



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

Spring 2008

Squash Lake Peninsula Protected for Earth Day

Roger Degrís, a retired industrial technology teacher and former resort owner, has conserved an extensive, 20-acre peninsula along the southeast shoreline of Squash Lake west of Rhinelander. Squash Lake, a 396-acre seepage lake, is a popular recreational lake. Most of the lake's shoreline has been developed, but development will now be limited to just one year-round residence on the entire peninsula.

Roger feels he is completing the wishes of his brother, Orlan Degrís. Before he passed away in 2001, Orlan shared his vision with Roger: "Promise me one thing – you're not going to subdivide it (the land) and you're not going to sell it."

According to Roger, keeping this commitment to his brother has not been easy. Especially after the property was re-assessed, the property taxes went sky high because virtually the entire peninsula, with over 3,800 feet of shoreline frontage, was developable. "That promise became a gulping hard swallow when the property taxes would have become more than my pension. I would have



About 50 students and teachers from the Northwoods Community School in Rhinelander celebrated the signing of a conservation easement by landowner Roger Degrís as part of an Earth Day event. Sarah Juon photo used by permission of NewsOfTheNorth.net.

been forced to subdivide it and sell off all or parts of it," he said. Formerly run as a seasonal resort with small cottages, Roger enrolled the property in the state's Managed Forest Law program. "I put the land in forest management, which was the best thing that could have happened to it," he commented. "Then when the Northwoods Land Trust program came into existence, it was a dream come true," he added.

"I could have been rich and had it made," said Roger. "I could have turned the property into a true Peninsula Village." But, as he explained to over 50 students and teachers from the Northwoods Community School who witnessed the signing of the conservation easement protecting the property as part of an Earth Day event, "money isn't everything."

"There are a lot of people who look toward money as one of their big satisfactions," he stated. "So many people don't think about where they are living and what they are living in, and down the road it is going to be too late. Part of my help towards Earth Day is the fact that this isn't just for me, this is for the whole world."

(Continued next page)



Roger Degrís (2nd from right) signed a conservation easement to protect a peninsula on Squash Lake, as witnessed by (from left) NWLT Board member Bob Martini, Attorney Bill Dickens, and Executive Director Bryan Pierce. Photo by Dr. Walt Gager.

mission:

The Northwoods Land Trust (NWLТ) 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 Web site: 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



Squash Lake - continued

“Sometimes the greatest things in life are not money or being wealthy,” Roger said. “Some people thought I was nuts and said I was signing away millions of dollars, and they are right, I am. But at least I can be happy when I go wandering about the property, knowing that it is protected. A lot of people on the lake are also going to be happy when they can see the wildlife and the natural scenery without having one little house right next to another little house, next to another and so on. Hopefully this will help preserve this part of Squash Lake forever.”

“Whoever takes over the land in the future cannot back out,” Roger continued. “This is something forever, and I believe in it. I hope that it can have some meaning for you young people too. When I’m gone, a lot of these young faces I’m looking at will wonder what the world is going to be like. I hope they can always have something to enjoy as beautiful as this land.”

Originally developed as a small resort by the McGuire family, who also founded Birchfield Nursery, the land has been owned by the Degris family since 1967. “Our parents bought the property adjacent to the resort when we were kids in the early 1950s,” said Janet Appling, Roger’s sister. “They bought the property because it reminded them of their home land in Lithuania. We had a summer home there built by the whole family, and we spent our summers there every year.”

“I still have the hammer I was given as a little boy to help nail the boards for the siding,” added Roger. “Our parents eventually moved from Chicago up here. When I retired from teaching in Lake Zurich, IL, I decided to move back home to Wisconsin.”

“Now my brother’s dream, and the rest of our family’s dream of keeping this protected as a natural habitat, is coming true,” Roger said. “We hope that it will stay wild forever.” Janet added.

“It makes me feel good that it is finally completed,” said Roger. “Ironically, it is something that I wanted before the Northwoods Land Trust even came into existence. When I die I can always say I did my part, and I kept my promise.”

Left: With a perpetual conservation easement granted to the Northwoods Land Trust by Roger Degris, the natural scenic beauty of the former Peninsula View Resort will always be protected.



