



# NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

HELP LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY FOR THE NORTHWOODS

*Celebrating our 10th Anniversary of  
Conserving the Northwoods - 2001-2011*

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

Winter 2010-11

## Site of 100 Years of Northern Conifer Forest Recovery Research Protected

By Trisha Moore, Conservation Specialist

The Northwoods Land Trust has protected over 5,000 acres on 50 private properties to date, but none have had the unique title of "research area" until now. Dr. Gene and Phyllis Likens contacted NWLT in 2009, interested in conserving their 11-acre property with 600 feet of frontage on Found Lake in Vilas County.

Bryan Pierce, Executive Director, met the couple and realized that Gene and Phyllis were involved in ecological research. Their unique property was the site of over five decades of research efforts started by well-known forest ecologist Dr. Forest Stearns. That research documents over 100 years of northern forest recovery.

According to Gene Likens, two men from Alaska purchased the land and built a small cabin overlooking Found Lake in 1922. Story has it that they found Wisconsin too hot for their liking and sold the property to Forest Stearns' father. The elder Stearns, a lawyer from Milwaukee, would come up to the cabin frequently, but Mrs. Stearns spent most of the summer there with her four children. The Found Lake land is where they all learned to love and appreciate nature.

"They would have their food brought up by railroad in wooden crates," Gene stated. "We still have parts of those wooden crates. The kids would swim and fish and spend time in the woods. They dearly loved this property."

That time spent in nature influenced one of the four children, Forest, to pursue a career in forest ecology. Forest worked his way into becoming one of the most distinguished forest researchers in the Midwest and the U.S. His career spanned 50 years as a professor and researcher. He published much of his scientific research on Wisconsin's forests, and conducted much of that research at the Northern Forest Research Station in Rhinelander, WI. Due to his proximity to Found Lake, he took over the family property there.



*Dr. Gene & Phyllis Likens protected an 11-acre wooded property on Found Lake in the town of St. Germain to ensure that this unique research site will remain intact.*

Science and research also led Gene and Phyllis Likens to Forest and then to the cabin and property. Gene, also a prominent ecologist with the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies in New York, often attends scientific conferences. His wife, Phyllis accompanies him and sits in on lectures of interest.

Phyllis explained that while at an American Institute of Biological Sciences conference with her husband she sat in on a lecture by Forest. "I felt terribly sorry for this man because he spilled his papers as he was trying to give his talk and was having a rough time. So, afterwards I made a

*(Continued next page)*

### 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.*

*Phone: (715) 479-2490 Email: [nwlt@northwoodslandtrust.org](mailto:nwlt@northwoodslandtrust.org) Web site: [www.northwoodslandtrust.org](http://www.northwoodslandtrust.org)*

## 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



## Likens property - continued

point of telling him that I enjoyed his talk and was happy to meet him."

The compassion Phyllis showed led to conversations throughout the conference with Forest Stearns. "At one point he was on a bridge spanning the Mississippi River talking to

students about lake properties," Phyllis recalled. Forest mentioned that he had a property that he was trying to sell in the northwoods, as he had remarried and owned a second lake property near Rhinelander. Phyllis immediately tuned in as she and Gene were searching for property in northern Wisconsin at the time. Despite living in New York, Phyllis and Gene have connections to Wisconsin. Gene earned his PhD in Limnology from UW-Madison and did much of his doctorate research on lakes in northwestern Wisconsin.

"You wouldn't be interested," Forest declared numerous times in response to Phyllis' persistent inquiries about the property and rustic cabin. It was this persistence that led to Phyllis and Gene finding the location of the land and driving to it on their way home from the conference. In 1986, soon after meeting Forest, the Likens purchased the property. Phyllis explained Forest's initial reluctance. "What Forest didn't understand is that he thought that this place without electricity or toilet would not interest us. We were definitely interested in what was here. He was very happy that we bought the place because he assumed that someone would knock the cabin down and build something grandiose in its place. We took care when we modernized to keep many things much the same as when Forest owned it."

In addition to keeping the land and cabin largely unchanged, the Likens took care of one other very important task. Forest had begun studying the pine trees on the property in 1950 for a long-term study of their recovery from the logging era. "Phyllis and I finished the research," said Gene. "When Forest died, I wrote the paper and made him the first author." The research, "One-hundred years of recovery of a pine forest in northern Wisconsin," was published in the *American Midland Naturalist* journal (Volume 148, No. 1, July 2002). The five-decade study was accomplished from 1950-1997 by reconstructing the original forest through stumps left after the logging and fire in 1897, and then by studying the recovery of the living forest since 1950.

