

CELEBRATING
20 YEARS
OF CONSERVATION
1988 *to* 2008



WEST WISCONSIN
LAND TRUST

2008
Annual Report

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on the cover: Axhandle Lake, Chippewa County
above: forest in Clark County

Letter from the President

Back in 2001, when our family placed a conservation easement on our small, 40-acre farm near Pine Creek in Pierce County, we hoped it would be part of a bigger effort to maintain the natural character and beauty of our landscape and waters. We could not have imagined that seven short years later, over 25,000 acres of land in western Wisconsin would be preserved! We knew that development and city sprawl threatened the habitat required to support wild plants and animals. But we could not have imagined then, the support and concern so many of our neighbors would show in protecting these threatened spaces, and the wildlife within them.

In 2008, as we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the organization, I want to say “thank you” to our executive director and to our staff, for bringing us to this monumental milestone. I also extend a special “thank you” to each volunteer and member that has restored habitat, promoted conservation while working an event booth, monitored easements and streams, cut walking paths on our public lands, or sent contributions to support our work. You are the reason behind the success described in this annual report. You have made the difference between a small gesture by one family, and the monumental accomplishments of our entire community of friends and neighbors.

Happy anniversary to West Wisconsin Land Trust, and congratulations to you all!

Linda Keefe
President, Board of Directors

Letter from the Executive Director

When describing how Americans felt about farming and rural life, the late Hugh Sidey, journalist and farm advocate, wrote, “We are talking about people who want to give birth and grow old and laugh and die, bonded and sustained by the soil, which is the oldest way of life Americans know. The farm economic crisis has become a rural crisis, and that has become a cultural crisis unique in our history. It is now beyond bank loans and Government subsidies. It is in people’s hearts.”¹

Against this backdrop, Wisconsin Farmland Conservancy began in 1988, with intent to slow the loss of farms and farmland. Unlike today, the credit crisis in the 1980s focused on the rural economy and agricultural land values. Farms were being lost, and/or consolidated into large agribusiness operations, while rural banks were failing.

Wisconsin Farmland Conservancy made a valiant effort to solve the farm crisis, and in the process, discovered that while it might not be able to keep farmers on the land, it could keep the land open for farming. We realized that open lands as well as farmland, were critical to the wellbeing and health of the people that live and recreate in our region. With the support of our members and Board of Directors, we changed the organization’s name to West Wisconsin Land Trust in 2002, expanding private land conservation to include all of the natural areas that make western and north-western Wisconsin special.

Over the past 20 years, we’ve protected more than

25,000 acres. In addition to farms, which make up 25% of our conserved properties, permanently-protected wild lakes, trout streams, forests, blufflands, and prairies will all serve as “letters to the future,” demonstrating Wisconsin’s natural character.

And we’re not done. With your help, we plan to protect another 25,000 acres in less than half the time, because we need to. And because your children and your grandchildren will want to know: did you try? Did you try to keep the waters clean, the forests wild, and the lands free for them to enjoy?

West Wisconsin Land Trust’s important work is not possible without YOU. This is where you live and recreate, where you work and play. This is your backyard, and for 20 years, West Wisconsin Land Trust has been actively working to steward and care for it. Thank you for partnering with us!

Richard E. Gauger
Executive Director

“Isn’t it wonderful that nature’s finest ingredients are being preserved by caring individuals?”

~ Judy Aldrian



WEST WISCONSIN LAND TRUST

“We come and go, but the land is always here...”

~ Willa Cather, American novelist

Our land conservators have shared their stories with us, because every preserved acre, lake, and river is a letter to future generations.

“I remember being on my grandfather’s farm, especially the first time I followed him on foot, in the furrow, when he was plowing. At age five, my job was to pick “angle-worms” and put them in one of his tobacco cans for a promised fishing trip that evening. Fifty years later, I can still remember the smell of freshly turned soil. My son owns that field today. Now, as a grandfather myself, I see my job is to ‘imprint’ memories for my own grandchildren.” ~ Kent Makela



¹ Time Magazine, August 11, 1986, Vol. 128 No. 6.

