



# Celebrating 30 Years of Land Protection in Central Wisconsin!

*Autumn at the Mumford Preserve.*

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT WHAT WILL THE NEXT 30 YEARS BRING?

*By Jill Falstad*

This year we have been celebrating the 30-year anniversary of the founding of North Central Conservancy Trust. We are grateful to all the community members who stepped up to form this amazing nonprofit organization and thankful to all the landowners, volunteers, and partner organizations who helped solidify a strong foundation, allowing NCCT to grow and expand our impact.



So, what will the next 30 years bring? While we recognize our history, we continue to plan, think and strategize on our best path forward. This past year NCCT achieved National Accreditation so the public can be assured the organization will continue to operate with high ethical conduct, sound financial practices, responsible governance, and lasting stewardship practices.

To date, NCCT has worked with over 60 landowners in our 8-county service area and has protected over 5,200 acres of land. We own four properties, including Suszko Ridge, the Mumford Preserve, the Bukolt Park area properties, and our office property in Whiting. We have a responsibility to steward these properties and monitor all private lands for which we hold easements. This takes a great deal of organization, time, and effort from our staff, board, volunteers, and members! We could not do this important work without your support, thank you!

NCCT currently has a record number of active projects under consideration. We could not be more excited and hopeful for the opportunity to protect more amazing properties in central Wisconsin. This exciting growth is welcome and so important—we are passionate about protecting land and vital habitats today...for tomorrow—but how do we manage and prioritize these projects? We want to ensure we are doing it right.

Last April NCCT's Board of Directors held our annual retreat, where we formed four subcommittees to work on the organization's 2025-29 strategic plan. Each team focused on one of NCCT's four primary goals: protect the land, stewardship, build a strong organization, and outreach and development. This process has included countless hours of brainstorming, analysis, and research into best practices and what other land trusts are doing. *Note:* We are open to new ideas and thoughts for improvement, so

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don't hesitate to reach out if you have something to share! Once this plan is finalized, we will post it on our website so it is available to read.

Naturally, when NCCT acquires new properties and easements, we need more volunteers and staff to support, maintain, and monitor them. That means the need for more money and resources too! As a nonprofit, NCCT relies on donations, memberships, sponsorships, and grants to support our mission.

Looking to the future, we will continue to pursue new grant opportunities and ways to engage more members and volunteers. To help build our membership program, consider a gift membership to the conservationists in your life, and be sure to renew your membership annually! And stay tuned as we formalize our volunteer program in 2025 with a new volunteer coordinator.



*View from the shoreline of an undeveloped lake that NCCT staff and board visited.*

important habitats. This summer, we walked a property that includes 40 acres of intact forest. As we hiked further, we entered a bog with squishy wet terrain—our feet sinking quite far. No one lost a boot! As we continued, we came upon a small opening on the shoreline of a pristine, undeveloped lake. WOW! The shoreline included a mix of large trees, and the sky and water were filled with birds and insects. Some fish and frogs also let us know they lived there too.

It is moments like these that truly matter. This is why our organization exists and why we are so grateful to work with landowners who want to forever protect these important places. We appreciate all of you! Let's keep this important work moving FORWARD.

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Let me leave you with some parting thoughts. I mentioned earlier that we have a lot of land protection opportunities in the works. One of the benefits of volunteering with NCCT is that we have the opportunity to walk some amazing properties in central Wisconsin, with owners who are excited to share their vision to forever protect



*Drone shot of the undeveloped lake NCCT is working to protect.*

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Chris Radford

People sometimes ask me, “What’s the best thing about working with NCCT?” Well, the answer is simple, there are TWO best things! The first is having the opportunity to help permanently protect land and natural resources for future generations. The second is working with so many interesting, fun, and motivated people who truly care about conservation and our community. We are all connected through this common mission to protect land, and it’s awesome.

