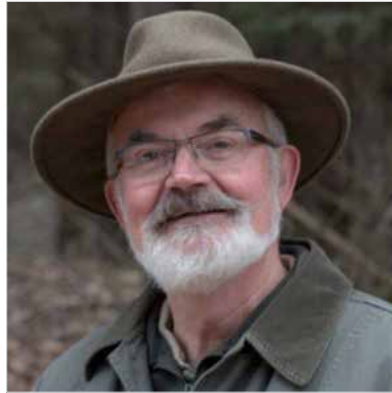
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## BOARD TRANSITIONS

### *Kerry Brimmer, Long-time Board Member Stepping Down:*

Most recently serving as NCCT's secretary, Kerry Brimmer has stepped down from the board. With twelve years of prior NCCT board service already under his belt, Kerry rejoined the board in 2019, completing two additional terms that ended in October of this year. Sixteen years of board service! Wow! Kerry has been a loyal supporter of NCCT since the organization began. He has an unwavering passion for land



protection, and continually advocates for the importance of natural-resource protection in Wisconsin. He is regularly seeking creative avenues for NCCT to continue to be financially and organizationally strong so that we are well positioned to steward protected lands and pursue new land protection projects in perpetuity. Over the years, Kerry has been very active on the board, Properties Committee, Stewardship Committee, and with land protection and stewardship initiatives. He has been, and will continue to be, an instrumental part of NCCT's team as he will continue to serve as chair of the Properties Committee. Thank you, Kerry, for your dedicated service to NCCT and conservation in central Wisconsin!

### **NCCT WELCOMES THREE NEW BOARD MEMBERS!**

#### *Eric Olson:*

Eric Olson is a community planner and natural-resource specialist who has dedicated his life to public service. In addition to researching and teaching urban and regional planning, he has volunteered for numerous community-development efforts at the local, regional, and state levels. His current role is a statewide outreach position where he works with hundreds of lakes and watershed organizations to assist them in carrying out the Wisconsin Lakes Partnership ideal: that the state and thousands of landowners can collaboratively care for our water inheritance. This includes planning for and managing aquatic invasive species, as well as developing watershed



management strategies that reinforce natural ways to limit pollution coming into lakes. Eric has a BS in urban forestry from the University of Minnesota, and a master's degree in urban and regional planning from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

#### *Austin Holland:*

Austin Holland is an assistant professor at the College of Natural Resources and an extension specialist at the Center for Land Use Education at UW-Stevens Point. He received his Ph.D. from the Department of Geographical & Sustainability Sciences at the University of Iowa in 2022. Austin's research and teaching interests include conservation governance and policy, private-land management, sustainable landscapes, ecosystem services, and stakeholder perceptions. His research makes use of both qualitative social-science methods and geospatial analysis to better understand how governance/policy impacts the landscape as well as stakeholders' perceptions of those policies, services, and landscapes. His previous work has examined federal agricultural policy, local ecological restoration, and governance of freshwater systems. Current projects examine climate change's impacts on tourism and collaborations on private land conservation.



#### *Jeremy Solin:*

Jeremy Solin is an educator, community organizer, gardener, woods-wanderer, father, husband, and entrepreneur. He has worked in the environmental and sustainability education fields for the past 20 years. Jeremy and his wife, Abi, co-own Tapped Maple Syrup, where they craft infused, barrel-aged, and pure maple syrups from sustainable forests in northern Wisconsin. Professionally, Jeremy works for UW-Madison Division of Extension where he is the Area Extension Director in Portage, Wood, Marathon, and Clark Counties. He has a bachelor's degree in water resources (UW-Stevens Point), a master's degree in environmental education (University of Minnesota, Duluth) and a doctorate degree in sustainability education (Prescott College).



## UPDATE FROM THE OUTREACH DEPARTMENT

By Becky Wadleigh, Outreach & Development Coordinator

2023 has been a remarkable year for NCCT's outreach and development efforts! Our events, volunteer days, and field trips have been enjoyed and well-attended, and our fundraising efforts have been strong. We started the year in the spirit of partnership with a winter hike co-led by the Ice Age Trail Alliance's Central Moraines Volunteer Chapter and NCCT at IATA's Rice Lake Preserve in Marathon County.

In the spring, we presented a "Tap Talk" at Central Waters Brewing Co. in Amherst about NCCT, conservation easements, and the importance of land conservation in central Wisconsin. After it warmed up, we held two productive invasive species workdays at our property north of Bukolt Park with lots of new volunteers!

This summer we attended and tabled at a lot of great events to try and reach new landowners and members. In August, our volunteers worked through extreme heat to pull spotted knapweed at Suszko Ridge in Waushara County to get ready for a fantastic event that we held later in the month as part of Land Trust Days. We had new members, landowners, and neighbors in attendance! Suszko Ridge was generously donated to NCCT in 2021 by Harry and Lisa Suszko, who attended the event all the way from South Carolina!



