



NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

LEAVING A LASTING LEGACY
FOR THE NORTHWOODS



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

Winter 2013-14

Wisconsin River Corridor Protected

"Sometimes the only way to save a piece of property is to buy it," said Tim Hagen, of Rhinelander. "That is what we did, that is the idea." Tim and wife Kimberly Kelling have now saved a special section of the Upper Wisconsin River.

They bought a 98.78-acre property just to conserve in the town of Crescent, Oneida County. The land includes over one mile, 5,440 feet, of entirely natural frontage on the Wisconsin River. Flowing below Hat Rapids Dam south of Rhinelander, the Wisconsin River in this stretch is very wild and scenic. With its flowing gradient and stretches of rapids, this section is also popular and fun for canoeing and kayaking.

Tim noted that "there has always been some kind of attachment there because my Dad grew up across the River. He talked about it as Eternicka's Bend. I call it River Bend."

A few years ago, Tim bought 75 acres of what had originally been Eternicka family land on the east side of the river directly across from the new property. He granted a conservation easement to NWLT to protect it in December of 2008. The adjacent 50-acre property upstream, owned by second cousin Beverly Engstrom, was also protected earlier with a conservation agreement in 2006.

"No one thought that this family farm would ever go away, but that part of a farm property directly across the river was caught in a long family business lawsuit," said Tim. "It eventually came up for auction. A big part of acquiring this piece was Bev Engstrom. When I expressed an interest in putting out the money to buy this piece of property, we went back and forth on what it would cost and where we would get the money. Bev was very interested in helping out."

"A lot of people canoe and kayak this river section," Tim commented. "It is right outside Rhinelander and when it comes to rivers in the local area, it is a very undeveloped

"That was the idea behind buying the land – to protect that scenic canoe and kayak stretch." - Timothy Hagen



Celebrating the signing of the Wisconsin River conservation easement donation were (from left): NWLT Executive Director Bryan Pierce, landowners Kimberly Kelling and Timothy Hagen, and NWLT Board President Mary Schwaiger.

stretch of river. That was the idea behind buying the land – to protect that scenic canoe and kayak stretch. That was the bottom line, and it worked out well. We were going after one piece and ended up with more. As it turns out, I really wish I would have bought another piece, but we really didn't know financially that it was even going to be close to possible."

Hagen was persistent. He attended a first court-ordered

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

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
Staff Writer: Trisha Moore



Wisconsin River - continued

auction, but that included a reserve price.

“Our bid on the first auction did not meet the reserve, so all bids were rejected,” said Tim. “Then it came back to a second auction, but with no reserve. The reason we were able to buy another parcel was that the first parcel went for less than we originally bid at the first auction.” (See Going Out On A Limb For Conservation on page 3 for how that transpired.)

“Bev definitely helped financially, it wouldn’t have happened otherwise,” he said. Kim noted that “once we signed everything, Bev got into her canoe and went right over to the new property to check it out. She said, ‘I can actually go on there now. My Dad would roll over in his grave if he thought that we could now go across the river onto this piece of property.’ She canoes across to turkey hunt and deer hunt, so it is certainly working for her and she is more than happy to have it protected.”

The family’s commitment to the land goes well beyond buying it. “I want to get the property back into reasonable forest management before I die,” said Tim. “It takes a long time, but it is going well. The previous owners had a forestry plan, but it didn’t get acted on because of the on-going litigation.”

“There was a red pine plantation that had sections that were dying,” Tim observed. “It was definitely overgrown to the point where it was going to be hard to thin it without having the trees fall down. We had five different foresters come in and look at it. The majority consensus was to try to thin it, but they all admitted that you would probably have to come back with salvage cuts the next year. There was also Bev to think about because she lives across from it. We elected to clearcut it because it was very over-mature. We are now replanting it, and put in 31,000 red pine this year.”