In September, I attended the national land trust conference in Providence, Rhode Island, and I am very thankful for this opportunity. The conference, called Rally, is hosted by the Land Trust Alliance and it’s held in a different city every year. This was the first time NCCT has been able to send someone, and the event was overwhelmingly educational and inspiring. Mornings of the multi-day event started off with powerful presentations from leaders of the Narragansett Indian Tribe. After the opening sessions, workshops and presentations were held throughout each day. I attended incredibly informative sessions about conservation easement document drafting, property stewardship, organizational policy, and I even went to a workshop Saturday morning at 7 am to learn about insurance for land trusts! Cool!

During a morning plenary session with all attendees of the conference present, NCCT was recognized for first-time accreditation along with the ten other land trusts nationwide that also achieved this goal in 2024. Truly a proud moment for all of us to celebrate!



Chris & Melissa Kalvestrand at Rally 2024.

One of the most inspiring takeaways from the conference that I wanted to share with all of you is that there were over 2,300 attendees representing hundreds of land trusts from across the country. Folks just like us, all connecting and sharing ideas to make our land trusts even stronger. During her presentation, Land Trust Alliance interim Director, Jennifer Miller Herzog, described each land trust nationwide as shining points of light, beaming out across the country. Please know that YOU are what makes NCCT’s light shine so bright, and the world is a better place because of your interest, time, talents, and support for this wonderful organization. I look forward to another great year of land protection and good times together. Thank you!

# 30 YEARS OF NCCT



**1994**  
D.J. and Mary Clare Freeman placed a conservation easement on their Weston area property to protect it from being crossed by a municipal sewer line, and began NCCT!



**2000**  
Manly and Luigi Mumford donated a conservation easement to protect their 160-acre property in Marathon County, becoming NCCT’s first official conservation easement on the books!



**2013**  
NCCT moved into its first office out of The Worth Company thanks to the generosity of supporter, David Worth, and also hired its first full-time executive director, Betsy Kerlin.



**2020**  
The Ranger Station became NCCT’s first standalone office space after it was updated and renovated by dedicated volunteers with support from members and local businesses.

**5,230 acres protected!**

0 acres protected



**1999**  
NCCT began meeting with a Stevens Point based group that was working with Gathering Waters to form a land trust to serve central Wisconsin. They officially merged that summer!



**2007**  
NCCT started down a new path and hired Jo Seiser as its first paid, part-time executive director. Jo retired in 2013, at which point NCCT had protected over 3,000 acres of land!



**2019**  
Under the leadership of Janet Smith, NCCT gained its first 3 properties: The Mumford Preserve, the Bukolt Park-area properties, and the former DNR Ranger Station property in Whiting.



**2024**  
Under the leadership of Chris Radford, NCCT earned National Accreditation status from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, and celebrated 30 years of protecting land in north central WI!

## STUDENT INTERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

*By Riley Hubanks, Land Protection Assistant Intern*

Hello, my name is Riley Hubanks! I joined the NCCT team as Land Protection Assistant Intern for the fall 2024 semester. I grew up in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, where I loved living in the Driftless Area and all the outdoor recreational opportunities it offers. I am currently enjoying my senior year at UWSP. I am majoring in Natural Resource Planning, minoring in Soil Science, and obtaining a certificate for Energy Policy along with Climate Change. I hope to have a career helping people manage their land, while also being an advocate for how we can better our environment.



I am very eager to make new connections and gain hands-on experience in the world of land conservation while working for NCCT. My goal in life is to be happy and make a difference in the world, no matter how small. After graduating from UW-Stevens Point, I hope to stay in the Midwest, working in land conservation. When I'm not busy with academics or working, I enjoy going for bike rides, playing board games, and cooking.