The Likens make the 5-day roundtrip trek from New York to northern Wisconsin 2-3 times each year to visit their lakeshore property. "We have gotten to know people on the lake and have made excellent friends," Gene said.

*(Continued next page)*

*Left: Half of the shoreline on this small, un-named "wild lake," with its natural bog and black spruce swamp fringe, is protected through the Likens' conservation agreement.*

*"May the green things of the forest smile on you and drop their leaves only at the preordained time.*

*May you sometime hear the footsteps of the chipmunks on their daily rounds and catch the glimpse of the wary whitetail and the waiting eagle."*

- Forest Stearns in a letter to former student, Tom Krischan

## 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.

Phyllis added, "Through Forest Stearns, we have met many of his childhood friends who own property on the lake."

The Likens also remained very close to Forest throughout the years. They would celebrate both his and his wife's birthdays on their biannual trip to the lake.

On September 8, 1999, Forest and his wife, Ruth, were visiting the property with the intention of discussing the manuscript of the pine research with Gene and Phyllis. Forest became weak and sat down for a few moments. Soon after, Forest Stearns died in the Likens' arms on the stone steps of the 77-year old cottage.

"He died peacefully and without pain. True to form for the consummate ecologist, minutes before, he was describing to his wife, Ruth, the sensitivity of 'bracken (fern) to frost'," Gene recalled in a Resolution of Respect (*Bulletin of the Ecological Society of America*, January 2000) written for Forest after his death.

Dr. Gene Likens co-founded the famous Hubbard Brook Ecosystem Study in the White Mountains of New Hampshire: "We study forestry effects at the watershed level. Hubbard Brook also is where we discovered acid rain in North America. We do experimental manipulations on a scale of entire watersheds. I work as an ecologist on water, land and air interactions."

Phyllis grew up in the Finger Lakes region near Ithaca, New York. She has always appreciated nature and has a "great fondness for birds." While she claims she is not a scientist, she shares her love of lakes with Gene. Phyllis also works closely with the research being done in the



*Over 100 years of northern conifer forest recovery was documented through research conducted in each of the last five decades by Dr. Forest Stearns and Dr. Gene Likens.*

Hubbard Brook Ecosystem Study where she has been associated for 37 years. She keeps the completed research in order by typing, organizing, and archiving manuscripts and other records for this project.

The idea of placing a conservation easement on the property was prompted through a friendship between Gene Likens and Carl Leopold, son of conservationist Aldo Leopold. Carl was working with the Finger Lakes Land Trust in New York. "We see the development that has been going on around lakes in northern Wisconsin and know that our children would not be able to maintain it in this primitive state that we enjoy," Gene explained. "So, setting up a conservation easement was a way to try to protect those values that we hold dear."

Gene described his land-use ethic: "The impact, the footprint if you will, that we have (with a small, primitive cabin) on the land is really quite small compared to the large homes being built. I take my ecological work seriously. I can't give lectures about how I think things ought to be and then not live my life in the same way."

"We read the local newspapers and see the condominiums going up on lakes that cannot really withstand that development," noted Phyllis. "It bothers me a lot."

While their four children live a long distance away and do not visit the northwoods much, Gene explained that they are in full support of the easement. They understand that they will have use of the property, but that it cannot be further developed.

Phyllis and Gene enjoy their time on the water fishing and canoeing. They also love to hike and spend time with their children and seven grandchildren.

As stewards of the land, they carefully look, listen and study. The Likens have observed moccasin flower, turtles, hooded mergansers, beaver, porcupines, muskrat, otter, barred owl, fringed polygala, blue-flag iris, pitcher plants, sundew and a variety of other plant and animal species.

The red and white pine trees on the property are now 110 years old and before logging was done on the property many years ago, the red and white pines were over 400 years old, Gene explained. "So, I would like to see, 100 years from now, these trees 210 years old."

Phyllis added that she would like to see the large trees still standing, the favorite bog pond remain in its pristine condition, and no further development - "A wild place for my grandchildren."

The Likens reflected on what words they would like to leave with those grandchildren about the property and protecting it with a conservation easement. "I did this for you," Gene stated. "I wanted you to have the opportunity to see and enjoy what I love so much. I didn't know how else to do it, but to protect a little spot of land."

Phyllis added, "I wanted to protect something for them to pass on to their grandchildren. I expect them to keep it wild and natural, just like we kept it for them. Take care of the land."





## The Wellenstein Family’s Conservation Legacy

The largest single conservation easement to date protected by the Northwoods Land Trust was completed on over 800 acres of land in the towns of Newbold and Pine Lake in Oneida County. This agreement added to an already extraordinary family conservation legacy.