Consulting forester Barb Henderson suggested that Hagen spray the harvested plantation site this year to knock all of the weeds down, trench in

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The 98.78-acre conservation easement is located directly across the Wisconsin River from two properties previously protected in 2006 and 2008 by Bev Engstrom and Tim Hagen.

Left: The Hagen-Kelling conservation easement property has mixed habitat types including an esker ridge, conifer and hardwood forest, open fields, pine plantation and the riparian corridor.

Gifts that last beyond our lifetimes!

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.

Wisconsin River - continued

the fall and plant in the spring of 2014. But Tim really didn't want to spray. He felt that since the pine plantation was so thick, not many weeds would come up right away if it was just trenched.

"We had such a long, late spring we had to have the tree seedlings held back in Canada," said Tim. "When the weather broke, the trenchers came in. The planters called the next day and wanted to plant right away because they were ready to leave the state. Barb drove up to Spooner to pick up the trees because they couldn't be delivered quickly enough."

"Bev was there and my brother John," continued Tim, "but I never did get to see it because I blew out my back planting trees and was flat on my back. It was a crew of ten guys that hand-planted all of the trees. It only took the crew about a half-day to put in all 31,000 pines. They started at 7:00 a.m. and were gone by 1:00 p.m."

"What was pine plantation will still be plantation," noted Tim. "But in addition, we planted a thousand more seedlings including oak, red pine, white pine and dogwood. All the oak have to be caged to protect them from deer, so we are building cages all the time. We put an individual cage over each one, which works really well."

In the fall they also planted hundreds of acorns. "Kim can't get her cardiovascular workout in, because we are always stopping on the road picking up acorns," Tim said.

An open sweet fern field below an esker ridge was also trenched and planted with pines. A second sweet fern field though will remain as habitat for songbirds. Another part of the property was an old jack pine forest that was falling down. "It was so bad that the foresters were not sure the seeds would still be viable," said Tim. "I have found some jack pine that sprouted this year, but it is not going to be thick, and deer love Jack pine. That is an area that I

(Continued next page)



Bev Engstrom (far left) and others enjoy a canoe and kayak trip down the flowing Wisconsin River at Eternicka's bend. The newly-conserved shoreline is on the right, while Tim Hagen's previous conservation easement property is to the left.

Going Out On A Limb For Conservation

Making the purchase happen is an intriguing story – one Tim Hagen tells here. Thanks Tim, Kim and Bev!

The night before the auction, I looked at the map and thought about the farmers who wanted me to buy a different piece than I wanted to buy, because they wanted the farm field out of it. In the middle of the night I woke up and it came to me that if they would be willing to buy the farm field back, I could afford to buy another piece.

I crunched some numbers and called them first thing in the morning before the auction. I couldn't reach anybody, so I said to Kim, "forget it, who knows if it would have worked anyway."

We went to the auction, and as we were getting out of the car, here is one of the guys that I needed to talk to. I asked him, "if the price does not exceed (I gave him a number), if you are willing to pay me this amount for what you want, I'll go for both pieces – but I have to have some backup here, so you have to make a decision." He went off to talk with his other partner, and they came back and said, "it's a deal."

When the auction came, a lawyer was bidding for someone out of New York on the upstream parcels. He was the high bidder on two parcels, and we were the high bidder on the other two. In an auction, you can start combining pieces, so I asked the auctioneer, what would parcels 1, 2 and 3 cost me? The auctioneer came back and gave me a figure, which was exactly - not a penny more or less - than my highest price.

Three things happened within seconds. I looked at Bev, and she was absolutely white. She looked like she was going to fall over. I'm sure she was thinking, "what are you doing? We've got what we want – let's get the heck out of here."

I looked at the two farmers, and their look seemed to imply go ahead. I'm thinking, I am walking so far out on a limb, I don't know that I can do this.

But then I thought, no worries, because every time someone would bid against the lawyer, he would bid it up right away. The bid would go over the top of my price anyway so it won't be a big deal. I'll save face with the farmers and I'll be home free because I won't have to worry about all that money.