During my semester with NCCT, I have been fortunate enough to work on a few projects. The first major event was the Annual Harvest Dinner. This took a lot of preparation and planning, and it couldn't have happened without leadership from Chris and Becky, and help from our board members, committee members, and volunteers! I was also able to complete three annual monitoring visits at conservation easements, something I was very excited to do, and they did not disappoint! Additionally, I created a mailing list of new potential conservation easement properties within the Central Sand Plains Ecological Landscape boundary. During all this time, I've learned how to use new land-conservation software, something I know will be crucial in my future career. I have also had the pleasure of meeting many NCCT members, volunteers, and conservation easement landowners! I love hearing their stories and how passionate they are about their land and conservation. I have already gained more passion for land conservation and I'm eager to continue learning from all that NCCT accomplishes the rest of my time here!

## NCCT WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBER:

**PAT MCMURTRIE**

NCCT is excited to welcome dedicated volunteer, Pat McMurtrie, to our Board of Directors! Pat has served on NCCT's Public Relations Committee since summer 2021, and on the NCCT Fundraising Action Team since November 2022.



Pat joined Gathering Waters in 2018 as its first Communications Specialist. She served in this role for two years before transitioning to the development team as the Annual Giving & Outreach Manager. Before joining Gathering Waters, Pat worked as a freelance marketing-consultant and content-writer for the healthcare industry and co-owned a full-service advertising and marketing agency in Wausau. During the agency's 15-year history, Pat acted as the customer-relationship director and business manager, in addition to being the copywriter and editor. She developed marketing plans and managed customer projects, acquiring a unique understanding of business and customer service as she developed long-term relationships with her clients.

Pat is currently studying for the Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) exam and hopes to become credentialed in 2025. Pat has also studied Business Administration at UW Platteville. Her favorite protected place in Wisconsin is the Door County shoreline. It reminds her of her hometown near Acadia National Park in Bar Harbor, Maine. Pat enjoys spending time with family, road trips, hiking, snowshoeing, and capturing unique photos.



## UPDATE FROM THE OUTREACH DEPARTMENT

*By Becky Wadleigh*

This August marked my third year on staff with NCCT as Outreach & Development Coordinator. I was first introduced to NCCT in 2014 as an undergraduate land use-planning student. When I returned to UWSP for graduate school in 2016, I began volunteering with NCCT more actively as a monitoring volunteer and as secretary for the Properties Committee. It has been exciting to see NCCT grow over the past 10 years!



Not only has the organization's capacity grown, but also, our "place" in the community. In many ways, it seems like conservation is becoming less of a niche interest as we, as a community, build our understanding of the benefits that come from leaving natural places and their important functions be. It is energizing to see NCCT and the land-trust community continue to become more diverse, adapt our programming to remain relevant, respond to ongoing challenges, and strive to achieve conservation goals all the while. Thank you for being a part of it!

Speaking of goals, in the spring newsletter I discussed NCCT's goal to increase our annual household members by 15%, or 32 households. We started the year with 191, including nine new members. To date, we have 214 household members, including 24 new members! Only nine more until we reach our goal. YOU can help by sharing this newsletter with someone who you think will appreciate it, or by giving the gift of NCCT membership.

### PLANNED GIVING WITH NCCT

NCCT is taking steps to formalize the Planned Giving Program of our Annual Fund. If you are interested in leaving a legacy in central Wisconsin and helping to protect natural resources in the future, a planned gift may be right for you. Options include bequests, gifts or bargain sales of land, reserved life estates, will or estate plans, and more. If your legacy plans include NCCT or you have questions about how to include NCCT, we'd love to hear from you.

Do your legacy plans (estate plans, bequests, retirement, etc.) include North Central Conservancy Trust? Please let us know!  
Contact Chris Radford, Executive Director,  
edncct@gmail.com or call 715-344-1910.

## NCCT ANNUAL FUND UPDATES

### *Community Foundation of Central Wisconsin: Community Grant*

This spring, NCCT received a Community Grant from the Community Foundation of Central Wisconsin to install a small parking area at the Suszko Ridge Preserve in Waushara County. NCCT is grateful to our partners from the Community Foundation and the USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program for their instrumental support at Suszko Ridge!



