



# NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

HELP LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY FOR THE NORTHWOODS

*Wisconsin's 2007 Land Trust of the Year!*

P.O. Box 321, Eagle River, WI 54521-0321

December 2008

## Conservation Focus: Private Woodlands

Many thousands of acres of industrial forest lands have recently been put up for sale all across northern Wisconsin. Other privately owned woodlands have also become more and more parcelized as they are split up for residential development. The result is fragmentation of wildlife habitat and fewer areas able to be managed for sustainable forest products.

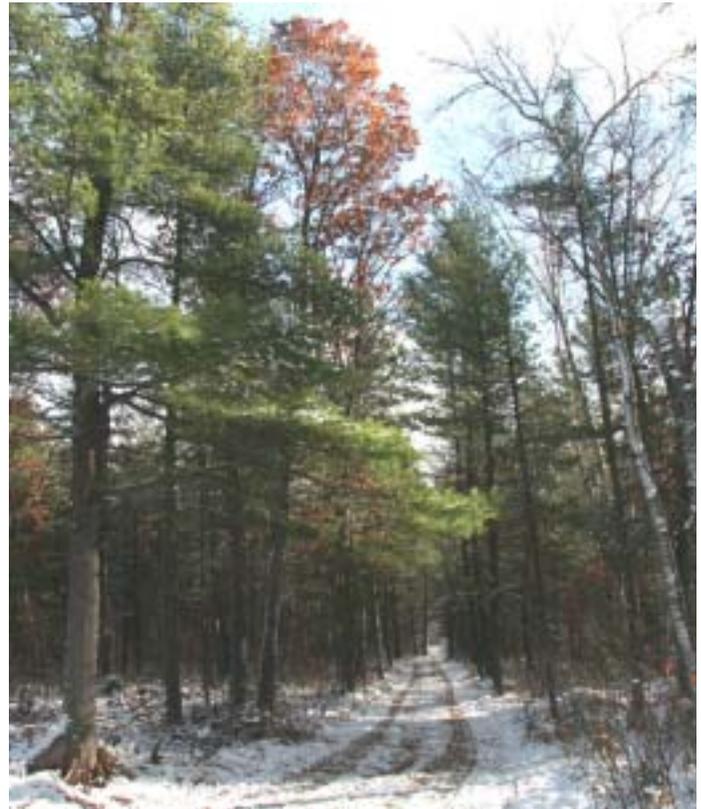
For the past year-and-a-half, the Northwoods Land Trust has been working hard to contact private, non-industrial woodland owners in Vilas County to educate them about the voluntary conservation options available through the land trust.

With grant funding assistance from the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board's (WEEB) Forestry Education Program, NWLT utilized Vilas County's geographic information system parcel maps and digital aerial photos (orthophotos) to identify all land parcels with 40 acres or more of undeveloped woodlands. Once the parcels were mapped on the GIS system, the owners of the selected parcels were identified using a linked taxroll database.

For those parts of the county not parcel mapped at the time, the most recent plat book was used in conjunction with the digital aerial photos to help identify the tracts of woodlands. The owners of these additional parcels were then also identified using the county tax roll database.

All together, a total of over 2600 wooded parcels of 40 acres and larger were selected. Just over 950 families, businesses, trusts and individuals owned those parcels.

Each of the property owners who had not already been contacted by NWLT previously was direct mailed a copy of our "For the Love of the Land... A Landowner's Conservation Guide to Protecting Your Northwoods Property." This packet includes current information on the various conservation options, tax benefits, conservation concerns and issues in the northwoods, and several "up close and personal" stories of how people have already



*Larger tracts of remaining undeveloped woodlands are critical both for forest products and for wildlife habitat.*

protected their working forest lands, and natural lake and river shorelines.

For those landowners who responded to the mailings and expressed further interest in conserving their land, NWLT conducted on-site visits and provided one-on-one technical assistance to help them select their most appropriate conservation options. For those committed to conserving their woodlands, NWLT prepared perpetual land protection agreements.