Over 3,800 feet of frontage on Squash Lake, a popular recreational lake west of Rhinelander, is now protected from development.

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.

The Nagy Family Provides for Generations Yet to Come

An article in the Wall Street Journal focusing on the tax benefits of donating conservation easements attracted the attention of Albert and Kathryn Nagy of Minocqua and San Juan Capistrano, CA. The Nagy family property includes 75 acres along the south shoreline of Marion Lake west of Minocqua, and they were interested in keeping this part of the lake undeveloped.

The conservation easement was granted in December to the Northwoods Land Trust, working in cooperation with Attorney Greg Harrold and the Lakeland Conservancy. “We were contemplating putting a conservation easement on the property as a part of our estate planning,” said Al. “We knew of conservation easements and were looking at exploring ways to, as permanently as possible, keep that acreage from being developed.”

According to Al, the family had owned land on Marion Lake since 1939. “In 1956, Owens-Illinois clearcut their adjacent land, but made an error and also logged some of our family’s property. Rather than accepting compensation, my Dad asked for an option to buy the land if they ever sold it,” he said. In the early 1970s, Owens-Illinois decided to sell the land, so Al and Kathy, along with Al’s sister and brother-in-law, Alice and Howard Fager, bought 148 acres.

Formerly managed as industrial forest land, the Nagy family kept the property under the Forest Crop Law program. The forest is now enrolled in the state’s Managed Forest Law program. “It was our intent to keep this as managed forest at least during our lifetimes,” said Al. “When we started looking at our estate plan, we talked with our children, and they also wanted it preserved if possible.”

“It was our parents’ view that this place should always be a place of sanctuary,” said Al. “We have fortunately been able to maintain this vision.”

“There have also been lots of celebrations on the family property,” Al said. “My wife Kathy and I were



Celebrating the protection of 75 acres on Marion Lake are Lucas Nagy, Albert Nagy, Kathryn Nagy and Alice N. Fager.

married here. Alice and Howard have a home here on the lake. And our sister, Carol Nagy Jacklin, was also married here.”

“We have families on both coasts, so this is a place of coming together,” Kathy explained. “It has always been a goal of the family, especially as our kids grew up in the city, to be able to come here to walk and learn about the woods and have that experience of discovery and natural beauty.”

The land has become even more important as a place for continuing generations. The next generation of children now come for their summer vacations with their own children, and spend more time here. “It makes us feel both excited and at peace to have put a conservation easement on the property,” said Kathy.

A business consultant, Al was raised in Chicago, but spent all of his summers at the property. Although now living in other parts of the country, Al and Kathy’s children Burke (29), Lucas (27) and Annika (24) also spent all of their summers here, and still come for at least one week in the summer plus one other holiday. “The land gives us a sense of history for the family too,” added Annika.

“We have provided for generations yet to come,” said Al. “One hundred years from now we’d like the property to be just like this. Those future generations can look across the lake at the land just as their great, great grandparents saw it when they first came here.”

The conservation easement does not allow any structures to be built or the 75 acres to be subdivided. “We want to maintain the shoreline and the natural beauty. The land trust’s goals are the same as our goals, which made it so easy,” said Kathy.

“Some people thought that we were ‘giving away our kids’ inheritance,’ but not all inheritance is monetary in our opinion,” Kathy stated. “What they are inheriting is worth a lot more.”



Over 1,200 feet of entirely natural shoreline frontage on Marion Lake west of Minocqua (Oneida Co.) was protected by the Nagy family.

(Continued on page 6)

Wallmann-Holtzer Nature Preserve Dedicated on Big Portage Lake

By Willa Schmidt

Sybil Holtzer first came to the Northwoods in the 1930s on a family trip around Lake Michigan from Chicago. When the family stopped to visit an uncle on Duck Lake in upper Michigan, he took them south into Wisconsin to Big Portage in the Town of Land O' Lakes, a better swimming lake for a small child. While there, her father was offered and agreed to purchase land on the lake and thereafter, Sybil would spend her summers in Vilas County.

An only child until the age of six, Sybil notes that the woods became her playmate and playground, something she credits as the inspiration for her later life's work as a research biologist. She loved traipsing about studying animals and insects and plants. She still does.