2008 Conservation HIGHLIGHTS

Axhandle Lake, Chippewa County

Michael and Karen Keil's 47-acre Axhandle Lake property in the Chippewa Moraine Lakes Priority Area boasts over 4,300 feet of frontage, and an additional 4,300 feet of frontage on an undeveloped "wild lake". The entire Axhandle Lake shoreline of the property is designated a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) "Sensitive Area" for its abundance of sensitive plant species, habitat for wildlife and birds, and spawning habitat for fish. The Keils find comfort in knowing that a place so special to them will remain as it is for future generations to enjoy.

Eau Claire Rod and Gun Club, Eau Claire County

Recognized as the oldest continuously operating sportsman's club in Wisconsin, the club celebrated its 100th anniversary by signing a conservation easement on 85 acres of club-owned property. The property is an ecological jewel, containing a high-quality oak barrens natural community, native prairie remnants, and a wetland occupying a former meander of the Eau Claire River. Club members, Pheasants Forever, West Wisconsin Land Trust, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, WDNR and the Natural Resources Conservation Service are leading an ambitious barrens restoration project on the property. Initial results indicate this could be a showcase restoration project when it is complete.

Keil Birch Creek Nature Preserve, Dunn County

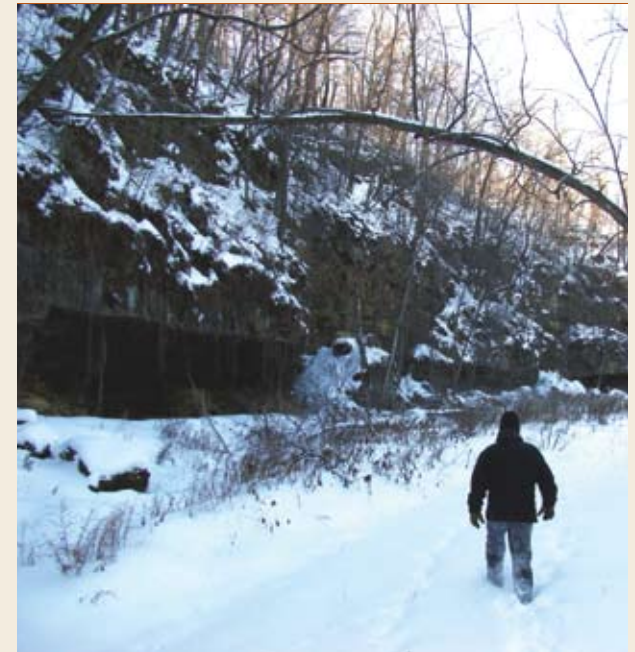
Led by an active coalition of neighbors, the Menomonie community pulled together to assist in the acquisition of a 28-acre preserve just minutes from downtown. Highlights of the preserve include one-quarter mile of frontage on the Red Cedar River, and the deep canyon of Birch Creek that bisects the property. This preserve offers Menomonie residents the opportunity to appreciate the unique habitats of the Red Cedar River valley close to home. The acquisition was also made possible by a grant from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, and through the generosity of Raymond and Janice Keil.

Cady Creek Caves, St. Croix County

Over 50 years ago, Bob Freiberg's father purchased some farmland in St. Croix County. The property, however, was not just ordinary farmland. Within the heart of the property, steep vertical cliffs rise upward to form the cool shaded valley of Cady Creek – a coldwater trout stream with naturally reproducing brook trout. The WDNR has designated the creek as an Outstanding Water Resource. Additionally, a vast interconnected cave network sprawls throughout the property's subterranean limestone bedrock – providing habitat for several bat species. In 2008, Bob and Barbara Freiberg conserved 95 acres of the property through a conservation easement with West Wisconsin Land Trust and financial assistance from the WDNR Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