NWLT was very fortunate in 2008 in having a number of property owners step forward to permanently protect

*(Continued on page 2)*

### mission:

*The Northwoods Land Trust (NWLT) promotes conservation by private landowners of natural shorelands, woodlands, wetlands and other natural resources, as public benefits for present and future generations. The Northwoods Land Trust covers areas of Vilas, Oneida, Forest, Florence, Iron and Price Counties.*

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## Northwoods Land Trust

### Purpose:

- To provide education and utilize voluntary conservation options with private landowners.
- To preserve natural shorelands on lakes, rivers and other waterways for protection of water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, erosion control, and natural scenic beauty.
- To conserve private woodlands and encourage landowners to manage their forest lands in an ecologically sustainable manner.
- To accept perpetual stewardship for secure conservation agreements with private landowners, such as easements, land donations and property acquisitions.
- To annually monitor NWLT land protection agreements.
- To seek support through donations, grants, endowments memberships and volunteers.
- To leverage our conservation efforts through partnering with other organizations and agencies.

Newsletter Editor: Bryan Pierce



## Vilas County Woodlands (continued)



Keith and Josie McCaffery (with signs) celebrate signing their conservation easement with NWLT Board members (from left) President Mary Schwaiger, Treasurer Sue Coffman, John Huppert, Pete Davison, Jim Holperin, Jerry Parker and Ed Mouw.

their woodlands. In Vilas County, Tannie and Jim Bragiel of Evanston, IL, signed a conservation easement on their 92-acre woodland close to the Deerskin River in the town of Washington. Thomas and Eileen Pawlacyk of Neenah signed conservation easements on a total of 141 acres of woodlands in the town of St. Germain. The Pawlacyks are also previous conservation easement donors for a large property in the town of Plum Lake. In addition, NWLT was able to close on another 84-acre tract of valuable woodlands and wildlife habitat in the town of Stella, Oneida County. This property was conserved courtesy of Keith and Jocelyn (Josie) McCaffery of Rhinelander.

Our sincerest Thank You to all of these landowners for their outstanding commitment to leaving a legacy of woodlands for all future generations to come. With the successful completion of the Vilas County WEEB forestry education project, we now hope to be able to replicate the process for other counties in our service territory.

*Scenic woodlands conserved by Thomas & Eileen Pawlacyk (left and right), in St. Germain, together include over 141 acres. These sites protect the aesthetics of both a paved bicycle trail and a snowmobile trail as important public recreational resources.*



## You Can Help!

The Northwoods Land Trust is a non-profit, tax exempt conservation organization. Your gift of cash, stocks, bonds or other financial support is fully tax deductible as charitable contributions under federal law. Donations of property or conservation easements may also provide tax benefits while promoting the conservation of our northwoods.

## Elsen Family Protects Big Stone Lake

Virginia and John Elsen have entered into a land protection agreement (conservation easement) with NWLT to ensure a former popular lodge and resort property in Oneida County will be permanently protected from being sold as individual lots. Their 18-acre property had already been subdivided into six residential lots prior to their taking ownership. Now used as a family recreational retreat, the historic lodge building on Big Stone Lake and the six lots will all be bound together as one tract, with limits to the amount and location of any future upgrades.

Built in the 1920s by Carl Marty, the old resort building was known as White Buck Lodge. The lodge with its vertical half-log siding and several small cabins were among the earliest buildings on the lake. Early patrons came by car or boat to enjoy the open wooden dance floor surrounding a large, beautiful stone fireplace.



*A total of 18 acres and six subdivided lots on Big Stone Lake, part of the Three Lakes Chain, are now bound together as one tract and cannot be sold separately thanks to Virginia and John Elsen.*



*Formerly known as White Buck Lodge, this building with its half-log siding was built by Carl Marty (of Northernaire fame). Once used as a dance hall, the lodge was one of the earliest structures constructed on Big Stone Lake.*



In spite of, or maybe because of, the property's history as a resort, the woodlands feature a diversity of trees and other vegetation. Behind the resort structures is some true, climax forest habitat with large super-canopy white pines, along with mature eastern hemlocks, yellow birch trees and sugar maples.

A lowland swamp forest habitat includes tamarack, black spruce and black ash trees as well as wild iris. This wetland also serves as a drainage for a small, un-named bog lake located on Nicolet National Forest land to the east of the property.

With an estimated 1,300 feet ((1/4 mile) of frontage on Big Stone Lake, part of the popular Three Lakes Chain of Lakes, the lakefront includes a large, productive wetland bay which provides an important spawning and nursery area for several fish species. Aquatic plants in the bay include extensive beds of pickerelweed, watershield and pond lily.

Our sincere Thank You to the Elsen family for ensuring lasting protection for both historic and natural resources in the northwoods!



