



# NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

HELP LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY FOR THE NORTHWOODS

*Next Issue: Focus on Florence County*

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

March 2012

## Winter Park Pines Nature Preserve Dedicated

On December 1, 2011, the Winter Park Pines Nature Preserve was established with the granting of a perpetual conservation easement by Ken and Carolyn Aldridge of Libertyville, IL and Minocqua, to the Northwoods Land Trust. This 3,195 acre property - nearly five square miles - includes about 43 kilometers of cross-country ski and snow shoe trails at the core of the Minocqua Winter Park Nordic Center's trail system.

"This project is the largest conservation easement ever donated to a land trust in Wisconsin," said Bryan Pierce, NWLT Executive Director. "Ken and Carolyn have left an extraordinary legacy for both conservation and public winter recreation in the northwoods."

*"This project is the largest conservation easement ever donated to a land trust in Wisconsin"*

*- Bryan Pierce, NWLT Executive Director*



*Ken and Carolyn Aldridge protected forever nearly 3,200 acres in December as the new Winter Park Pines Nature Preserve.*

*Photo by Ed Duda*

Minocqua Winter Park is regarded as one of the premier cross-country ski trail systems in the Midwest. The ski chalet located on 40 acres of land owned by the Town of Minocqua is managed for public use under an agreement with the Lakeland Ski Touring Foundation, Inc. The Winter Park Pines Nature Preserve entirely surrounds the chalet property.

Through the conservation agreement, the land will remain forever open to the public for winter silent sports including cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and skijoring (skiing with dogs). Ski trails now protected include the Base Loop, Tornado Alley, Survivor Windy Ridge, Nutcracker, Nose Dive, Beaver Pond, Creek Trail, Red Pine, Silver Strider, Sleigh Ride, VO2 Max, Nepco's Cruise, most of X-C Express and River Run, as well as the northern half of Yukon. Much of the newly-expanded snowshoe trail system is protected as well.

The Aldridges have also placed limits on forestry practices, land fragmentation and development which will

*(Continued next page)*



*Photo courtesy of Minocqua Winter Park*

### 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 in Vilas, Oneida, Forest, Florence, Iron and Price Counties and the surrounding region.*

*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  
Staff Writer: Trisha Moore



## Winter Park Pines Nature Preserve - continued

keep the land in its natural state. The conservation agreement protects over 13 miles of natural shorelines on the Squirrel River, Yukon Creek, Howard's Creek, and other small, un-named streams and ponds. In addition, the land provides natural habitat buffers around and adjacent to the Squirrel River Pines State Natural Area.

“What caught our interest first were all of the old, mature trees on it,” said Ken. “The land has a lot of glacial features, with eskers and potholes, so there is a lot of relief to the terrain. As we explored it we found out more and more how beautiful it was. But it was the trees that really caught our attention, and the excess clearcutting going on that made us pretty nervous about the future there.”

“In 1924, my mother started vacationing in Minocqua with her family on Lake Shishebogama, so her family history was here,” Ken continued. “They bought a place on Blue Lake in 1946, so when I was born I started coming up right away. Now it is our home. Just 10 miles from Blue Lake, Winter Park has been my backyard since I was very young.”

“When I was in my teens, I was hiking and biking there, and climbing the fire tower,” related Ken. “I climbed the tower all the time, and my kids have climbed it. It is the best view in the whole county. We’ve had a long history of hanging out at Winter Park. After a while you get to really appreciate the beauty with the big trees. I never skied there when it was a downhill area, but right after it started as a nordic area in the mid-70s I was skiing there.”

According to Carolyn, she is from Vermont where “cross-country skiing is just about all you do. When I moved out here and discovered Winter Park, I was in heaven. We were out there all of the time skiing. Our favorite trail was River Run, and one day we were out there skiing and all of a sudden here was a big clearcut. We just stopped in our tracks and said, ‘we’ve got to stop this. How do we do it?’”

