



# NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

*Leaving a Lasting Legacy for the Northwoods*

## Last Wilderness Conservation Association Entrusts Conservation Properties to NWLT



Paulette Cary (far left) and members of the LWCA Board (left to right): Al Eschenbauch, Randy Boyle and Robert Horswill at a 2018 property dedication on Van Vliet Lake.

The Northwoods Land Trust (NWLT) recently accepted 16 transfers of conservation projects from the Last Wilderness Conservation Association (LWCA). LWCA has spent the last 24 years as an all-volunteer land trust conserving critical lakeshore properties and associated natural resources in the “Border Lakes” Region in Presque Isle and Winchester in northern Vilas County.

The Border Lakes region is an area that has been recognized as a globally-significant conservation resource due to the abundance of inland freshwater lakes of glacial origin. The area boasts extensive forests, wetlands, lakes, and streams along Wisconsin’s northern boundary with Michigan. More than 100 lakes in this region are connected by a complex network of high quality wetlands and streams, supporting diverse assemblages of native fish and other wildlife. The area links the Ottawa National Forest in Michigan with the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest in Wisconsin, serving as a broad environmental corridor for wide-ranging mammals including timber wolves and moose.

According to Vice-President Tom Preston, LWCA was started in the early 1990’s, with Carl Watras leading their formation, initially as a grass roots conservation organization. They emphasized education on matters such the importance of maintaining a vegetative buffer zone on lakeshores and also

*(Continued next page)*

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## 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, Price and northern Langlade Counties.*



*The accreditation seal recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust and ensure that conservation efforts are permanent.*

## NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

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## LWCA Conservation Land Transfers to NWLT - *continued*

advocated for a local ordinance to restrict the operation of personal watercraft on lakes under 200 acres. In 1995 they incorporated and began to accept land donations and conservation easements from area landowners.

In September of 2017, LWCA Board members approached NWLT's Executive Director, Bryan Pierce, to request that NWLT consider accepting the transfer and perpetual stewardship of the lands they have worked so hard to protect in the Border Lakes Region. According to Al Eschenbauch, LWCA Board President, the land stewardship responsibilities became too great for the volunteer organization to manage. The NWLT Board of Directors felt that it was imperative the conservation properties be transferred as a "package deal" to ensure the integrity of the project as a whole. After extensive committee and legal review, field documentation and fundraising, 16 projects were transferred to NWLT late last year, totaling an estimated 690 acres of land and five miles of shoreline.

*"We are very grateful that the Northwoods Land Trust has agreed to honor our commitments to preserve these lands."*  
- Tom Preston, Vice-President  
LWCA Board of Directors

Of the 16 projects transferred, 11 properties are now owned and managed by NWLT. Four are privately-owned properties with land protection agreements (conservation easements), and one privately-owned property is legally protected through a grant of development rights. All 11 of the properties now owned by NWLT are open to public access for non-motorized outdoor recreation and nature study, including hiking, snowshoeing, skiing, wildlife observation, carry-in boating, and fishing. Hunting is allowed on several of the properties with permission from NWLT. Most of these properties have unimproved access points of entry.

The Genevieve Lake property in Winchester is one of the 'jewels' of the project. It includes 57 acres of land with 3,690 feet of lake frontage and 445 feet of creek frontage. This property acquisition was originally funded through the Wisconsin Knowles-Nelson Stewardship fund to protect Genevieve Lake, a wild and undeveloped lake. The property is contiguous with the Nell Lake State Natural Area, creating a block of approximately 175 acres of wild land, including a large expanse of acidic conifer swamp, and three wild lakes. The LWCA board was innovative in leveraging the value of a 36 acre nature preserve property on Rock Lake to qualify for the stewardship grant to fund the purchase of Genevieve Lake. "Preserving Genevieve Lake from any development has been our greatest achievement," said Preston.