With your help, we held an incredible Annual Harvest Dinner this fall! We also celebrated a new partnership with the Wonderful Water Run in Stevens Point, which selected NCCT to be the beneficiary of the event resulting in an incredibly generous donation to the organization! In late October, we held an educational invasive species workday on Bukolt Island with UWSP's Women in Natural Resources student organization and our partners from Golden Sands RC&D, and in November we wrapped up our stewardship year just as we started it: controlling buckthorn at our property north of Bukolt Park with our fantastic volunteers.

Many thanks to the fantastic members, supporters, volunteers, and partners who made 2023 a great year for NCCT! You make this work possible, and so enjoyable too!

## ANNUAL FUND UPDATES

### Schlecht Family Foundation Grant



In May, the Schlecht Family Foundation awarded NCCT a \$75,000 Capacity Building Grant to support organizational growth and impact from 2023 through 2025 and beyond. The grant is being administered through the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin (CFNCWI). The Schlecht Family Foundation was founded by Steve and Marianne Schlecht, and is a family philanthropy making investments in people and ideas that transform and strengthen our communities in Dane County and rural Wisconsin. Learn more about the foundation at [schlechtfamilyfoundation.org](http://schlechtfamilyfoundation.org). NCCT would like to sincerely thank the Schlecht Family Foundation Board of Directors for this opportunity! This investment in our organization will provide lasting benefits to the communities we serve and to our environment.

### Sponsor Highlight: Wonderful Water Run

The Wonderful Water Run (WWR) in Stevens Point began in 2020, and their goal is to gather community and support the protection of Central Wisconsin's groundwater—a mission we can stand behind! For their third annual event, the WWR Board of Directors selected NCCT to receive a direct contribution from the race's proceeds in support of our conservation-based mission. The WWR Board recently informed NCCT we would be receiving a donation of \$5,000, making their gift one of the most significant sponsorships in our organization's history! We can't thank the Wonderful Water Run Board, volunteers, and runners enough for this generous and impactful gift!





## 2023 HARVEST DINNER, FRIEND-RAISER, AND FUNDRAISER

By Becky Wadleigh, Outreach & Development Coordinator



On September 28, NCCT hosted its Annual Harvest Dinner, Friend-raiser, and Fundraiser celebration at the Bukolt Park Lodge in Stevens Point. 140 people attended, including NCCT members, volunteers, conservation-easement landowners, partners, sponsors, UWSP students, and new friends of the organization! During

the program, Executive Director, Chris Radford, shared updates about the organization before presenting board treasurer and longtime volunteer, Marv Noltze, with the 2023 Distinguished Service Award.

The Keynote Presentation at this year's event was titled, "Putting the Kibosh on Extinction—the Power of Birds," and was delivered by Craig Thompson. Craig is the Chief of Program Integration for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation, and has a personal and professional passion for the conservation of migratory birds. NCCT proudly hosted this event in conjunction with the sixth annual Wisconsin Land Trust Days celebration.



NCCT's Board of Directors and staff would like to extend a sincere thank-you to everyone who attended and made the 2023 Annual Harvest Dinner a big success! Special thanks to our Major Sponsor, Great Northern Distilling, and all the generous businesses and individuals who also sponsored the event and donated items to the silent auction and raffle. Thank you to the City of Stevens Point Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department for donating the use of the Bukolt Park Lodge! Our most important annual event wouldn't be possible without the year-round help of NCCT's dedicated volunteers, thank YOU!

Keep an eye out for a Save the Date for NCCT's 2024 Annual Harvest Dinner in celebration of our 30<sup>th</sup> year and 5,000-acre milestone! It will be one to remember.

Thank You to Our Sponsors!

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Autumn 2023

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## NCCT ISLAND BIRD-BANDING UPDATE

*By Susan and Joy Schuller*

For the second year, mother and daughter scientists continued banding birds on the little island near Bukolt Park where NCCT's restoration work is taking place. From April 26 to May 29, the duo kayaked to the island to drop mist nets (special nets used for studying birds) to band birds during peak spring migration. They are studying avian use of the island for possible breeding or as a stopover site during spring migration. They use bird-banding techniques along with Cornell's eBird app for documenting birds observed and to gather data.

This year, they banded for a total of 12 days, and captured 53 birds. Eight captures were birds that had already been banded. When looking at the data, all recaptured birds were previously banded on the island earlier in the season or last year. Three species (American Robin, Gray Catbird, and Black-capped Chickadee) recaptured this year were banded on the island last year (2022). This is where data gets exciting! These birds made it through a full year and continue to use the island. Since American Robins and Gray Catbirds migrate, it was exciting to learn they returned to the island the next year. The Black-capped Chickadee could be a resident bird since this species does not migrate.