"You can always find something new," she points out. When asked about her favorites she declares, "No favorites. I love it all!" The overuse of night lighting disturbs her though, because of its harmful effect on wildlife and microorganisms, darkness being as necessary to creatures in the woods and water as it is to the birds that rely on starlight for navigation.

Sybil's studies led her to the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, where she and her husband, Professor Howard Holtzer, have spent many years working in the field of cell biology. Yet she has always remained devoted to Wisconsin's northwoods.



Sybil Holtzer (3rd from left) leads a walking tour along Big Portage Lake for the dedication for the Wallmann-Holtzer Nature Preserve.

In a visit to the area during the 1960s she decided to purchase her own piece of land on Big Portage Lake, to honor her preservation ideal. From Lyle Dussault she bought 750 feet of frontage and approximately eight acres that she vowed to keep unchanged. "I just wanted it for the woods," she says. When she heard about the Northwoods Land Trust and its role in helping private landowners conserve open land, she realized she'd found a way to carry her wishes into the future.

"There are tax advantages to an easement," she notes, "and the money you save leaves more for other good causes." But her primary purpose is keeping the land as it is. "It's like a jewel you treasure." She enjoys sitting on the shore, knowing the only changes that happen will be natural ones.

The Holtzer easement, completed in December 2007, calls for no subdivision, no buildings or roads, no direct access except by boat. There may be footpaths, but of no more than six feet in width. The intent is to leave the property as an undisturbed nature preserve with minimal human disturbance. Now dedicated as the Wallmann-Holtzer Nature Preserve, eventually signs will be placed visible from the lake identifying it as such, with public access by prior permission only.

Featuring a beach ridge and uplands of northern hardwoods and large red and white pines as well as swamp lowlands, the Holtzer parcel is one of the few remaining large segments of undeveloped natural shoreline on Big Portage Lake. In 2002 it was identified by the Wisconsin DNR as one of the lake's thirteen "sensitive areas" due to its habitat for wildlife, its terrestrial vegetation, water quality protection and natural scenic beauty.

Ospreys, eagles, herons and loons are among the birds sighted there, and the coarse woody undergrowth left in a natural condition provides nesting and denning opportunities for a variety of other birds and animals.



The Wallmann-Holtzer Nature Preserve now protects over 8 acres and 750 feet of natural shoreline, a "sensitive area" on Big Portage Lake.

Range Line Lake Project Buffers Vilas County Forest

Almost 19 acres of former resort property on Range Line Lake will now permanently buffer adjacent Vilas County Forest lands thanks to Thomas (Ellen) Katsich of Eagle River. The Katsich property in the town of Cloverland has now been conserved with a perpetual conservation easement granted to the Northwoods Land Trust.

According to Tom, he acquired the former Range Line Rest Resort in 1972. “When we moved up here to Eagle River, there was no McDonald’s, no Pizza Hut, no bypass, there was not even a stop-and-go light,” he said. “Now it has changed tremendously. There is so much development going on everywhere.”

“The property we initially bought was a resort, but we petitioned to rezone the lake for single-family dwellings,” Tom said. “We adjoin Vilas County Forest land on three sides of our property, and that is one of the reasons we wanted to preserve this land. No matter who owns it in the future, it will always be the same.”

NWLT Executive Director Bryan Pierce commented that “from our land trust’s perspective, this project is great because the property provides a nice buffer for the larger block of Vilas County Forest lands. Now there is no chance of having those 18.7 acres split up into multiple residential lots.”

Range Line Lake, a 60-acre seepage lake, does not have a public boat landing. However, the lake is publicly accessible by walking through the Vilas County Forest lands. “It is a shallow lake, so there are no walleyes or muskies,” said Tom. “But it is a good fishing lake for panfish. The grandkids love it.”

The Katsich property includes over 375 feet of lake frontage. “Part of that frontage is entirely natural tamarack-spruce swamp immediately adjacent to the Vilas County lands, providing for a more extensive stretch of natural shoreline frontage along the north shore of the



The 18.7-acre Katsich property is contiguous on three sides with Vilas County Forest lands, including this north shoreline of Range Line Lake.

lake,” said Pierce. “On the south side there is also a real nice natural buffer strip of shoreline habitat between the Katsich home and the adjacent lakefront property. Within the conservation easement, those two areas are designated as shoreland protection zones.”