So I said, "yeah, I'll take 1, 2 and 3." The auctioneer immediately spun to the lawyer and said it will be this much to you. The lawyer said "nope, we are done, we are out of it."

And that is how we ended up buying a whole other piece. The details got worked out, and we are glad it worked out the way it did, but it was a very nerve-wracking day!



Wisconsin River - *continued*

am experimenting with oak and I think they are going to do fine there. I put in some ash, but with the Emerald ash borer, that is iffy. I've ordered more trees for next year, but it will just be filling in with 600 red pine and another 400 oak. I've also scattered thousands of thorn apples for the birds. If we can keep the deer under control, now that it has been opened up, hopefully the trees will grow well and get ahead of the deer. It is a work in progress."

While hiking the land to take baseline documentation photos for the conservation easement, NWLT Executive Director Bryan Pierce nearly stumbled upon another significant conservation value - a wood turtle getting ready to lay eggs. The wood turtle is listed by the DNR as a Threatened Species in Wisconsin. Bev has observed many other species of wildlife along this stretch of river.

Pierce also noted that this is the ninth conservation easement project completed by NWLT on the Upper Wisconsin River in Oneida and Vilas Counties, with Bev Engstrom's the first. All together, 333 acres and over 3.5 miles of Wisconsin River shoreline have now been permanently protected.

Tim and Kim did not reserve any building rights on this property. "No houses ever would be the best in there," Tim said. He noted that they don't know what the adjacent landowner will do, but that he has some history with conservation easements in Florida. The owner claims there won't be development there. They are using it for hunting and putting in deer plots.

"There is a developer who owns everything to the south, so who knows what will happen there," Tim noted, "but there is a scenic easement along the river. Eventually you get down to state land."



This wood turtle, a Wisconsin Threatened Species, was found getting ready to lay eggs on the conserved property.

*"It has been fun.
It was all done just for this -
to protect it."
- Timothy Hagen & Kimberly Kelling*



About 5,440 feet of wild shoreline along the Wisconsin River provides natural scenic beauty on the northern edge of the property.

"We took some friends there in September and walked down along the river," Kim related. "There were three different, big groups of canoers and kayakers with 10 or 12 coming down the river at a time."

"It has been fun," added Tim. "It is a nice stretch - particularly with both sides now protected. It was all done just for this - to protect it."



Conservation Buyer Wanted for conserved property on Snipe Lake

Looking for a highly-scenic lakefront property with a cute cabin, west-facing sunset views and excellent fishing? And to top it off, the property has 56 acres of land and about 1,000 feet of pristine lake frontage already protected with a conservation easement?

One of NWLT's earliest conservation easement donors recently contacted us to let us know that, due to health reasons, she will need to sell her beautiful property on Snipe Lake west of Eagle River. Protected since 2005, this property is just five miles from Eagle River on County Hwy. G - quick to drive or bike. The land is also located adjacent to another NWLT conservation easement site, so it is well protected from additional development.

NWLT's conservation buyer/seller program seeks to link conservation-minded buyers and sellers. Even with current economic conditions, record low interest rates and land prices at their lowest in a decade make this a great time for conservation buyers to invest in some of our last remaining wild tracts in the northwoods. Please contact the NWLT office for more information or to arrange a site visit at (715) 479-2490.



Mertens Brothers Protect a State “Wild River”

There are only a few “wild rivers” designated by the Wisconsin legislature. The entire Popple River in Forest and Florence counties, from its mouth upstream to the headwater branches, is one.

Brothers Tom (Carol) Mertens and Joseph (Susan) Mertens granted conservation easements on adjacent properties to the Northwoods Land Trust. The agreements protect one of the largest stretches of the South Branch of the Popple River in private ownership.

Tom’s 60-acre property includes over 4,400 feet, or about 0.83 mile, of natural shoreline frontage on the South Branch of the Popple River. The river in this segment is a Class II trout stream and supports naturally-reproducing populations of brook trout. The river is also accessible for canoeing and kayaking.