*Left: “I climbed the tower all the time, and my kids have climbed it. It is the best view in the whole county... After a while you get to really appreciate the beauty with the big trees.” - Ken Aldridge*



*Over 13 miles of river, stream, lake and pond shorelines were protected by the Winter Park conservation easement, including the Squirrel River (above).*

### 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.

## Winter Park Pines Nature Preserve - continued

The Aldridges spent \$4.5 million to purchase the nearly 3,200 acres, then granted the conservation easement to NWLT restricting development forever. “It became somewhat emotional,” Ken explained. “I went in thinking I’d buy 1,000 acres with some local people just to preserve the core ski trails. It turned out the only way to preserve the thousand acres was to buy the whole thing, or we weren’t able to make the deal happen. We went from buying a third of it to buying all of it within a two-month period, so it all happened really fast.”

“We definitely went out on a limb,” said Carolyn, “but it is like when a fire is coming, you do what you have to do. It was only afterwards that we thought, ‘what have we done?’”

Squirrel Hill used to be a local downhill ski area that operated 50 years ago, but it closed down for financial reasons. Thirty years ago the Lakeland Ski Touring Foundation worked with the town of Minocqua to operate the ski chalet and develop, groom and maintain the extensive system of about 75 total kilometers of trails.



*Celebrating the December 1st signing of the Winter Park conservation easement were (from left): Atty. Tom Lawrence, Pam Fashingbauer-President of Lakeland Ski Touring Foundation, Ken and Carolyn Aldridge, Ed Duda-Compass Land Consulting, Mary Schwaiger-NWLT President, Dr. David Kozeluh-Lakeland Ski Touring Foundation Past-President, and Bryan Pierce-NWLT Executive Director.*

“The conservation easement was an early Christmas present for the many friends of Minocqua Winter Park,” exclaimed Dr. David Kozeluh, Past-President of the Foundation’s Board of Directors. “The Winter Park Board has known for a long time that we could have the best groomed trails in the state, the best equipment, the best staff, and the best facility for our guests, but if we didn’t have the land, we had nothing.”

“We really felt we needed to do everything in our power to figure out a way to protect the land, keep the trails intact, and keep the forest from being fragmented into smaller and smaller pieces that would make it more difficult to retain access to those trails,” Kozeluh added. “Fortunately, there are many people in this community who also care about Winter Park. Through many years of networking we were able to finally put all of the right people together at the right time.”

Pierce noted that this project was more involved than a typical conservation easement because of the public access provisions for winter recreation and working in partnership with the Lakeland Ski Touring Foundation as the nonprofit management organization that maintains the trail system.

“It was about an 18-month process,” said Pierce. “It is also a great example of people stepping up as conservation buyers, where they find an area that they love and know they want to protect, and they realize it is going to take someone to step in and buy it.”

“I knew I couldn’t afford to keep all the land, so the conservation easement was the only way to protect it

*(Continued next page)*

*“As someone who has been a part of those discussions for a number of years, I can attest to the fact that dedicated folks have worked diligently to preserve Winter Park. I know how big a benefit this is to the community. It was certainly an interesting and unique project from my perspective. I enjoyed the opportunity to represent Ken and Carolyn and help bring this all together. For a long time there was a danger of fragmentation with new owners and running the risk that this whole trail system would have to be tweaked every year. Preserving this venue for skiing is a fantastic commitment for the community.”*

*- Attorney Tom Lawrence, Minocqua*

## Winter Park Pines Nature Preserve - *continued*

forever,” commented Ken. “It is a permanent deed restriction where the development rights have been extinguished. We have it (the land) divided into 12 parcels which are allowed by the easement to be sold off over time. Each one of those tracts has a building site which allows a very small, seasonal cabin to be built on it.” Anyone interested in learning more about the tracts for sale can contact Ed Duda, Compass Land Consulting, at (715) 892-2055.

“I love these northwoods, so it is really fun to be able to save it just like it is,” Ken explained. “We were able to stop all the clearcuts that were happening there and do the right thing.”

“The most fun for me at Winter Park is when I see all of the kids out there as the next generation, and the excitement and passion of all the volunteers working there,” said Ken. “That is what motivates us to get involved with this.”