According to Pierce, one of the benefits of a conservation easement is its flexibility. “You can look at the individual features of each site and design a conservation easement to fit the characteristics of the property, the owners’ wishes and how the property can best be protected through the terms of the easement,” he said. As an unfragmented block of forest and wetland habitat contiguous with extensive Vilas County land, the conservation values of the property are significant.

“With all of the development around us, I think we see more wildlife now because they’ve got nowhere to go,” Tom commented. “They come through our land to get to the County land, so we see everything.”

“When we were walking the property to find the lot lines, we literally stepped on a fawn,” said Tom. “We had two dogs with us and they never sensed it. We took a couple of pictures, then Ellen called the Northwoods Wildlife Center, and they said to leave it alone. Sure enough, the mother came back, got it and it was gone. But it was amazing that our dogs never smelled it.” They have also seen bobcat, otter, mink, fisher, fox, woodchuck, porcupine, badger, skunk, black bear and many other species of wildlife.

In 100 years Tom would like the property to look “just the way it is now.” “It should look the same, but maybe with some updated outbuildings,” added Ellen. “There would be just one family there enjoying it.”



The NWLT Board of Directors celebrated the signing of a conservation easement for the Katsich property. Pictured from left are: Bryan Pierce, Pete Davison, Mary Schwaiger, Sue Coffman, Willa Schmidt, Dan Wisniewski, Ellen Katsich, Tom Katsich, John Huppert, Meta Reigel, Jim Holperin and Ed Moww.

For Generations Yet to Come - *continued*

With a degree in environmental studies, son Lucas uses the property for relaxation, kayaking, canoeing, catch-and-release fishing, walking in the woods, mountain biking on the logging trails, and just being quiet and communing with nature. "I think the conservation easement is great," he said. "It sets in stone the deeper desire of what we all want for the land. Lots of great pieces of land are lost to not-so-great development. Especially in the last 10 years, there has been an explosion. This piece of land is a part of our lives."

"When I was little, I used to have really bad dreams that someone had built condos around the lake," added Annika. "It was one of my major fears as a kid - that I would come up here one summer and it would all be developed. I've seen a lot of places I loved get developed. I want to be able to bring my kids here and have it look like it does now. It means a lot to just be able to look at the land. It is nice to canoe along the shoreline and have it be all natural."

When asked about the family's strong environmental ethic, Lucas explained that it had to come in part from being up here every summer for a few months. "Especially when we were little kids, we were out in the woods every day," he said. "We grew very attached to the land."

"The family has always been appreciative and

respectful of the land," commented Al. "We recognize the need for both human and natural spaces, but we need a proper balance."

With their perpetual conservation easement, the Nagy family has made a lasting commitment to ensure at least some of those natural spaces are now protected.



These 75 acres of productive woodlands will never be subdivided for new residences thanks to the Nagy family conservation easement.

Wallmann-Holtzer Nature Preserve - *continued*

In addition, the Holtzer land helps provide an important environmental corridor linking nearby Vilas County forest land to the south with the Ottawa National Forest and other protected areas to the north and east. An intermittent stream connecting Big Portage Lake with Pickerel Creek to the north during high water levels runs through the property.



Sybil Holtzer finds putting a permanent easement on her land "a great relief." Her word of advice to other landowners considering such action is "Go for it! Not all your descendants will fit on your property, better to let them share and leave more of it in a natural state."

Her message to future generations is similar: remember to give in equal amounts to what you've received, and leave the things that have given you enjoyment for others to enjoy. Now retired, Sybil and Howard continue to make their home in Philadelphia, but they plan to spend the summer in Wisconsin, hiking the woodlands, relaxing by the shore, treasuring their Big Portage Lake jewel.

Range Line Lake - *continued*

In a different way, members of the family will remain a part of the protected property forever. "We have a home burial plot," explained Tom. "We did that many years ago. Once someone is actually buried there, it becomes state property. The State Historical Society keeps track of all the burial plots in Wisconsin." Pierce noted that the home burial plot was specifically excluded from the legal description of the land subject to the conservation easement.

Whether through protecting the land with a conservation easement, or becoming physically a part of the land, "forever" clearly means a lot to the Katisch family.