County Line Lake Property, Sawyer County

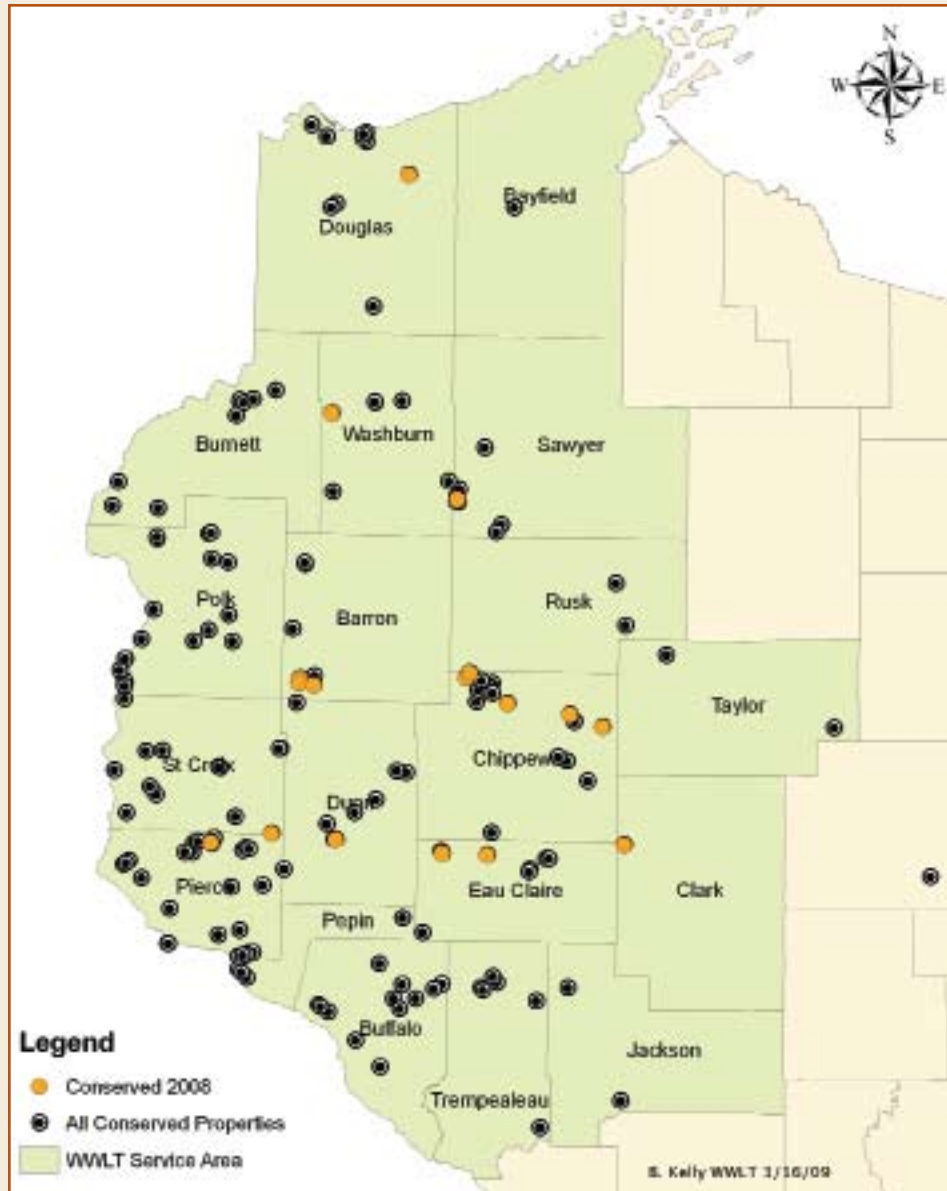
For years, Rick and Roberta Freitag have owned land in the Birchwood area, between Long Lake and Lake Chetac, where the landscape is dense with clusters of small lakes and bogs surrounded by hardwood forest. When the Freitags learned that a neighboring parcel was slated for development on nearby County Line Lake, they quickly took action, and acquired the parcel. In 2008, the Freitags took an extra step by permanently conserving the property with West Wisconsin Land Trust. The 28-acre property, which is dominated by oak and pine trees, contains nearly a half-mile of shoreline along County Line Lake. Also, the property adjoins the publicly owned Loyhead Lake Primitive Canoe Area, a remote non-motorized area that offers visitors a wilderness-like experience.