Protection of the land also affects Carolyn deeply: “It is very visceral, with deep, deep emotion. I am a very strong outdoors woman. I live my life outdoors. When I discovered Winter Park, it was paradise for me to ski through the trails with the forests, wetlands, rivers and views.”

“I think people that love the northwoods came here for the woods and the water, and sometimes they get

### ***From The Nature Conservancy:***

*“It is a great gift to the local community, to have that trail network protected forever and accessible,” said Matt Dallman, Northern Conservation Director for The Nature Conservancy (TNC) based in Minocqua.*

*“This project has been around since the late 1990s when the land traded hands from Packaging Corporation of America, then was sold to Tomahawk Timberlands and then Potlatch. All the while there was concern for Minocqua Winter Park about who might buy small pieces and close off access to trails. Now we don’t have to worry about that any more.”*

*Note: TNC is an important conservation partner for NWLT. Dallman provided assistance during both the purchase and conservation easement phases of the protection effort.*



*The protected land provides natural habitat buffers around and adjacent to the Squirrel River Pines State Natural Area.*

distracted and forget about it,” Ken added. “But at the end of the day, if they really sit back and think about why they are here, that is what they love – the clean water, the clean air and the woods. Someone has to step up and help preserve it. It is not just going to happen.”

A dedication event for the Winter Park Pines Nature Preserve was held on December 29th. “Unfortunately Ken and Carolyn couldn’t be there,” said Pierce. “Ken was ice-skating just before the ceremony and broke his leg above his ankle, so they were on their way to the hospital during the dedication. The dedication was really fun though because there were lots of skiers out after Christmas enjoying the new snow and extremely well-groomed trails, and there were a lot of other people who just wanted to thank the Aldridges.”

“We feel terrific about it,” commented Carolyn. “I was out at Winter Park recently, and the amount of gratitude from people is overwhelming. Ten thousand people a year use the ski trails, and everybody is so happy. That in itself is its own reward.”

To get to Minocqua Winter Park, take Hwy. 70 about 6.5 miles west of Minocqua, turn south on Squirrel Lake Road for about 4 miles, and follow the signs east ¼ mile on Scotchman Lake Road to the entrance drive.

For more information on the preserve, contact NWLT Executive Director Bryan Pierce at (715) 479-2490.



# NWLT Annual Report of Contributions Received in 2011

Our sincerest Thank You to all of our continuing members and contributors, and welcome to our new members and supporters!

## CONSERVATION EASEMENT DONORS

3,195 acres Ken & Carolyn Aldridge - MWP Preservation LLC  
56 acres Highlands Limited Partnership of Wisconsin - Michael, Rick, Charlie, Anna & Bart Wellenstein  
36.5 acres Jean & Jerry Crawford  
40 acres Michael (Mick) Mlinar  
82 acres Carol Ritter & Michael Eaton

## ORGANIZATION CONTRIBUTIONS

\$1,000 First National Bank of Eagle River  
\$100 + Squash Lake Association  
Snipe Lake Assn. Community Pharmacy, Madison  
\$50 + River Valley Bank of Eagle River  
St. Croix Rod Company, Park Falls  
\$20 + Woodland Indian Art Gallery, Lac du Flambeau  
Springstead Lake Lodge  
A Step Up Gift Shop, Minocqua

## FOUNDATION & GOVERNMENT GRANTS

\$25,832 DNR Lake Protection Grant  
\$20,000 John C. Bock Foundation  
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\$13,495 Wisconsin Environmental Education Board Forestry Education Grant Program  
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\$6,500 Waukesha County Community Foundation - Jeffrey D. & Sara R. Ford Wiesner Family Fund  
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Eloise & Jeffrey Potter  
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*Minocqua Winter Park is considered one of the premier cross-country ski trail systems in the Midwest, with over 70 kilometers of well-groomed ski trails.*

## Conservator - \$250-499

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# NWLT Annual Report of Contributions Received in 2011 - continued

Our sincerest Thank You to all of our continuing members and contributors, and welcome to our new members and supporters!