Tom Katisch literally stumbled upon this newborn fawn. The mother returned shortly and the fawn was fine.

Volunteers are Greatly Appreciated!

The Northwoods Land Trust has been greatly assisted by volunteers this spring with a number of projects.



Volunteers and NWLT Board members worked together in March to assemble large mailings of our landowner

conservation guides. These education packets were sent to over 800 owners of riverfront and woodland properties in Vilas County. Special thanks to Betty & Gus Gussick, Jean Johnson, Tom Katsch, Don Kratsch, Bill Reardon, Anita Salinas, Marion Schoofs, Bill Schweisheimer, Jim & Sandra Slagle, June Wedell, Pete Davison, Bob Martini, John Huppert, Meta Reigel and Willa Schmidt.

Coordinated for Earth Day by Anna Kazda with assistance from other Wisconsin DNR staff from the Rhinelander Service Center, a group of 48 students plus teachers from the Northwoods Community School in Rhinelander pulled large piles of honeysuckle and buckthorn, terrestrial invasive species, that were encroaching on the Holmboe Conifer Forest State Natural Area.

Dr. Walt Gager has volunteered to coordinate the annual monitoring visits by volunteers to NWLT's conservation easement properties. He is currently contacting volunteers and landowners. Interested in monitoring? Call NWLT.

Janet Christianson spent countless hours updating and editing a database for our upcoming bulk mailings. Thank you to all who have volunteered their time!

Gifts Leave a Lasting Legacy

NWLT recently received the following gifts in honor of special people and as truly lasting memorials:

Willa Schmidt made a gift in memory of Marguerite Christensen, NWLT member who died at age 90 on May 6. "Marge grew up at the State Forestry Headquarters at Trout Lake, known back then as the 'State House,' where her father was in charge and her mother cooked for a crew of 30 men. Though much of her adult life was spent working in Madison as Head of Reference at the University of Wisconsin's main library, the northwoods always had a special place in Marge's heart."

Other memorial gifts were contributed by Marion Schoofs of Eagle River in memory of the following individuals: Charles Arndt of Eagle River, Roy Petts of Eagle River, Mildred Schultz of Eagle River, Urban Rehberg of Eagle River, and Dr. Joe Schoofs of Pocahontas, IA.

Scott Watson and Susan Scobell Watson wrote the following in a note to NWLT: "Please accept this contribution to the Northwoods Land Trust in recognition of your excellent work and in honor of Bob Martini's 31 years of service to Wisconsin." Bob retired in 2007 from his position as the DNR State Rivers Coordinator.



Invasive honeysuckle pulled at Holmboe Woods for Earth Day.



JOIN THE NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

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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.

YOU ARE INVITED!

2008 NWLT Annual Meeting to feature a walking tour of Tom Turriff's Mud Lake Conservation Easement Property

You are cordially invited to participate in the Northwoods Land Trust's 2008 Annual Meeting on **Thursday, June 19th** at the St. Germain Outdoor Pavilion. The Annual Meeting will begin with a **free barbecue cookout** starting at **4:30 p.m.** At 5:00 p.m. we'll give a summary report on NWLT's record year of conservation projects.

Following the Annual Meeting, please join us for a short, guided walking tour of Tom Turriff's 140-acre conservation easement property. Protected in 2005, this conservation project includes about 475 feet of natural bog frontage on Mud Lake, a DNR-listed "wild lake." We'll carpool less than 5 miles from the pavilion to the property.

We recommend wearing rubber-bottom boots, as part of the trail winds through a black spruce swamp. Long pants, long sleeves and bug dope are also suggested.

To RSVP (preferred to help us plan for the cookout, but not required), please contact the NWLT office at (715) 479-2490 or email us at nwlt@northwoodslandtrust.org.

DIRECTIONS: The Pavilion is located just one-half block west of the intersection of Hwy. 70 and Hwy. 155 in downtown St. Germain on the north side of Hwy. 70. 



A guided walking tour of Tom Turriff's 140-acre conservation easement project in the town of St. Germain will be featured as part of the 2008 NWLT Annual Meeting. The tour is a unique opportunity for NWLT members and supporters to see this privately-protected property with its natural bog habitat fringing the shoreline on Mud Lake.



NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

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