There were 45 new individual birds banded. Species included: American Goldfinch, American Robin, Baltimore Oriole, Black-capped Chickadee, Blue Jay, \*Chipping Sparrow, Common Grackle, Gray Catbird, Mourning Dove, \*Nashville Warbler, Song Sparrow, \*Warbling Vireo, White-breasted Nuthatch, Yellow Warbler, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. (\*New in 2023)

### ***About the scientists:***

Susan and Joy Schuller have been volunteering with master bird-bander, Bob Welch, at the Waupaca Biological Field Station for the last 10 years. Susan holds a bird-banding subpermit under Mr. Welch. Joy Schuller is 12 years old, and a 7th-grader at PJ Jacobs. Joy released her first bird when she was 2! The true gift was apparent even at that young age. Today she has an impressive resumé of banding birds. Naturally, her dream is to become an ornithologist. Some may say she already is.



Susan and Joy want to acknowledge and thank the volunteers from Aldo Leopold Audubon Society and the UWSP students who help with this study. This research is expected to continue in spring 2024.

## 2003 DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENT MARV NOLTZE

We are honored to recognize board member and longtime volunteer, Marv Noltze, as the 2023 Distinguished Service Award recipient! The Distinguished Service Award recognizes individuals for their outstanding contributions and volunteer service with NCCT—an honor most fitting for Marv, who began volunteering in 2006!



Marv serves as board treasurer, chair of the Public Relations (PR) Committee, and is on both the Executive and Finances committees. He helped update policies for our Land Trust Alliance Accreditation application process, staffed tables for NCCT at events, searches and applies for grants, does organizational research, and much more!

Even when he first began volunteering with NCCT, Marv was helping with a wide variety of activities including grant-writing, database management, conservation easement monitoring, and also served on the Properties Committee, PR Committee, and as secretary of the board. Marv was also instrumental in the founding of the Sheboygan Area Land Trust (now Glacial Lakes Conservancy) when he lived in southeastern Wisconsin!

Marv works as the Senior Institutional Planner for the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness at UWSP. He shares, "I enjoy working with NCCT because there is good synergy with everyone in the land trust community. It is very satisfying to work towards something important and lasting such as land protection."

About Marv, Executive Director Chris Radford said, "Marv has been an integral part of our board, committees, and of NCCT. We thank him sincerely for everything he has done for this organization, our community, and the environment. I congratulate him wholeheartedly as a recipient of this well-deserved honor and on joining our other distinguished service honorees, an exemplary group of conservation heroes." Previous recipients include Joe Freeman, Dave Hillier, Tuck Mallery, Bob Freckmann, Kerry Brimmer, Alan Haney, David Worth, Doug Henderson, and David James.

Marv, we truly thank you for all that you do!



## MAKE A YEAR-END DONATION & RECEIVE COMMEMORATIVE STICKER!



Between Giving Tuesday (Nov. 28) and Dec. 31, we'll send you the 5,000 acres protected commemorative sticker as thanks for becoming a member or making a year-end donation!

*NCCT's mission wouldn't be possible without your support.*

### GIVE NOW:

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# THANK YOU!



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## WOMEN INSPIRING WOMEN IN CONSERVATION

*By Becky Wadleigh, Outreach & Development Coordinator*

This past August, Portage County conservation-easement landowner, Christine Klessig, welcomed more than two dozen visitors to her property as part of a Summer Field Day with the Wisconsin Women in Conservation (WiWiC). WiWiC is a state-wide collaborative effort led by the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute in partnership with the Wisconsin Farmers Union and others to bring together Wisconsin women landowners to learn about conservation practices, resources, and funding opportunities.



*Photo by WiWiC*



Christine works with WiWiC as a Conservation Coach, and led a tour of her mature conservation property while discussing the conservation practices she and her late husband, Lowell, have implemented since purchasing the property in 1979, including the donation of a conservation easement to NCCT in the early 2000s. Christine is an enthusiastic advocate for this program, which observes that women conservationists have historically been underserved by conservation agencies and underrepresented in media and historical content. Of the program, Christine says, “WiWiC is



a network of women learning how to write love letters to the land. This initiative connects them with resources to respect, nurture, protect, and delight in their properties. Good stewardship is a lasting legacy for the future.”



**Best wishes for a safe and happy holiday season from NCCT!**

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Special thanks to Lora Hagen, Susan and Joy Schuller, and Spectra Print for their significant contributions to this newsletter.





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*NCCCT's mission is to conserve the natural heritage of Central Wisconsin through the protection of land.*