*Rock Lake benefits from conservation lands that were transferred to NWLT from the Last Wilderness Conservation Association.*



*Above: Genevieve Lake is an important scenic resource as a "wild lake."*

*Below: Tom Preston, LWCA Vice-President and Kari Kirschbaum, NWLT Land Protection Specialist, explore land on Papoose Lake.*



Also included in the conservation transfers is a two-acre parcel adjacent to the Van Vliet Lake Conservation Area donated by Paulette Cary to NWLT in 2017. Paulette donated the first parcel to LWCA in 2008. Together the two parcels protect a total of 722 feet of natural frontage on Van Vliet Lake. A public trailhead with a parking area is located just across the road, leading into the Van Vliet Hemlocks State Natural Area.

NWLT appreciates all of the efforts of LWCA to protect the Border Lakes Region for nearly a quarter of a century, and is honored to accept responsibility for the perpetual stewardship of these properties. "Our thanks to the Board of Directors and volunteers from the Last Wilderness Conservation Association for all of their work over the years to protect these scenic natural resources," stated Pierce.

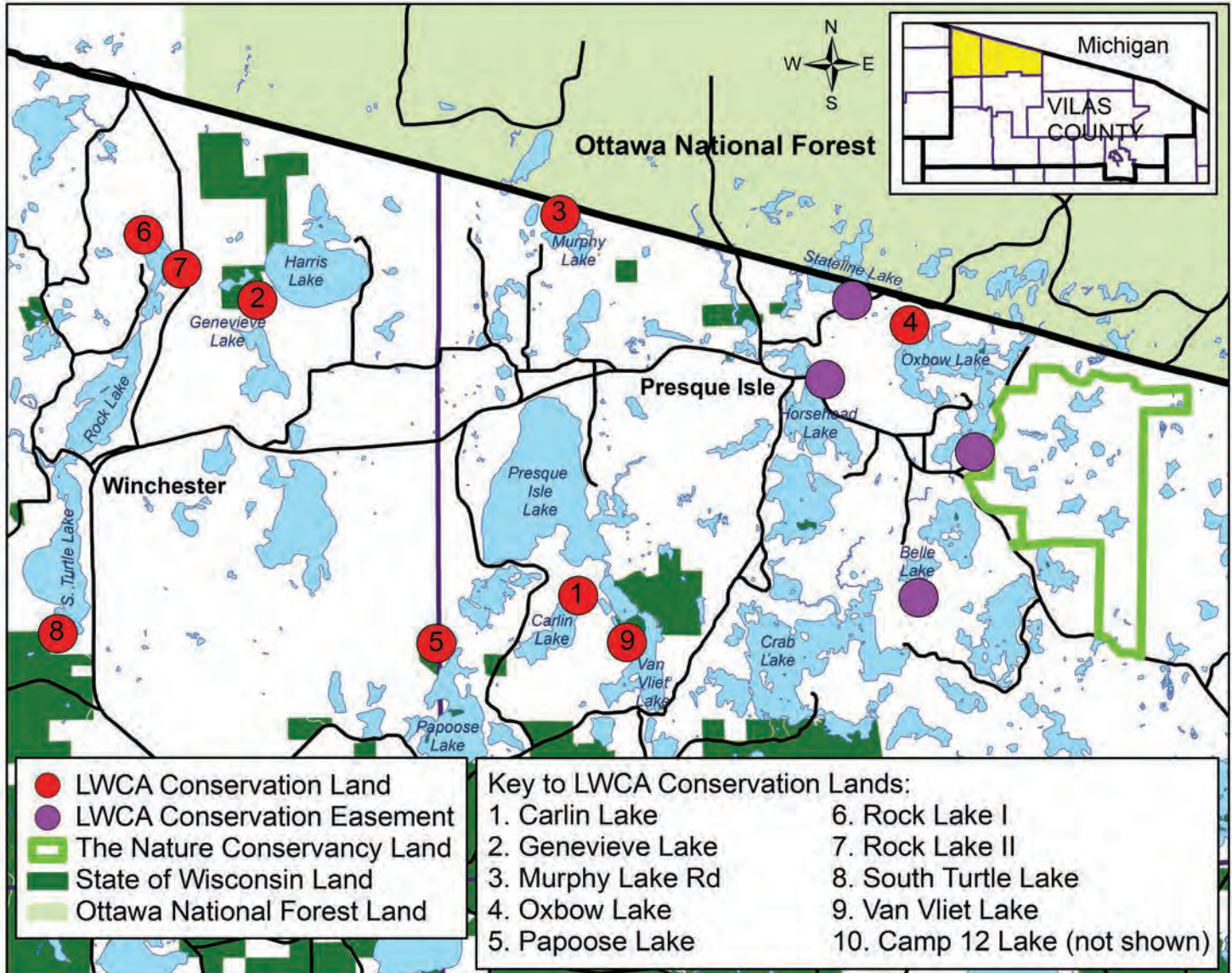
Volunteers are needed to help maintain and monitor the newly acquired conservation properties in the Border Lakes Region of Vilas County. Please contact Kari Kirschbaum at [karik@northwoodslandtrust.org](mailto:karik@northwoodslandtrust.org) to inquire!