*Staff and board members from NCCT, CFCWI, and USFWS gathered at Suszko Ridge.*

### *Schlecht Family Foundation Grant*



This is year two of three for our Capacity Building Grant from the Schlecht Family Foundation, administered through the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin (CFNCWI). Funds from this grant are helping NCCT expand our outreach programming and our capacity for land protection projects.

### *The 2024 Wonderful Water Run*

For the second year running NCCT was the primary beneficiary of the proceeds of the Wonderful Water Run (WWR) in Stevens Point! This year's event had more than 800 registered participants. The goal of the WWR is to gather community and support the protection of central Wisconsin's groundwater. Thank you very much to the WWR Board, volunteers, and athletes for your impactful support of NCCT's mission! NCCT volunteers and staff had a great time assisting athletes at mile 12 on the racecourse (pictured below left).



## 2024 HARVEST DINNER & 30<sup>TH</sup>-ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

In September, NCCT hosted our Annual Harvest Dinner, Friend-raiser, Fundraiser, and 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration at the Bukolt Park Lodge in Stevens Point. Around 135 members, volunteers, landowners, partners, sponsors, and students were in attendance. This event was proudly hosted in conjunction with the seventh annual Wisconsin Land Trust Days celebration.



NCCT Emeritus board members.

A presentation during the event told the story of NCCT's past, present, and future, and was delivered by current and former staff, volunteers, board members, and landowners. Speakers included Jill Falstad, board president;



2024 Harvest Dinner.

Jo Seiser, former board president and executive director; Bob Freckmann, early member and easement donor; Alan Haney, former board president and easement donor; Chris Radford, executive director; Becky Wadleigh, outreach & development coordinator;

Janet Smith, former executive director; Christine Klessig, easement donor; Kay Meyer, board vice president; Riley Hubanks, student intern; Morgan Goff, former student intern; and Mike Carlson, executive director of Gathering Waters.

Thank you to everyone who helped make the 2024 Annual Harvest Dinner a big success! Special thanks to our Major Sponsor, Great Northern Distilling, and to all the generous businesses and individuals who sponsored the event, student dinner tickets, and donated to the silent auction and raffle. Thank you to the City of Stevens Point Parks, Recreation, & 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!

### \$30,000 for 30 Years Fundraiser

With your help, a total of \$17,320 has been raised towards NCCT's \$30,000 for 30 Years fundraiser—more than halfway to our goal! Thank you to everyone who has supported this effort. To allow for more time to meet the goal, we've decided to extend the fundraiser through the end of the year!

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Thank You to Our Sponsors!

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## RECOGNIZING DR. ROBERT FRECKMANN

This summer, NCCT had the opportunity to join our partners and community members in honoring Dr. Robert “Bob” Freckmann, with Gathering Waters’ 2024 Harold “Bud” Jordahl Lifetime Achievement Award.

The award recognizes a committed conservation professional or volunteer for using their time, talents, and energy during their lifetime to support conservation and the protection of Wisconsin’s land, water, and wildlife. Bob was nominated by NCCT, and support for his nomination was widespread amongst his fellow volunteers, landowners, colleagues, and friends.

Recognition of Bob’s incredible contributions to conservation didn’t stop there—once the announcement was made that he was to receive the award, commendations for his work started rolling in. In addition to the award, Bob received a Legislative Citation from State Senator Patrick Testin and Representative Katrina Shankland, a special commendation from the City of Stevens Point for his decades of services on the City Parks Commission, and a Certificate of Commendation from the office of Governor Tony Evers.

An award ceremony was held for Bob in July at Schmeekle Reserve, with more than 100 guests in attendance. Speakers included Executive Director Chris Radford, UWSP Chancellor Thomas Gibson, City of Stevens Point Parks, Recreation, & Forestry Department Director Dan Kremer, Senator Patrick Testin, and Gathering Waters’ Executive Director Mike Carlson (pictured right).