Cady Creek, St. Croix County

17 Total Projects, 1,343 acres

2008 Land Conservation PROJECTS



Fee Simple Acquisition

Property	Acres	County	Resource
Dog Island Lake	120	Chippewa	Wild Lake
Keil Birch Creek Nature Preserve	28	Dunn	Creek
Rush River Fishing Preserve	15	Pierce	River

Conservation Easements

Property	Acres	County	Resource
Eau Claire Rod and Gun Club	85	Eau Claire	River/Wetland
Robert and Barbara Freiberg	95	St. Croix	Creek/Farm
Roberta Freitag	26	Sawyer	Lake/Forest
Michael & Karen Keil	47	Chippewa	Lake/Wild Lake
Kent and Jeanette Makela	130	Douglas	Forest
Claudia Place	167	Washburn	Lake/Forest
Carl and Barbara Plochman	4.5	Chippewa	Lake
Sherman Creek Park	30	Eau Claire	Creek/Park
Steve Thaler	80	Chippewa	Working Forest
Steve Thaler	194	Chippewa	Working Forest
Steve Thaler	113	Barron	Working Forest
Steve Thaler	88	Barron	Working Forest
Steve Thaler	40	Barron	Working Forest
Steve Thaler	80	Clark	Working Forest

“We’ve seen how imprudent planning and political decisions can have an adverse effect on this little part of the world, and we trust that WWLT will keep this place safe for future generations to explore and enjoy as we have done.” ~ Gib and Judy Krohn

2008 Stewardship & Education HIGHLIGHTS

Pine Creek Restoration

There have been many phases of restoration happening at West Wisconsin Land Trust nature preserves within the Pine Creek valley this year. During the summer, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources crews and other volunteers joined together to restore the stream channel from decades of erosion and sedimentation. In the fall, WWLT welcomed volunteers who joined in a day-long effort to handpick native seed from the prairie on Maiden Rock Bluff. The seed was then planted along the banks of Pine Creek. Soon, native flowers and grasses will thrive alongside the cool water of the stream. Cumulatively, these efforts will improve the long-term health of the Pine Creek watershed.

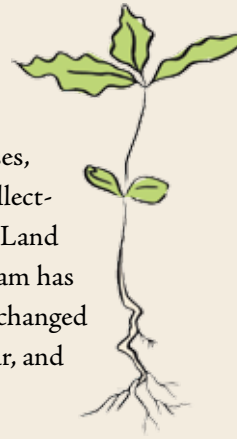


Seedlings in the Outdoors

Whether it's winter tracking in heavy snow, searching for Goldenrod galls in tall prairie grasses, creating art-in-nature crafts, or collecting maple syrup, West Wisconsin Land Trust's Outdoor Education Program has something for everyone. WWLT changed education coordinators at mid-year, and still experienced a 25% increase in program participants.

A growing body of research shows that nature is the best place to play, and children of all ages enjoyed discovering their natural environment through the 50 different programs offered in 2008.

West Wisconsin Land Trust believes that youths want to be involved in helping protect the natural lands and waters of western Wisconsin. We say "hooray" for the 40 boys and girls that became new "Seedling" members of the Land Trust.



Monitoring & Stewardship

With the assistance of hardworking volunteer monitors, West Wisconsin Land Trust stewardship staff coordinated over 150 site visits to properties throughout 18 counties in western Wisconsin. WWLT continues to demonstrate its long-term ability to uphold and support all of its conservation easements.