# Map of the Conservation Land Transfers from LWCA to NWLT

## Last Wilderness Conservation Association Conservation Lands and Easements Transferred to NWLT

Towns of Presque Isle & Winchester, Vilas County



### Our Wild Lakes Are Rare & Need Protection

According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' Wisconsin Land Legacy Report, the Border Lakes Region was identified as one of the 229 Legacy Places critical to the state: "The Border Lakes Region probably represents the last opportunity in Wisconsin to protect a reasonably large cluster of lakes. Lying at the heart of several large blocks of public property, the area is also among the last places to provide a variety of recreation activities in a very remote setting... Protection of this unique mosaic of lakes, wetlands and upland forests—with its significant water quality, fisheries, wildlife and forestry resources—is important

to maintaining the biological diversity and recreational opportunities of northern Wisconsin."

"Of the 1,200 privately owned lakes north of Highway 29 that were undeveloped in the 1960's, an estimated 60% had been developed by 1995" (WDNR 1996). Recognizing this loss of natural shoreline habitat, the WDNR initiated a conservation partnership program to identify and protect "wild lakes" with little or no development, in an effort to protect the last remaining undeveloped lakes in northern Wisconsin. Genevieve Lake is a 14-acre seepage lake with entirely undeveloped lakeshore that was identified as one of these "wild lakes."





# NWLT Annual Report of Contributions Received in Fiscal Year 2018

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

## New Conservation Donors

360 acres	Monahan Forest Trust/Trees For Tomorrow
431 acres	Yawkey Lumber Company
690 acres	Last Wilderness Conservation Association
124 acres	Guy & Carole Hansen
38 acres	Bruce & Caroline Amundson

## Government & Foundation Grants

\$166,229	Wisconsin DNR Stewardship Fund
\$59,788	Wisconsin DNR Lake Management Program
\$119,500	Caerus Foundation
\$20,000	John C. Bock Foundation
\$10,000	Lux Foundation Inc.
\$9,500	Arthur L. & Elaine V. Johnson Foundation
\$6,500	Modestus Bauer Foundation
\$2,323	EarthShare Employee Giving Campaign
\$2,000	Coles Family Foundation
\$1,704	Charles A. & Ida C. Sanders Northwoods Memorial Fund of the Natural Resources Foundation of WI
\$1,200	Wisconsin Land Fund of the Greater Green Bay Community Foundation
\$1,000	Charles & Carol James Fund - Greater Milwaukee Foundation
\$600	Ron & Winnie Krueger Fund - Community Fdn. of North Central Wisconsin
\$600	Kimberly Clark Fdn.-Employee Giving Program
\$350	River Valley Bank Foundation
\$250	American Natural Heritage Foundation & Mueller Family Charitable Trust
\$250	Butternut Franklin Lakes Foundation
\$37	Amazon Smile Foundation

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*Continued next page*

# NWLT Annual Report of Contributions Received in Fiscal Year 2018

(Continued from previous page)

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Please let us know if we've made  
an error so we can correct it in  
our next newsletter. We truly  
appreciate your support!



## Bryan Pierce, NWLT Executive Director, Announces Retirement

After 18 years of service to the Northwoods Land Trust (NWLT), Executive Director Bryan Pierce has announced his retirement. The announcement was not a surprise, as NWLT has been working on succession planning policies and procedures over the last couple of years as a part of its five-year organizational strategic plan.