Joe’s 20-acre parcel includes over 2,900 feet of river frontage on the South Branch of the Popple, plus about 460 feet on Simpson Creek, a tributary stream. That adds up to another 0.56 mile of natural shorelines. Simpson Creek is a Class I trout stream, also with brook trout.

“I found out about the Northwoods Land Trust from talking with a friend in Milwaukee who was involved in a land trust down there,” said Tom. Tom also received a landowner conservation guide from NWLT as part of a DNR River Planning Grant project in Florence County.

“My grandfather, Julian Mertens, was from Green Bay,” related Tom. “He and his buddies started a deer camp about seven miles up the road. They traded a Model T for 20 acres in 1938. During the summer they cut the trees down right there on the property and built a log cabin. That cabin didn’t last very long because they missed the boundary line and didn’t build the cabin on their land. When they were informed that they were not on their property, they tore the log cabin down and moved it back a few hundred yards.”

Tom noted that over time, as the property transferred



Tom (left) and Joe Mertens protected 80 acres and over one mile of shoreline on the South Branch of the Popple River, a state “wild river.”

What is a “Wild River”?

The State of Wisconsin designated state “wild rivers” under section 30.26 of the Wisconsin Statutes with the following legislative intent: “In order to afford the people of this state an opportunity to enjoy natural streams, to attract out-of-state visitors and assure the well-being of our tourist industry, it is in the interest of this state to preserve some rivers in a free flowing condition and to protect them from development; and for this purpose a system of wild rivers is established.”

These rivers “shall receive special management to assure their preservation, protection and enhancement of their natural beauty, and their unique recreational and other inherent values” (s. 30.26(2)(b)).

The only state-designated “wild rivers” include the Pike River in Marinette County, the Pine River and its tributary Popple River in Florence and Forest counties, a portion of the Brunsweler River and portions of the Totogatic River in northwestern Wisconsin.

down through the generations, the ownership became more complex with more owners. Their father, Julian Jr., was also from Green Bay. He hunted there and was part-owner of the cabin property for a time, but then transferred his ownership to Tom.

“I was the oldest grandson, and I happened to be the one who was using it more,” said Tom. Tom’s siblings include brothers Ken, Dave and Joe, and sisters Gail and Kris. “It just got too hectic for me, so Carol and I started snooping around looking for our own place. We found these 80-acres for sale in 1987.”

Tom has a strong background in natural resources. He received his bachelors degree in environmental sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, and his Master’s degree from Texas A&M University in natural resources development. Tom taught undergraduate and graduate courses at the State University of New York at Cortland, adding a natural resource component to their recreation education department. After moving back to Green Bay, Tom retired from a sales position in orthopedics.

“We just recently updated our family trust documents, and we have no kids,” said Tom. “I realized the land was just going to be left to my estate unless I designated somebody else to take it over, which I can still do. But I wanted it to transfer and stay the way it is forever.”

Tom deeded 20 acres of the original 80 to his younger brother Joe for a cabin site. “My brother Joe and I spent a lot of time hunting together,” Tom related. Joe is a psychologist and works for the Merrill public school district. He and his wife Susan also do not have any kids. “Joe and I share the same values as far as this area is concerned, and that is why we are both willing to do the conservation easements.”

(Continued next page)

“Wild River” - continued

“I think that the South Branch of the Popple River is a unique resource,” Tom continued. “This 80 acres is nearly surrounded by the Nicolet National Forest, which is already public land. From a natural resource or ecosystem perspective, we’ve got a little private inholding with all this other public land on the South Branch. I’d like to see this fantastic, free-flowing stream protected.”

“If the habitat is good, the fish and wildlife will follow,” noted Tom. “They are indicators of the quality of the stream. If the stream is in good condition, the fish will be there. If the deer and grouse habitat is good, the deer and grouse will be there. That is my philosophy about nature’s way. If you take care of what nature’s given us, it pays back.”