Devil's Punchbowl Prairie Restoration

Prairie restoration at the Devil's Punchbowl has been a long-standing dream ever since the property was acquired over ten years ago. Throughout the summer, WWLT stewardship staff worked with student interns to prepare the upper field by removing vegetation and scarifying the soil. In the autumn, native prairie seeds were hand broadcast across the site. The next time you visit the Devil's Punchbowl, be sure to keep a close eye on the upper field as new flowers and grasses begin to emerge.



"Walking in the woods, following the creek through the swamp in search of springs and flowers, searching the grasslands for signs of hidden beauty, watching birds and butterflies flitting among the blossoms are all a joy. What a relief that 'Whispering Pines' will always be intact, because so many other wonderful childhood spots are no longer available." ~ Elaine Sandin

this page: Gretchen Yonko and children have fun with outdoor education

2008 Financial REPORT

2008 Board of Directors

President

Linda Keefe

President Emeritus

Curt Rohland

Vice President

John Goetz

Treasurer

Joe Kingman

Secretary

Kathy Olson

At Large

Scott Nicasastro

Robert Cropp

Sandy Anderson

Edward (Ned) Bixby

Larry Jost

Laura Kracum

Bill Lamb

Jacob Wert

2008 Staff

Executive Director

Richard E. Gauger

Associate Director

Edith M. Kadlec

Land Program Director

Rick Remington

Northwoods Land Protection

Coordinator

Jane Anklam

Stewardship Manager

Bill Hogseth

Conservation Coordinator

Britta Kelly

Director of Education

Bill Dingwall

Outdoor Education Coordinator

Gretchen Yonko

Education & Stewardship

Project Specialist

Jennifer Dippel

Executive Assistant

Michelle Copley

Member and Communications

Assistant

Jane Tappen

Special Projects Coordinator

Nancy Toedt

Interns

Sara Randle

Stephen Gauger

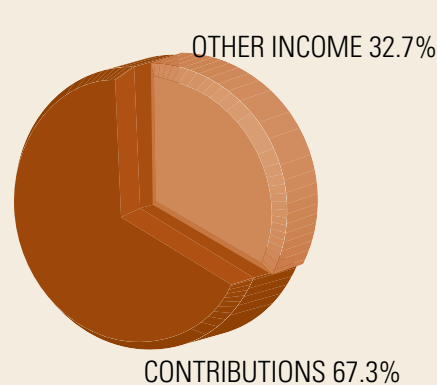
Jeanna Kadlec

Land Stewards

Bruce Moss

Dave Linderud

John Cole



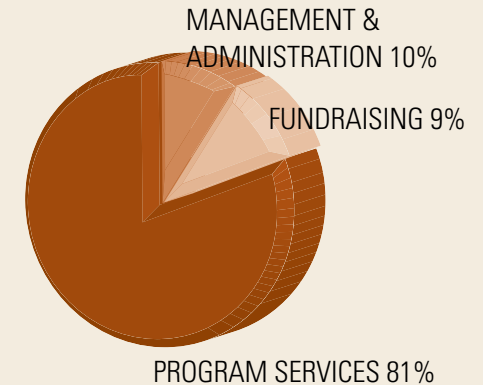
INCOME

Contributions \$602,350

Other Income* \$292,550

Total Income \$894,900

*Includes investment income and other sources of income.



EXPENSES

Program Services \$725,538

Management & Administration \$87,320

Fundraising \$77,560

Total Expenses \$890,418

West Wisconsin Land Trust's fiscal year runs from January 1 to December 31. These represent unaudited figures. Please contact us if you would like to receive a copy of our audited financial statements for 2008. WWLT's federal tax returns (990s) are available on Guidestar, which provides information on nonprofit organizations (www.guidestar.org).



West Wisconsin Land Trust has been awarded the Charities Review Council "Meets Standards" seal, indicating that WWLT has met all sixteen of the Council's Accountability Standards in Public Disclosure, Governance, Financial Activity and Fundraising. View our report at www.smartgivers.org.



Our Mission: Preserving Western Wisconsin's Natural Character



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