



WEST WISCONSIN
LAND TRUST

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Friends,

In 2015, our 27th year, the theme was moving forward. Much has been written regarding the life cycles of non-profit organizations. The most common arc is idea, start-up, growth, maturity, and then regeneration or decline. In February of 2016, we achieved the honor of national accreditation. This designation was the result of a year-long review of every facet of our work. This recognition by the Land Trust Alliance is in many ways the most visible sign of our maturity as an organization. Over 30,000 acres conserved, nearly a million dollars in our stewardship endowment, and now national recognition—we are all grown up! And as one board member recently asked me, “...now what?” Good question.

This brings us to the revision of our strategic plan. The effort began in mid-2015 and will end in early summer of 2016. Our members, both past and present, received a questionnaire as part of this initiative and we were very grateful to have received such a large number of responses. It shows that you care about this work and about our future. As we consider the “...now what” question, we have to examine things from many perspectives. Where is our work most needed? Who will be the advocates for nature in the future? Can we impact that? How can our work strengthen the connection between children and nature? How can we be more responsive to the outdoor needs of local communities in our area? And along with all those what questions are the how questions regarding staffing, fund raising, etc. There is so much to consider yet it is critical that we take the time to step back and reflect on who we are now and the contributions we are (or can be) best

sued to make in the years to come. Creating a vision for the future is exciting stuff—our board and staff are energized by considering how we can innovate and strengthen our connection to the landscape and people we serve.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to offer our deep gratitude to Laurie Kracum whose three-year term as board president came to a close at the end of 2015. Laurie has been a wonderful leader, a generous supporter, and an impressive conservationist-- the Kracum family donated significant conservation easements in Chippewa County to the land trust. We are extremely pleased that Laurie has agreed to serve another year on the board!

As ever, our members and their local communities are at the heart of all that we do. From Superior to Alma to Eau Claire—we love this place and we know you do too. Indeed, that’s what keeps our land trust moving forward.



Bob Fitzwilliam

Executive Director

West Wisconsin Land Trust

ON THE COVER:

View of the Chippewa River from the Town of Union Youth Forest, Eau Claire, Co.

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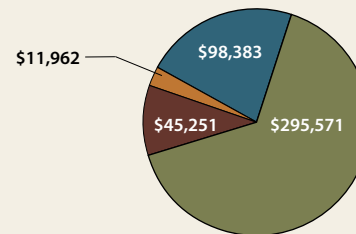
2015 FINANCIALS

BALANCE SHEET:

Assets	2015	2014
Cash and Investments:	\$93,757	\$77,038
Stewardship and Defense Fund	\$934,830	\$996,871
Accounts Receivable:	\$66,309	\$54,172
Furniture and Equipment:	\$1,230	\$2,406
Land Held for Sale:	\$295,800	\$34,100
Land Held for Conservation:	\$3,284,609	\$3,386,309
Total Assets:	\$4,676,535	\$4,550,896
Liabilities and Net Assets:		
Liabilities:	\$119,456	\$113,003
Total Net Assets:	\$4,557,079	\$4,437,893
Total Liabilities and Net Assets:	\$4,676,535	\$4,550,896

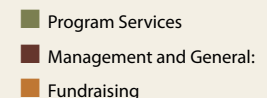
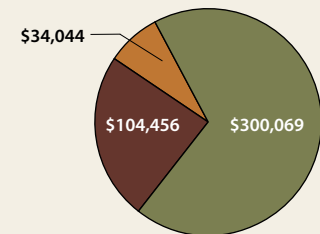
2015 OPERATING REVENUE

Total: \$451,167



2015 EXPENSES

Total: \$438,569



West Wisconsin Land Trust's fiscal year is from January 1 to December 31. This financial summary is based on an audit by the accounting firm, Wegner CPAs LLP, of Madison, WI. Please contact the West Wisconsin Land Trust office if you would like a copy of the complete audit report.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

2015

“Health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal. Conservation is our effort to understand and preserve this capacity.”

~Aldo Leopold

National Accreditation

After a number of years of refining our policies and practices to align with national standards, we felt that we were finally ready to submit an application to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. The rigorous application and review process went on for much of 2015, culminating in our officially getting word in early 2016—national accreditation awarded! This is a significant honor that has been bestowed on only 342 of the nearly 1,500 land trusts in the U.S., signifying confidence that lands conserved by West Wisconsin Land Trust will be protected forever.

“It is exciting to recognize West Wisconsin with this distinction,” said Tammara Van Ryn, executive director of the Commission. “Together, accredited land trusts stand united behind strong national standards ensuring the places people love will be conserved forever.

About the Land Trust Accreditation Commission

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission inspires excellence, promotes public trust, and ensures permanence in the conservation of open lands by recognizing organizations that meet rigorous quality standards and strive for continuous improvement.