“If I had kids and was leaving the property to them, I would still do the easement,” said Tom. “It is specified in my trust that I’m going to leave it to another person in my family, but I want to make sure that it stays the way it is, and that they have the same attitude toward it that I do.”

The cabin on the property when they bought it was revitalized and expanded with red pine logs cut from the land. While mostly a seasonal cabin, Tom explained that “I’ve enjoyed all the seasons here and did things that coincided with each season. Carol and I went trout fishing and hiking in the spring and summer, grouse hunting and deer hunting in the fall, and snowshoeing and cross-country skiing in the winter.”

“Every time we walk out the door, the wildlife changes, and my wildlife interests change with the seasons,” Tom observed. “We have a good representation of wildlife – wolves and coyotes howling at night, bear, otters on the creek, and deer and grouse all the time. It is all here, but it is here because this is a fairly large, undeveloped area, and the stream is part of that too.”

When asked about the conservation easement, Tom commented that “I wouldn’t really call it restrictions. I’m not looking to restrict anything other than additional development. I just want to keep it the way it is. If we just limit any additional development, then everything else will take care of itself.”

“I know in the future that the South Branch, with the public land above and below, will stay the way it is,” he added. “I realize that the vegetation changes with time and the willows and alders will grow, but it is in nature’s hands now and it will always remain a wild river.”

“If you have a unique or valuable resource on your property like the South Branch, you have an opportunity through the land trust to keep it the way it is,” said Tom. “There really is no reason not to do it. At least I will know that some day there won’t be cottages lined up along the river. The conservation easement is a simple designation that you can make if you want to ensure it will stay protected.”



“If the habitat is good, the fish and wildlife will follow... That is my philosophy about nature’s way.”

- Tom Mertens

Come Celebrate Spring by Snowshoe!

Join the Northwoods Land Trust on Saturday, March 22nd, 2014 at 5 p.m. for a snowshoe hike and bonfire at NWLT’s Dugan Squash Lake Nature Preserve! We will celebrate the beginning of spring at this beautiful property by snowshoeing across a small bay on Squash Lake to the esker peninsula where we will enjoy a bonfire on the ice.

Meet us at the parking area to the Squash Lake Nature Preserve. To get there, take Hwy. 8 west of Rhinelander about 6 miles from the intersection with Hwy. 47, then turn east on Squash Lake Road about one mile to the Preserve.

The snowshoe hike is open to all ages and is a family-friendly event. The hike will be about ½ mile. Please come prepared with appropriate clothing, any personal hiking supplies (water, camera, etc.) and snowshoes. NWLT will provide food and drinks for the bonfire. There is no charge, but please RSVP to the NWLT office at (715) 479-2490 by Thursday, March 20th so that we can plan for food. 🌲



Join us for a fun snowshoe hike at 5 p.m. on Saturday, March 22nd at the Dugan Squash Lake Nature Preserve!



NWLT Welcomes Ron Eckstein and Kirk Mueller

The Northwoods Land Trust is excited to welcome two new members to its Board of Directors. Ron Eckstein and Kirk Mueller joined the Board at the end of 2013. They each bring a wealth of knowledge and experience in ecology/wildlife management and financial/organization skills, respectively.

Ron Eckstein grew up in Wisconsin and received a BS and MS in Wildlife Ecology from UW-Madison. He and his wife Jan moved to Rhinelander in 1974 for his first job out of college with the Wisconsin DNR. He was stationed in Rhinelander for his entire 36-year career.

Ron was one of two wildlife biologists covering Vilas, Oneida and Forest counties, and served as the statewide coordinator for the eagle and osprey conservation and survey work. He specialized in forest ecology, raptor management and wild rice conservation. He also worked on big and small game management, property management, wetland management, wildlife surveys, wildlife talks and as a Special Conservation Officer. During Ron's career he banded about 1,500 eaglets in their nests, and erected over 70 osprey nest platforms. Ron retired in 2010 but is still an Official Volunteer and "emeritus" wildlife biologist at DNR working on eagle, osprey and forest ecology.