*The Elsen property features about 1,300 feet of shoreline frontage on Big Stone Lake, including part of this highly productive wetland bay.*

## Two “Wild Lakes” Preserved by the Wellenstein Family

Not one, but two DNR-listed “wild lakes” in the town of Newbold, Oneida County, have now been protected forever thanks to the Walter and Janet (Nina) Wellenstein family of Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.

Primarily used for waterfowl, deer and upland bird hunting, the property includes about 595 acres of productive forest lands, wetlands and other valuable wildlife habitat.

The Wellenstein property encompasses the entire shorelines of two small lakes with over two miles (10,840 feet) of lake frontage. McCabe Lake is a 49-acre seepage lake which supports panfish. Mudhen Lake, at 29 acres, is also a shallow seepage lake that is recognized as highly valuable habitat for waterfowl.

Both lakes were identified by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources’ Northern Initiatives as “wild lakes” warranting additional protection based on their high



*Most of the extensive natural shorelines around McCabe Lake, a 49-acre lake, in the town of Newbold, Oneida County will remain forever wild thanks to a conservation agreement signed with the Walter and Janet Wellenstein family.*



*These white-tailed deer are enjoying a seeded wildlife opening in the large tract of Wellenstein woodlands.*

ecological significance, outstanding natural scenic beauty, and/or special recreational values. Mudhen Lake in particular was the seventh highest of 88 identified “wild lakes” in Oneida County, due primarily to its importance for waterfowl production. Rare yellow rails have also been observed on the property.

The property has been in the extended family for generations. Walt’s mother Florence grew up in the area. She was a Frederick, a well-known family with a long history in Newbold. The Frederick’s Flowage located just to the west of the protected property is named for the family. The flowage is also a highly productive area both for waterfowl and for fur-bearing mammals. Walt purchased the property to keep it in the family. “I have a love for that land,” he said. “I grew up there and saw how pristine it was. We hunted deer and Grandma would take a cane pole to the Wisconsin River and catch enough fish to feed ten people. I didn’t know what beef was until I moved into the city. When I got out of World War II, I went back up north right away.”

A beautiful hunting lodge serves as the family retreat. Located off the north shoreline of McCabe Lake, the lodge is barely visible from the water. Walt and Nina have four sons and a daughter who enjoy the property - Rick, Michael, Charles, Bart and Annie. Although some now live and work out of state, all have a stake in the future of the property.

“I would prefer the land remain intact without any more buildings,” Walt said. “Every day you see more and more of the land in the area split up for development. The purity of the land is gone. I wanted to make sure this land would be there as a haven for the animals - the grouse, deer and wolves.”



*Mudhen Lake, a shallow 29-acre seepage lake, was recognized by the WDNR Wild Lakes Program as especially productive waterfowl habitat.*

# Rueckerts Conserve Woods and Water along the Pelican River

By Willa Schmidt



*Springtime on the Pelican: Roland and Ruth Rueckert signed a conservation agreement to conserve 307 acres of managed woodland and about 7,500 feet of natural frontage along the Pelican River, southeast of Rhinelander in Oneida County.*

In 1950 Rueckert's father, a Rhinelander grocer by trade, purchased 200 acres in Pelican Township for \$1000. It was logged-over land, and included an old sheep farm with soil unsuitable for crops. Rueckert Senior planted pines and built a house, and eight years later convinced his son to snap up a piece of land on the nearby Pelican River. At \$200 for 23 acres it seemed a good deal, but there was no land access and Roland, a university student at the time, never even saw his purchase until several years later. Soon, however, another landowner sold him 80 acres for \$3500 allowing him to put a road through, and this led to bits and pieces of more land over the years acquired from the town, county and private individuals. "None of it had to do with acumen," he says, "but it turned out to be the best investment of any I've made." When their father died, Roland and his brother inherited the original parcels. Rueckert hopes to interest his sibling and an adjoining neighbor in eventual easements as well.

The property abounds with deer and increasingly with bear, he says, as well as ruffed grouse, woodcock and a wide variety of ducks and songbirds.



*Large blocks of forest habitats are important for wide-ranging mammals and birds, including the timber wolves utilizing the Rueckerts' property (warning - do not touch wolf scat).*

There are wetlands populated by beaver, which he plans to explore more thoroughly in spring with

his recently acquired kayak. Plant life includes a multitude of ferns as well as trailing arbutus, twinflowers and trillium. In addition to the common birch, pine and aspen, there are some unusual tree species: mountain ash, basswood, and the northern burr oak valued for its beauty by Frederick Olmstead, designer of New York City's Central Park. Bald eagles nest in the large white pines along the extensive river corridor, "and I bought that for \$200!" Rueckert says with amazement.