The large property was purchased by Walter and Janet (Nina) Wellenstein and gifted to their adult children through the Highlands Limited Partnership of Wisconsin. The site was originally owned by other extended family members. Walt bought it in order to keep the land where he grew up intact.

The Partnership consists of five siblings - Rick Wellenstein, Charles Wellenstein, Michael Wellenstein, Anna Wellenstein and Bart Wellenstein. All five signed the easement to ensure that these family lands will always remain together.

Just one residential building zone is reserved in the conservation easement property. Altogether, the project protects roughly 36,000 total feet of lake shorelines - an extraordinary amount of undeveloped frontage. The conserved property almost entirely encompasses Fredrich’s Flowage, a series of flowage pools which provide outstanding waterfowl habitat.

Included on the site is nearly 4,600 feet of frontage on Douglas Lake, about two-thirds of the lake’s shoreline. With relatively little development, Douglas Lake was identified by the DNR Northern Initiatives as a “wild lake” warranting enhanced protection.

In addition, the property conserves over 6,000 feet of shorelines along Tom Doyle Creek and McCabe Creek, which flow into the Wisconsin River. A smaller flowage on McCabe Creek provides excellent waterfowl habitat as well during high water years.



Walter and Nina Wellenstein celebrate protecting their family lands with their children (from left) Michael Wellenstein, Rick Wellenstein, Anna Wellenstein, Charles Wellenstein and Bart Wellenstein.

Significantly, these 800+ acres are located adjacent to the 595-acre conservation easement protected by Walt and Nina Wellenstein in December of 2007. That property includes the entire shorelines of two other DNR-listed “wild lakes” - McCabe Lake and Mudhen Lake. McCabe Lake was one of the top ranked “wild lakes” in Oneida County. Wild lakes are among the highest strategic conservation priorities in NWLT’s recently-adopted five-year strategic plan.

Altogether, the two conservation easements provide lasting protection for an extensive block of over 1,400 acres of conserved lands. In addition, this block is contiguous with other state of Wisconsin lands and close to the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest. Large blocks of interconnected forests, wetlands and other wildlife habitats are important for many free-ranging mammals, birds and other animal species.

In addition to waterfowl production on the flowages, both properties are actively managed for forest products under a forest management plan prepared by a consulting forester.

Our hats off and heartiest thanks to the entire Wellenstein family for leaving such an incredible conservation legacy for all of the future generations!



About 4,600 feet of natural shoreline frontage will forever be protected on Douglas Lake, a DNR-listed “wild lake.”



## Enhanced Federal Income Tax Benefits extended for 2010-2011

The national Land Trust Alliance, of which NWLT is an affiliate member, recently announced some great news. Both the Senate and House of Representatives passed a bill in the lame duck session of Congress, which President Obama signed, extending the enhanced Federal income tax benefits for donations of conservation easements.

The same enhanced benefits have applied to donated conservation easements for the previous four years, but ended at the close of 2009. The extended benefits now apply to any conservation easement donated since January 1, 2010, and will continue through all of 2011.

The enhanced benefits include a special income tax deduction rate increasing the deductibility of the charitable contribution from 30% to 50% of the landowners' adjusted gross income in any one year. Any remaining contribution balance (based on values established by an IRS-standard conservation easement appraisal) may be carried forward a maximum of an additional 15 instead of 5 years.

These enhanced benefits may not be as important to conservation easement donors with higher incomes compared with the appraised donation value. However, property owners with lower incomes and high-value conservation easements are much more likely to be able to maximize their utilization of the charitable deduction.

We are very pleased with the outstanding level of bipartisan support demonstrated for these enhanced benefits. Encouraging voluntary conservation of private lands certainly makes fiscal sense, especially during tight economic times.

While we hope these benefits can be extended again after 2011, their future is unknown at this time. Therefore, we highly recommend that any landowners who are seriously considering granting a conservation easement to protect their family lands, get in touch with NWLT soon. It can often take many months to complete all of the baseline documentation work, and negotiate and legally review a conservation easement project that would be eligible for the enhanced benefit. The conservation easement must be recorded at the county Register of Deeds prior to the end of 2011 in order to qualify.

While we strive to meet IRS requirements for all easement donations, the Northwoods Land Trust cannot guarantee their deductibility. For that reason, we strongly recommend you consult your own financial and legal advisors to consider how these enhanced federal income tax benefits may apply to your own situation.