In addition to his service with NCCT, Bob worked for nearly 55 years as a Biology professor at UWSP, where he helped to establish the Freckmann Herbarium, the second largest of its kind in the State. Bob has held leadership roles with the Aldo Leopold Audubon Society, Botanical Club of Wisconsin, Friends of Powers Bluff, Ice Age Trail Alliance, The Nature Conservancy, Wisconsin Wetlands Association, and many others. He continues to serve as a trip leader, member, and trusted advisor for countless conservation organizations locally and regionally, including NCCT! Most recently, Bob had a new grass species, *Dichanthelium freckmannii* (*Poaceae*), named after him by his colleague Richard LeBlond. Bob has also been selected as a 2025 inductee of the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame and the induction ceremony will take place this spring. Congratulations! To read more about Bob’s conservation legacy, go to: <https://bit.ly/48ardrA>

## 2024 STEWARDSHIP UPDATES

By Riley Hubanks

NCCT volunteers and our partners have been busy this year!

- In January, volunteer Kerry Brimmer and the spring intern, Morgan Goff, cut and cleared overgrown understory-vegetation at NCCT’s property north of Bukolt Park.



- In April, 30-plus volunteers gathered to celebrate Earth Day at NCCT’s property north of Bukolt Park by planting native shrubs, pulling garlic mustard, and picking up trash.

- In May, volunteers from NCCT and Prime W.A.T.E.R. Anglers helped to install the dock on Bukolt Island, also

known as Little Island.

- In July, NCCT volunteers and staff joined our partners from Golden Sands RC&D to control buckthorn on conservation easement landowner Nancy Stevenson’s property as part of a grant to control terrestrial invasive species in the area.



- In August, volunteers from IGNITE Young Professionals, a Portage County-based group, and NCCT controlled buckthorn on Bukolt Island.



- In September, the new parking area was installed at Suszko Ridge with support from a Community Grant from the Community Foundation of Central Wisconsin.

- In October, staff and volunteers removed the dock from Bukolt Island to prevent damage.

Plans for the rest of 2024 include working with UWSP’s Environmental and Conservation Planning Club to do fall buckthorn control at NCCT’s property north of Bukolt Park, and controlling oak and pine saplings that are growing in the prairie-restoration area at Suszko Ridge.

Special thanks to all our volunteers and partners for making an impactful difference in our community!

## FOREST HEALTH NEWS

### HETEROBASIDION ROOT DISEASE

By Riley Hubanks

Heterobasidion Root Disease (HRD), once called annosum root rot, is a disease that affects conifers in 30 Wisconsin counties. HRD has been found in all the counties in NCCT's service area, except Lincoln. It most commonly affects red and white pine plantations, but a lot of tree species can host HRD. This disease can be detrimental to conifer populations, as it can cause reduced height and diameter and thin foliage, which leads to mortality. There is no cure for this disease, only methods to treat and control, making the prevention of HDR very important.



*A thinning pine stand infected with HRD.*

Photo courtesy <https://bit.ly/3BSEmtk>

The most common way HRD spreads is when the fungus spores land on a freshly cut stump. As the HRD spores germinate, the fungus overtakes the stump and moves to the roots and soil. It can spread through the soil and by root contact between 3 and 6.5 feet per year. Spores can spread many miles by wind as well, which is how they can land on freshly cut tree stumps.

To identify if your pine stands have been infected with HRD, there are some signs to look for. At the base of dead or dying trees and stumps, white or tan fungus fruit bodies will appear on or just below the soil. These fruit bodies look like popped popcorn at a young age but turn into shelf-like structures as they mature. Standing trees will have a thinner diameter, reduced height, and a thinning of needles, or will be dead. The roots of dead trees can appear yellow and stringy. These symptoms occur between 3 and 8 years after a thinning has taken place and HRD has infected the area.