Ron and Jan share a second home on Little Crooked Lake near Boulder Junction. They also enjoy exploring Lake Superior and spend a lot of time hiking, kayaking, cross-country skiing at the "big lake."

Kirk Mueller was born and raised in Illinois and first visited the northwoods in the 1960s by attending scout camps. He received his BS from Valparaiso University and his MBA from DePaul University, where he served four years on the Finance Department's adjunct faculty. In 1989 Kirk bought a cabin in the Eagle River area and moved here full time in 2010.



Ron Eckstein (left) and Kirk Mueller recently joined the NWLT Board.

Kirk's corporate career in Dallas, TX and Chicago included nearly two decades as an officer or director of multi-national companies including Santa Fe Railroad, Hyatt Corporation, Braniff Airlines, and Premark International. His experience and leadership responsibilities included organization development, labor relations and human resources, mergers, acquisitions and restructurings, retirement and benefit plans, governance and ethics.

From 2000 until his recent semi-retirement, Kirk supported dozens of non-profit organizations (including NWLT). His consulting engagements covered strategic planning, organization assessments, executive coaching, leadership and board development, and capital campaigns. He co-led the startup of an executive succession consulting practice. Kirk started and leads two small, private non-profits: a grant-maker and an operating foundation devoted to Federal constitutional reform and debt restructuring.

Kirk's avocations have included managing two modest-size family farms and a certified Tree Farm. Kirk's interests include history, music, and advocacy for federal debt restructuring on behalf of future generations. 🌲



JOIN THE NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

HELP KEEP THE NORTHWOODS THE NORTHWOODS!

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- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$25 |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Steward | \$500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Land Legacy | \$1000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My additional contribution of _____ | \$ _____ |
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Donate online or 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 NWLT.

- ☐ How to include NWLT in my will.



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

2013 Monitoring Season Complete

Every year the Northwoods Land Trust conducts monitoring visits on each conservation easement and NWLT-owned property. The monitoring program is important to maintain annual contact and communication with landowners about their protected property.

Monitoring visits also help NWLT keep its promise to the landowners to uphold the terms of the agreement. On the property inspections NWLT staff and volunteers observe and record changes to the land as well as wildlife sightings or rare species noted. They also talk with the landowners about plans to exercise reserved rights.

In 2013, 69 properties were monitored by NWLT's two staff members and the much-appreciated assistance of 25 volunteers. These volunteers logged 150 hours in easement monitoring! Monitoring volunteers are able to regularly connect with landowners on a yearly basis and be additional eyes and ears for both the landowners and NWLT out on the properties.

As NWLT's conservation efforts grow, so does our need for more monitoring volunteers. Our volunteers are asked to attend a spring training session, travel to and inspect at least one property with a monitoring partner or staff person, be willing to hike over sometimes rough and hilly terrain and oftentimes off-trail and complete a short report on the visit.

A special Thank You to all of our 2013 conservation land and easement monitoring volunteers: Ron Becker, Jim Bennett, Pete Davison, Bill Dickens, Ed Drager, Walt & Donna Gager, Kim Genich, Peter Hatch, Terry Hatch, John Huppert, Jean Johnson, Ron Krueger, Dale Lang, Bob Martini, Mary McCarren, Gary Meister, Ben Meyer, Janet Moredock, Tim Obukowicz, David Picard, Bill Reardon, Willa Schmidt, Pam Schoville, John Seward, Mark Shepherdson, Karen Stroede, Beth Tornes, Tom Turriff, Laura VanValkenberg and Penny Warner.



Volunteer monitor Pam Schoville (center) visits with landowners David and Sara Kozeluh during a tour of their property.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer for NWLT, please contact NWLT Conservation Specialist Trisha Moore at trshmr@gmail.com or (715) 891-2412.