A volunteer board of diverse land conservation and nonprofit management experts governs the Commission, which was established in 2006 as an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance. For more information, visit www.landtrustaccreditation.org.



photo: Marcie O'Connor



Freshening Up the Devil's Punch Bowl



From left to right: Jolene Neisius, Dunn Energy; Jarrod McCurdy, Cedar Corporation; Clark Yoltz, Dairy State Bank/Talen Trust; Jeff Jaeger, WESTconsin Credit Union; Jim Eggert WWLT member; Paul Helgeson, Unitarian Society of Menomonie; Georgina Tegart, Community Foundation of Dunn County; Lauren Evans, Fairmont Santrol; Bob Fitzwilliam, WWLT Executive Director; Andrew Norman, WWLT Conservation Specialist. Not pictured, Menomonie Noon Rotary.

Here's a picture of our Punchbowl Partners who supported this much needed upgrade to our most visited property, which is located a few miles south of Menomonie. Over the years the original concrete steps had deteriorated and the signage also left something to be desired.

Through the generosity of lead sponsors Fairmont Santrol and the Community Foundation of Dunn County, as well as land trust members, other local businesses, a service club, and a local family foundation, we were able to complete these improvements in 2015. We also want to commend the sign shop at UW-Stevens Point for the beautiful sign.



Chippewa Moraine Conservation Area Expands



In the summer of 2015, we acquired eighty acres near Long Lake in Chippewa County, a landscape we have been working in for many years. Our conserved properties contain examples of the distinctive qualities of the Chippewa Moraine and Chippewa Glacial Lakes area, namely hummocky-forested topography, seepage lakes, sphagnum bogs and wetlands. Ecological community types change quickly as the topography undulates between small hills and low-lying wetlands.

The land trust began its work with local land-owners a decade ago and now has conserved over 2,500 acres through easements. This latest addition contains two wild lakes and a mixed

hardwood forest and is just down the town road from the Ice Age Trail. The purchase was made possible by a grant from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship program, a major contribution from Chippewa County, and very generous terms from owners Lehmen and Sandra Larson. We especially enjoyed completing this project because of their inspiring generosity and the importance of the land to them.

Sandra's family, the Metcalf's, purchased the property in 1952. At that time there was a log house, a small barn, and a chicken coop. Their large family resided there for a number of years. They later moved to another location in the county but always held on to this beautiful par-

"Nature is not a place to visit. It is home."

~ Gary Snyder

cel in Sampson Township. The family, friends, and neighbors hunted and hiked these hilly woods for many years. Lehmen spent many a season making firewood on these quiet acres. It was a family oasis that they wanted to protect forever. We were honored to help make those wishes come true. Over the next year or so, we hope to establish a trail and a few primitive campsites for public use. This land's proximity to the Ice Age Trail makes it a very handy spot for hikers wanting to camp or just take a break. Thanks so much to Lehmen and Sandra for their gift to all of us.



Woods and wild lakes of the Town of Sampson acquisition.



Town of Union



A strong partnership with the Town of Union culminated in the permanent protection of 84 acres on the Chippewa River west of Eau Claire. The Town of Union Youth Forest has been owned and managed by the Town since 1950, about the same time area youths planted pines that occupy parts of the site today. The current Town leaders and residents want to ensure the permanent protection of this unique property regardless of future ownership.

The property contains approximately 2,600 feet of frontage on the Chippewa River, as well as significant bluff prairie and oak savanna remnants on south-facing slopes. The two hundred foot bluff on the property provides command-

ing views of the Chippewa River and the Lower Chippewa River State Natural Area. The property is also located within the Lower Chippewa River Important Bird Area (IBA). The IBA consists of floodplain forest, prairie and savanna, and a matrix of riparian forest and wetland communities, which host numerous common and declining bird species. Protection of the Lower Chippewa River corridor from Eau Claire to the Mississippi River is key to the success of the IBA.

Under the terms of the Youth Forest conservation easement, West Wisconsin Land Trust and the Town leaders are planning for low-impact public use of the site. Recognizing that citizens, particularly children, need close-to-home

opportunities to experience nature, the Town leaders are doing their part to provide parkland within their Township, while accomplishing significant ecological goals in the process. The Youth Forest is WWLT's second cooperative project with the Town of Union, the first being Sherman Creek Park on Eau Claire's west side.



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CREATING A LEGACY OF CONSERVATION

Legacy Gifts may be directed by the donor to current needs, to a permanent endowment fund, or to both. Legacy Gifts may also be designated for specific purposes such as the WWLT Stewardship and Defense Fund.

The promise of a Legacy Gift to West Wisconsin Land Trust qualifies one as a member of the Legacy Circle. This designation celebrates the impact of thoughtful planning as well as a personal commitment to conservation in western Wisconsin.

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Photo: Marcie O'Connor, Buffalo County conservation easement



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