Bryan and his wife, Gail Gilson-Pierce, moved to Eagle River over 30 years ago. Both worked at the Trees For Tomorrow Natural Resources Education Center. Bryan also worked for both the Oneida County UW-Extension and Vilas County UW-Extension as a Community Resource Development Agent, while also volunteering as NWLT's first President. In 2004, Bryan left his UW-Extension tenured faculty position to lead NWLT as Executive Director. "As a founder and the first Executive Director of the NWLT, this has been the best possible career choice I could have hoped for," Bryan reflected.

"Bryan has been the driving force behind an organization started in 2001 by a small group of volunteers, with the purpose of helping private landowners conserve their property in a condition that reflects as closely as possible the natural state of the northwoods. After its first two easement donations in 2003, the numbers of easements completed by NWLT increased rapidly," said former secretary and founding board member, Willa Schmidt.

NWLT went on to conserve and protect over 13,000 acres of land and 70 miles of natural lake and river shoreline in six counties. Under Bryan's leadership, NWLT completed the largest private conservation easement donation to a land trust in the state - 3,195 acres in and around Minocqua Winter Park. NWLT also accepted the most valuable land conservation donation to a land trust in Wisconsin with the largest amount of lake shorelines - 431 acres with 4.4 miles of frontage on Lake Katherine in Hazelhurst.

NWLT was awarded Wisconsin Land Trust of the Year in 2007 and became a Nationally Accredited Land Trust in 2013. Bryan volunteered as a board member for Gathering Waters: Wisconsin's Alliance for Land Trusts, and as a member of the Land Trust Advisory Council, to offer his expertise to advance conservation initiatives across the state.

"In addition to being one of the most dedicated and successful conservationists in Wisconsin, Bryan carries out his work with care and respect for anyone he is interacting with including volunteers, landowners, and many others in our community, regardless of backgrounds or differing opinions," said long-time NWLT staff member Trisha Moore.

"With over 100 conservation projects completed, an outstanding board of directors, and extraordinary committed landowners, we have come a long way," said Pierce. "From an organization that has grown from all-volunteer to having a permanent office and visitor center, with an exceptional staff of five dedicated and talented individuals, I am absolutely certain NWLT will be a sustainable conservation organization long into the future. That makes me very comfortable making the decision that it is time for me to ride off into the sunset (literally) and let someone else take over the reins of this outstanding organization."

"While I am still healthy enough, my goal is to do horse packing and fly fishing trips on some long distance trails including the Colorado Trail and the Continental Divide Trail. That means being gone long enough so that I don't want to affect the land trust's operations, so the time is right to retire," said Bryan.



*Pierce's retirement plans include long horse pack trips on the Continental Divide Trail.*



*Bryan Pierce, the founding president and first executive director of the Northwoods Land Trust.*

*"We wish him well, and know that we are well-positioned for the future because of his efforts." - Mary Schwaiger, NWLT President*

"I hope to see many of our conservation land and easement donors, active volunteers, and long-time members at the NWLT annual meeting in June to thank everyone for all of their support and to introduce them to the next executive director of the Northwoods Land Trust," wished Bryan.

The NWLT Board of Directors formed a search committee early in the year and in May began the process of reviewing and interviewing candidates for the position. The goal is to have a new executive director in place by June.

"I have been on the Board of NWLT since its inception, and have watched it grow under Bryan's leadership. His technical and organizational skills, and ability to work with donors and landowners, has been the foundation for our success. We wish him well, and know that we are well-positioned for the future because of his efforts," stated NWLT President Mary Schwaiger.

## Goodbye Sandy, Welcome Troy

Sandy Lotto joined the NWLT staff in February of 2016 as Outreach Coordinator. For over three years she led public, member, and volunteer events and workdays to show some examples of the special places that NWLT helps to protect. Since adding the role of Monitoring Coordinator in 2017, the majority of her time was spent meeting with private landowners on their NWLT-conserved properties to ensure that the terms of their conservation easements are being upheld. She trained and coordinated 40+ volunteers who also perform annual monitoring visits on many of the 87 properties that NWLT holds easements on.