If you, your accountant or other advisors have any questions on how the enhanced federal income tax benefits apply to conservation easement donations, please feel free to contact the NWLT office at (715) 479-2490 or email [nwlt@northwoodslandtrust.org](mailto:nwlt@northwoodslandtrust.org).



*Enhanced federal income tax benefits during 2010 and 2011 will help encourage even more private landowners to permanently protect their family lands with conservation easement donations - like the Wellenstein family who protected Fredrich's Flowage above.*

### Enhanced Federal Income Tax Benefits: An Example

If the appraised fair market value (FMV) of a property before a conservation easement (CE) is donated is \$400,000, but with the perpetual development restrictions of the CE in place the appraiser indicates the FMV is now \$250,000, then the value of the CE for a charitable deduction is a total of \$150,000.

Under the normal federal tax benefits, a donor with a \$30,000 annual adjusted gross income (AGI) would only be able to utilize 30% of their AGI in any one year (\$9,000). The carry-forward period for utilizing any remaining balance from the charitable deduction would be up to an additional five years. In this case, the landowner would only have been able to utilize a total charitable deduction value of \$54,000 of the \$150,000 (\$9,000 each year for a total of six years).

Under the enhanced tax benefits, that same donor could claim a charitable deduction value of 50% of the AGI (\$15,000) for the first year. The remaining deduction balance could be carried forward for each of the next nine years. Assuming the same income level each year, the total \$150,000 charitable deduction would be fully used up over a 10-year period.

Your financial advisor can help you "run the numbers" with your own finances to see how this may apply to you.

## Priority rivers & streams project now underway in Forest County

A Wisconsin DNR River Planning grant project to encourage private owners of natural river and stream frontage in Forest County to conserve their properties is underway thanks to assistance from NWLT volunteers. Based on the highly-successful Vilas and Oneida County private lake and river shoreland protection projects, the Forest County rivers project is a critical component of NWLT's newly-revised and adopted five-year strategic plan.

Similar to our recent Forest County lake project, the grant utilized NWLT's geographic information system (GIS) computer technology to identify all priority river and stream parcels with a minimum of about 500 feet or more of natural shoreline frontage. Digital parcel maps and aerial photos were overlaid where needed to determine the extent of natural versus developed frontage.

The selected parcels were mapped on the GIS system for each town. The parcels were then linked with the Forest County tax roll database to generate a mailing list of the landowners.

Over 870 parcels were identified and mapped. After editing for landowners with multiple parcels, and those who have received a guide from NWLT previously, a total of 344 landowners on these priority rivers and streams were identified. Copies of "For the Love of the Land... A Landowner's Conservation Guide to Protecting Your Northwoods Property" were mailed in August to each of these identified landowners.

All of the landowner mailing packets were assembled quickly by a group of NWLT volunteers who met at the Olson Memorial Library in Eagle River. Special thanks to Ron Becker, Walt Gager, Betty and Gus Gussick, Jim Holperin, Tom Katsich, Dale Lang, Marlette Larson, Anita and Walle Salinas, Marion Schoofs, and June Wedell for all of their volunteer assistance!

We'd also like to thank the Forest County Association of Lakes, Forest County Land & Water Conservation Department, Forest County UW-Extension, River Alliance of Wisconsin, Forest County Emergency Management/911 and the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission for their support and assistance.

Funding assistance to complete this project is being provided by the \$10,000 DNR River Planning Grant award. The required 25% local grant match includes significant volunteer and professional assistance. Other project expenses are covered by contributions from NWLT members and supporters.

The project runs through the end of 2011. We will be providing technical assistance to any of these river and stream shoreline owners who wish to permanently protect their land along these high-quality segments. For more information on the rivers project, contact NWLT office at (715) 479-2490.



*Owners of natural shorelines on high quality rivers and streams in Forest county are the focus of a DNR River Planning grant project.*

### Dale Druckrey

#### Loss of a River Champion

With the death of Dale Druckrey, of Bonduel, we have all lost a true conservationist and a special friend to clean, flowing waters. Fire fighters responded to a fire at his home and found the house engulfed in flames. His body was found later.

Dale Druckrey was a staunch supporter of Trout Unlimited and a major donor to the Northwoods Land Trust, as well as to other conservation organizations.

I met Dale when I gave a presentation to the Oconto Chapter of TU, and he signed up to receive our newsletter. He participated in our canoe excursions, including down the scenic Deerskin River (in the canoe in the photo above) where we visited the recently-protected conservation easement property of Bob and Kathy Martini. Dale truly loved trout waters, and often visited his rustic cabin on the Pine River, a federally-designated Wild & Scenic River.