Although he originally planned to build a house of his own on the land, he decided against it, feeling it would be an intrusion.

Roland and Ruth Rueckert of Madison have signed a land protection agreement, also known as a conservation easement, with the Northwoods Land Trust covering 307 acres of land in the Town of Pelican, Oneida County.

The sizeable property includes almost a mile-and-a-half of natural frontage on the Pelican River. The Pelican was ranked #13 out of 79 priority river and stream segments in Oneida County identified by the Wisconsin DNR Northern Rivers Initiative.

Like other private landowners who have made the decision to protect their land in perpetuity, Roland tells an engaging story of his family's interaction with a cherished piece of the northwoods.



*"Grandpa and Grandma" white pines tower over logging trails in the productive woodlands.*

*(Continued next page)*

## Rueckert's Pelican River Property *(continued)*

There are at present no residences on the protected property, his father's house being just outside the conservation easement's borders. The land protection agreement does, however, allow for the construction of one single-family residence and possible accessory structures with a total footprint of 3500 square feet. The residence must be located within a building zone of no more than three acres, adjacent to an existing access road. Subdivision into smaller parcels is expressly prohibited.

Roland's interest in a land protection agreement was kindled when Bryan Pierce, Executive Director of the Northwoods Land Trust, gave a talk to the Partners in Forestry (PIF) cooperative, a group of woodland owners devoted to sustainable forestry. "He appeared at just the right time," Rueckert says. "I learned through PIF about the increasing fragmentation of large forest holdings and wanted my land set aside."

Roland attributes his longtime interest in conservation to a 1958 flight over the Quetico Wilderness. "There's something special about the wilderness. I wanted to slow down its disappearance." He also noted the viewing of the 1970s film *Soylent Green*, which depicts a future world devoid of nature where only the very old remember verdant forests and free-flowing streams.

Rueckert hopes his young granddaughter, the couple's only heir, will come to treasure the land as he does and is doing his best to stimulate her interest. She's a city girl though. "Grandpa," the eleven-year-old has told him, "I don't know if I'm going to be able to manage something like this." Should she someday decide to sell, the land will remain protected because the conservation easement ensures that any future buyer must uphold the easement's provisions.

If he could look ahead 100 years Roland Rueckert would like his land to look as it does today, but with bigger trees. He can sleep more easily now, knowing he's done his best to make that vision possible for present and future generations.



*Roland Rueckert considers his long-term, sustainable forest management goals as he tours his 307-acre woodland property.*



*This Big Stone Lake peninsula was protected with funding assistance from a DNR Lake Protection Grant.*

## NWLT Completes Phase I of Oneida County Lake Project

The Northwoods Land Trust has recently completed the first phase of a grant-funded project to encourage private owners of natural lake frontage in Oneida County to consider conserving their properties. Based on the highly-successful Vilas County Private Lake Shorelands Protection Project, the Oneida County lake project is a critical component of NWLT's five-year strategic plan.

The project used plat map pages and Oneida County digital aerial photos to select all lakefront properties with an estimated 500 feet or more of natural shoreline frontage remaining (no homes or cottages on that 500 feet). The selected properties were then matched with the Oneida County tax roll database to generate a mailing list.

Over 500 Oneida County lake property owners were mailed a copy of our Landowner's Conservation Guide. A total of 41 properties received direct, on-site technical assistance. Seven of those properties resulted in new conservation easement donations, and one property was donated outright to NWLT.

Overall the project helped to permanently protect over 987 acres of land, including 20,786 feet (3.9 miles) of lake frontage and an additional 1,754 feet (1/3rd mile) of river and stream frontage. The total appraised value of lands newly protected as a result of this Phase I lake project amounts to over \$2.6 million - a great leveraging of the state grant and other contributed funds.

Major funding assistance to complete this project was provided by the Wisconsin DNR Lake Protection Grant Program. The 25% local grant match included significant volunteer and professional assistance. Other project expenses were covered by contributions from NWLT members and supporters, as well as grants from the John C. Bock Foundation, Arthur L. & Elaine V. Johnson Foundation, Audubon Land Fund for Wisconsin, and the Norcross Wildlife Foundation.