Sandy's regular social media postings, with notices of upcoming events and great photographs by conservation easement donor Beverly Engstrom and others, has created over 400 'followers' on NWLT's Facebook page.

Her wide-ranging knowledge of the natural world and ability to work with people of all ages and backgrounds has benefited NWLT and its programs. She's taking an early retirement to explore personal interests, enjoy the outdoors, spend time with friends, family, and her dog Bodie, and to live life to its fullest. We will greatly miss Sandy and wish her well on her future endeavors.




Troy Walters joined the NWLT staff in May of 2019. He will be taking on the role of Outreach and Monitoring Coordinator, overseeing annual monitoring visits of each conservation easement property and coordinating public programs, events, and speakers.

Troy grew up in West Bend, WI and credits his love of the outdoors to a 7th grade teacher with a passion for the environment, especially birds. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin -Stevens Point in 1997 with a B.S. in Water Resources – Water Chemistry.

Troy has taught environmental education for over 11 years, most of which occurred at Trees For Tomorrow Natural Resources Specialty School from 2003 to 2014. While at Trees For Tomorrow, he not only taught students grades 4 - 12, but also coordinated Road Scholar which provides exceptional learning opportunities for adults in their 50s and beyond.

Troy has led birding and canoeing trips for the Natural Resources Foundation, and conducted numerous surveys including for owls, nightjars, waterfowl, breeding birds, Kirtland's warbler, cranes, woodcock, and coordinated the acoustic bat monitoring project for the Eagle River area. He has also worked as an environmental lab analyst, lab tech at a wastewater treatment plant, and zookeeper.

In his free time, Troy enjoys cross country skiing, rollerskiing, canoeing, biking, and hiking with his dog Addie. Welcome Troy! 

*Left: Sandy Lotto and Troy Walters at the Yawkey Forest Reserve during the NWLT Conserved Property Volunteer Monitoring Training on Lake Katherine in Hazelhurst on May 2, 2019.*



## JOIN AS A MEMBER OF 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.

### 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 contributing to NWLT in my will or other planned giving.





# NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

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*Leaving a Lasting Legacy for the Northwoods*

## Join Us at NWLT's 18th Annual Meeting & Celebration on June 21!

You are invited to participate in the Northwoods Land Trust's (NWLT) 2019 Annual Meeting to be held on Friday, June 21st from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the Northwoods Center in downtown Eagle River.

The casual event will feature NWLT's accomplishments over the past year, including the land conservation transfers from the Last Wilderness Conservation Association (*see story on page 1*) and the remarkable gift of 431 acres of land on Lake Katherine in the town of Hazelhurst donated by the Yawkey Lumber Company.

Also to be highlighted is the recognition of long-time, outgoing Executive Director Bryan Pierce for his dedication to NWLT and northwoods conservation since 2001 (*see story on page 6*).

Drinks, hors d'oeuvres and desserts will be served. Tours of the NWLT office and visitor center, conveniently located directly behind the Northwoods Center on Wall Street, will be offered to anyone interested in learning more about NWLT.

If you know you will be able to join us, please contact the NWLT office by calling (715) 479-2490 or emailing [carrie@northwoodslandtrust.org](mailto:carrie@northwoodslandtrust.org) so we can plan accordingly. NWLT members, donors and volunteers, as well as anyone from the public, is invited to participate.



### Summer Public Outreach Events

- June 18, 9:00 am to 1:30 pm: Iron County Wetland Walk, meet at the Sherman Town Hall, Highway 182.
- August 22: Save the Date! NWLT will hold an event to highlight the new Yawkey Forest Reserve during "Land Trust Days," a statewide initiative to experience land trust conserved lands.

Check our website at [www.northwoodslandtrust.org](http://www.northwoodslandtrust.org) for more information and to learn about newly added events.

*Directions: The Northwoods Center is located at 115 S 3rd Street, one-half block north of Wall Street in Eagle River. Parking is located next to and behind the building.*