Dale set up a donor-advised fund with the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, and he regularly designated a contribution to come to NWLT. In addition, he had an undeveloped lot in a subdivision in Minocqua that he sold. The proceeds were split between the Natural Resources Foundation, River Alliance of Wisconsin (who he also generously supported), TU and NWLT.

Dale was truly a champion for protecting wild rivers and streams. He will be sorely missed.

- Bryan Pierce, NWLT Executive Director

## Norcross Wildlife Foundation Grant

Thanks to a \$2,000 grant from the Norcross Wildlife Foundation of Wales, MA, NWLT volunteer conservation easement monitors will have new monitoring equipment. In 2011, 55 conservation land and easement properties will need to be monitored by both volunteers and staff, up from 48 easements monitored in 2010.

The Norcross Foundation's grant will help to fund new GPS units, digital cameras, compasses, clipboards, fanny packs and other gear the volunteers need in order to conduct the annual monitoring visits. Our goal is to make at least five complete monitoring kits available which can be checked out for the on-site field tours.

Volunteers should contact Conservation Specialist Trisha Moore at (715) 891-2412 to coordinate use of the packs. We appreciate the Foundation's support!



*Proceeds from the sale of this donated 100-foot lot on Pickerel Lake west of Eagle River will support NWLT's northwoods conservation efforts. See the NWLT website for details: [www.northwoodslandtrust.org](http://www.northwoodslandtrust.org).*

## 2010 Anonymous Stock Donation

We are very pleased to acknowledge and thank our wonderful donor from the Rhinelander area, who wishes to remain anonymous, for her extraordinary contribution again in 2010! NWLT is very pleased to be the recipient of this large gift of stocks to support our conservation work.

These stocks have appreciated significantly in value over the years, in spite of the economic downturn. As a result, the stock donation has important donor tax benefits from a capital gains perspective. The real benefit though is knowing this gift will help us to continue our efforts to protect our beautiful northwoods - a gift that truly lasts. Our sincerest appreciation for the donor's continued, outstanding support for the Northwoods Land Trust!

With assistance from former Board Treasurer Tim Hagen of Financial Services Group in Rhinelander, NWLT has established a brokerage account to easily accept gifts of stocks. Please contact the NWLT office at (715) 479-2490 for details if you are interested in making a gift.



## JOIN THE NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

HELP KEEP THE NORTHWOODS THE NORTHWOODS!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (w): \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (h): \_\_\_\_\_

E mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

### Membership Contributions

- Individual \$25
- Family \$35
- Supporter \$50
- Founder \$100
- Conservator \$250
- Steward \$500
- Land Legacy \$1000
- 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.

## A Board United... Congratulations to Beth Tornes and Bill Dickens!

We realize it is not often that we celebrate other events not sponsored by the Northwoods Land Trust in our newsletter, but we really have to take some credit for this. You might say that we had a direct hand in it.

When Attorney Bill Dickens of Rhinelander joined the NWLT Board of Directors in the summer of 2009, he was introduced to the fellow board members at his first official meeting in September. There he met board member Beth Tornes, who works as a grant writer for the Great Lakes Intertribal Council in Lac du Flambeau. They also wound up sitting next to each other at the NWLT volunteer recognition event held that evening at Otto's Pub in Minocqua. The rest, as they say, is history.

Beth was a little sheepish as she announced at a Finance Committee meeting this summer that she couldn't help with arrangements for our banquet because she had "other commitments" - and then we finally noticed the flashing engagement ring. Bill caught a bit of ribbing the next evening at the Conservation Committee meeting too.



In spite of all that, Beth and Bill were married on August 28th. Their wedding was held at scenic Dillman's Resort on White Sand Lake in Lac du Flambeau.

As Beth commented: "Dillman's was the perfect spot for the wedding, and we had a beautiful day. If it weren't for Northwoods Land Trust, this could never have happened! Thanks for inviting Bill to join the Board!"

You are both very welcome. Congratulations from all of us! 



**NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST**

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

### Board of Directors & Staff

Mary Schwaiger, President  
Bob Martini, Vice-President  
Willa Schmidt, Secretary  
Sue Coffman, Treasurer  
Pete Davison  
William Dickens  
Jim Holperin  
John Huppert  
Mitchell Olson  
Meta Reigel  
Beth Tornes  
Dan Wisniewski  
Bryan Pierce, Exec. Director  
Trisha Moore, Conservation  
Specialist

Nonprofit  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Eagle River, WI  
Permit No. 47

*Please remember NWLT in your  
annual and planned giving.  
Give a gift that will last forever!*