*HRD in the early "popcorn stage."*

Photo courtesy <https://bit.ly/3C6Qkzk>

To prevent HRD from entering a stand, treat stumps within 24 hours of being cut. This can decrease the chance HRD will be introduced into a stand. It is important to spray equipment down before and after usages because HRD can also spread by soil contamination.

- To learn more about HRD in Wisconsin, go to: <https://bit.ly/4eSLF2A>
- If you think your stand is infected, want to take preventative measures, or own land near an infected site, contact your local Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Forest Health Zone Specialist: <https://bit.ly/40ar05B>
- To read an in-depth guide to treating for HRD, go to: <https://bit.ly/3Yrt6wT>



*Mature HRD on the base of a red pine tree.*

Photo courtesy <https://bit.ly/3C9BIEM>

## WHY LEAVES CHANGE COLOR: IT'S ALL ABOUT ENERGY

*By Jeremy Solin, from the Tapped Maple Syrup blog*

It's been a beautiful fall in Wisconsin. The weather has been pleasant and the color has been fantastic, although it's always too short-lived. But why is it that this season of color even exists?



*Autumn at the Mumford Preserve.*

Leaves reveal color as much as they change color. The green color that we see throughout the summer is from chlorophyll in the leaves. Chlorophyll is the essential compound that captures sunlight during photosynthesis. Photosynthesis is the process that creates sugar/food for the tree (and most of the rest of life on Earth). Chlorophyll is a fragile compound continuously needing to be created by the tree (it's capturing sunlight after all, a high intensity job!). As the amount of sunlight decreases in the fall, the tree makes an energy decision: is it getting enough energy (food) from photosynthesis to continue to create chlorophyll for a decreasing amount of sunlight or does it make sense to save the energy and not make chlorophyll because not enough energy would be produced. While photosynthesis is happening, the tree also needs to create compounds that protect the leaves from insects and disease. Photosynthesis requires an energy investment from the trees. At the point that the tree doesn't get enough energy out of the process, it needs to stop investing energy or it risks its health.

At that tipping point of the tree ceasing the creation of chlorophyll, the leaves start to change color as chlorophyll breaks down and the yellows and oranges are revealed. These colors come from carotenoids that are always


in the leaves. They act like sunscreen for the leaves, protecting them from high energy sunlight. Some trees also begin, then, to produce anthocyanins which produce the red colors in leaves. We're not sure exactly why trees produce these compounds, but one idea is that they act as additional sun protection while the tree is extracting nutrients and compounds from the leaves to store and use again the following year.

So, we see the colors of the leaves in the fall when the tree decides it's not worth photosynthesizing anymore, that is, when the energy return isn't worth the energy investment. The value of return on time and energy investment can also be applied to our personal lives and societal values as a whole. What types of activities are we investing our time and energy in that aren't providing the types of returns we'd like to see? Is it time to slow down or simply stop doing things that don't provide enough benefit? To view the blog post, go to: [www.tappedmaplesyrup.com/blog/why-leaves-change-color](http://www.tappedmaplesyrup.com/blog/why-leaves-change-color)

*Support the campaign with a year-end donation!*


# \$30,000 FOR 30 YEARS

**Make your year-end donation before December 31 and your gift will support NCCT's campaign to raise \$30,000 for 30 years!**



**Celebrate 30 years of land and water protection in Central Wisconsin by supporting NCCT's campaign to raise \$30,000 in honor of our 30th anniversary!**

**HELP RAISE \$11,080 MORE BEFORE DECEMBER 31 TO MEET THE GOAL!**



**TO DONATE, GO TO [WWW.NCCTWI.ORG/DONATE](http://WWW.NCCTWI.ORG/DONATE)**



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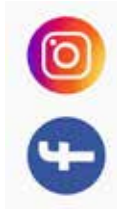
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*NCCCT's mission is to conserve the natural heritage of Central Wisconsin through the protection of land.*