## Volunteers Make It Happen!

This fall, NWLT was benefited from a number of volunteer work projects that have provided vital assistance to our conservation efforts. Here are a just a few:

The entire staff of WIPFLI LLP accounting firm in Rhinelander provided great assistance by devoting an afternoon of community service work to help us clean up a 21-acre property. This site has since been protected by the estate of the landowner with a perpetual conservation easement. The parcel features about one-half mile of shoreline frontage on the Wisconsin River flowage above Rhinelander. This property will be featured in a future issue of the newsletter.



*A volunteer work party consisting of the staff of WIPFLI LLP in Rhinelander cleaned up a 21-acre site on the Wisconsin River flowage.*

Tad Schmidt of Rhinelander has coordinated the construction of a deer enclosure for the Holmboe Conifer Forest State Natural Area for his Eagle Scout project. The 8-foot tall enclosure will keep deer and other animals from browsing on a small patch of rare Canada yew. Check it out along the nature trail by the shore of the Pelican River.

Heidi Bramm, also of Rhinelander, is currently completing a "wildlands recreation" project through Northern Arizona University. She is helping NWLT write a forest education grant proposal to submit in early 2009.

## Gifts Leave a Lasting Legacy

The Northwoods Land Trust, as a nonprofit charitable organization, has recently received several donations beyond direct cash contributions. Such gifts, which are also tax deductible, have included a donation of stocks, employer-matched contributions, and a distribution from an individual retirement account. Gail Gilson-Pierce also donated a one-of-a-kind showy lady slipper art quilt for a fundraiser. All of these gifts are now being used to support our efforts to help private land-owners permanently protect their properties for their conservation values.



*Volunteer easement monitoring coordinator Walt Gager looks over the new deer enclosure at the Holmboe Conifer Forest constructed through the efforts of Eagle Scout Tad Schmidt of Rhinelander.*



## JOIN THE NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

HELP KEEP THE NORTHWOODS THE NORTHWOODS!

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### Membership Contributions

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual  | \$25     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family  | \$35     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter   | \$50     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Founder   | \$100    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservator   | \$250    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Steward   | \$500    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Land Legacy   | \$1000   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My additional contribution of _____ is also enclosed. | \$ _____ |

### Please make checks payable to:

Northwoods Land Trust, Inc.  
PO Box 321  
Eagle River, WI 54521-0321

### Interests

- I have property I may wish to conserve, please send me the free landowner's guide.
- I am interested in becoming a volunteer to assist the NWLT.

- I am interested in the NWLT Council of Trustees.

## In Memory...

The Northwoods Land Trust is very saddened by the passing of two great friends. Cliff Schwaiger, a long-time NWLT volunteer who helped us numerous times with many projects over the years, passed away in September. His wife, Mary, is our current NWLT President. Cliff's wry sense of humor and unfailing support for protecting the northwoods will be greatly missed by all of us. Memorial gifts contributed by numerous family and friends have been donated to NWLT.

NWLT conservation easement donor Dr. Walter Thiede passed away in December. His wife, Anita, sadly preceded him in death last year. Walt and Anita protected their beautiful "Wit's End Farm," an 80-acre property that includes a small, 6-acre wild lake and is surrounded by Oneida County Forest. They have left a conservation legacy for the next generations of their family who will continue to enjoy the property just as Walt and Anita did.

Marion Schoofs of Eagle River gave gifts in memory of Paul Pophal, the son-in-law of Roger Jehnke, Roger Rieckman, Emma Kupferschmidt and Herman Krug. Jeff and Eloise Potter of West Bend sent a memorial gift in honor of Kenneth Kudelko. Memorial gifts to recognize the passing of Cliff Schwaiger, Randy Fenton and Jim Magee were also provided by former NWLT Board member Ed Drager of Tucson, AZ.

## Conservation Christmas Gifts

We were very pleased to receive a contribution from Diana Black of Columbus, Indiana, as a Christmas Gift for Larry Black and Barb Roeber of Madison. Rob Thoms, of Olympia, WA, gave a gift family membership in NWLT to his father, Robert T. Thoms of Rhinelander. Julia Berger of Napa, CA, also gave a gift membership to Ian and Monie Shackelford of Ironwood, MI. Thanks to all. We greatly appreciate sharing in these Christmas gifts.



*Eighty acres of woodlands and old farmstead property surrounding this 6-acre wild lake were protected in Oneida County by Dr. Walter and Anita Thiede as a lasting conservation legacy for their family.*



**NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST**

P.O. BOX 321, EAGLE RIVER, WI 54521-0321

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