## Memberships, Memorial Gifts & Other Contributions - continued

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*Please note:  
We want to acknowledge your gift. If we have made an error, please let us know so we can correct it in our database and in future publications. Thank you for your outstanding support for the Northwoods Land Trust!*

## 8,500 Acres to Monitor...Oh My!!

Each year, NWLT staff and volunteers head into the woods to conduct the required annual monitoring visits on conserved properties. This ensures that regular contact is kept with landowners and that the conservation agreement is being upheld. Monitoring also helps the organization meet national land trust accreditation standards.



Meta Reigel monitors with landowner Terry Hatch.

In 2011, NWLT staff and 30 volunteers completed the monitoring visits on all 55 private conservation easement properties and three NWLT-owned properties, logging over 200 hours! In 2012 we will visit 62 properties and thousands of acres. The monitoring visits often help us learn more about the history of the land, the flora and fauna currently there, and the landowner's future plans for the property.

Monitoring visits include meeting with landowners, walking the property and taking photos of any changes to the land or structures. This is typically done during the snow-free months with the help of many dedicated volunteers. This core group of volunteers is vital to NWLT and the work we do after an easement is in place.

A volunteer training session will be held on **Saturday, April 28 from noon to 4 p.m.** at the Dr. David and Minka Dawson property south of Rhinelander on the Wisconsin River. In case of bad weather, May 5th is a backup date.

If you are a returning volunteer, look for your training letter in the mail at the end of March. If you are interested in participating in the training to become a volunteer monitor, contact Trisha at (715) 479-2490.

## You Can Help Protect Winter Park

Conservation easement donations do not come without costs. For the Aldridges, this included important legal assistance and reviews, consultants, appraisals and other costs above and beyond the \$4.5 million spent to purchase the land. The Northwoods Land Trust also takes on significant expenses and obligations that run in perpetuity, including annually monitoring and legally defending the conservation easement if needed.

In order to meet national land trust standards, NWLT must raise sufficient funds to meet these perpetual obligations. Due to the large size and complexity of the Winter Park project, this amounts to over \$100,000 to be set aside in a land stewardship fund. With help from the Aldridges, several foundations and families, we are making progress toward our goal, but we still need help!

Please use the form below or contact the NWLT office at (715) 479-2490 if you are willing to contribute to the lasting stewardship of this extraordinary project.



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



## JOIN THE NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

HELP KEEP THE NORTHWOODS THE NORTHWOODS!

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

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### 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.

## Winter Park Pines Nature Preserve is in the News!

The protection and dedication of the Winter Park Pines Nature Preserve brought extensive publicity for Minocqua Winter Park and the Northwoods Land Trust across Wisconsin and beyond. The project was featured on January 5th in a one-hour live broadcast on Glenn Moberg's Route 51 Wisconsin Public Radio program.


The WPR program included Moberg's interviews with representatives from NWLT, TNC and DNR. The broadcast also featured a taped interview with landowners Ken and Carolyn Aldridge. If you missed this program, you can still listen to it through [http://wpr.org/regions/wau/route51/archives\\_2012.cfm](http://wpr.org/regions/wau/route51/archives_2012.cfm).

The project made the front cover of the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel on December 16th with a feature article by Don Behm (who is also a conservation easement donor with NWLT). That article can be found at: <http://www.jsonline.com/news/wisconsin/couple-donates-conservation-easement-in-oneida-county-k43fjki-135778723.html>.

Naturalist John Bates announced the project in his regular column with the Lakeland Times, and many other newspapers covered the story including the Vilas County News Review, Wausau Daily Herald and Stevens Point Daily Journal. Feature articles were also written for the



Chicago Tribune, and Chicago area Daily Herald and Pioneer Press. Links to these articles were highlighted on both the Gathering Waters Conservancy and national Land Trust Alliance websites.

Regional television stations Channels 7, 9 and 12 also filmed the project at Winter Park, and viewers reported TV stations from as far as the Quad Cities in IL/IA that also picked up the story. We hope the example set by Ken and Carolyn will encourage other landowners to conserve their properties here in the northwoods and beyond! 



### NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

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

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