



NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

Leaving a Lasting Legacy for the Northwoods

Beaver Creek Hemlocks Campaign Goal Surpassed



Large hemlocks along Beaver Creek.

Just over a year ago, the Northwoods Land Trust (NWLTL) began its largest-ever capital campaign to protect the Beaver Creek Hemlocks in southern Iron County. This October, NWLTL concluded the campaign with \$411,700 raised, exceeding its original expectations of raising up to \$365,000. Thirty donor families and seven foundations generously provided gifts and grants to allow NWLTL to purchase the two properties that now make up the Beaver Creek Hemlocks Conservation Area.

The additional funds will support the development of recreational amenities and educational programs. Providing safe and welcoming public access will require the construction of a driveway and parking area, an informational kiosk, several long boardwalks and approximately two miles of defined foot paths. The trails, to be built in the summer of 2022, will accommodate low-impact public recreation, including hiking, snowshoeing, backcountry cross country skiing and nature observation. Traditional uses including fishing and hunting will be allowed according to established guidelines.

The trails will also serve as conduits for NWLTL's educational programs to showcase the need for the protection of mature and old-growth forest and other ecological habitats. A portion of the grants received will be reserved in NWLTL's Land Stewardship Fund, with interest income supporting annual monitoring and management expenses.

Project Background

As a part of NWLTL's Old-Growth Forest Initiative, the Beaver Creek Hemlocks property was identified in 2019 as one of the best opportunities to protect mature and old-growth hemlock-hardwood forest in our service area.

(Continued next page)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Beaver Creek Hemlocks Campaign
- Story of Eastern Hemlock
- Goodbye Trisha!
- New Directors & Staff
- Minocqua Thoroughfare Easement
- Year-end Appeal

MISSION:

The Northwoods Land Trust (NWLTL) 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.



PROTECTION TOTALS:

- 14,312 acres of land conserved
- 93 conservation easements with landowners
- 25 conservation properties owned by NWLTL
- 77 miles of shoreline protected
 - 41 miles lakefront
 - 36 miles riverfront

www.northwoodslandtrust.org

Follow NWLTL on   

Beaver Creek Hemlocks Campaign *continued*

In December of 2020, NWLT bought a 25-acre privately-owned parcel located on Highway 182. The purpose of this land purchase was to provide legal access prior to acquiring the adjoining, land-locked 240-acre Beaver Creek Hemlocks parcel from the Wisconsin Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL).

A public bidding process is required in order for BCPL to sell land, which would have jeopardized the protection of this site. To avoid this scenario, BCPL identified an alternate parcel that they wished to acquire for forest management purposes. NWLT then acquired the parcel of interest to BCPL from a third party and exchanged it for the Beaver Creek Hemlocks. Through this complicated land transaction, NWLT received the original 1841 land patent for the Beaver Creek Hemlocks on May 21, 2021.

Conservation Features Protected

Protecting the Beaver Creek Hemlocks is paramount to protecting the State's ecological and biological diversity. The property is less than a mile from the Turtle Flambeau Scenic Waters Area, and within several miles of nine other state and national conservation areas. With this connectivity to surrounding conservation lands, a wide array of species of wildlife and plants can migrate and move more freely, especially important as many species are expanding their ranges due to a changing climate. 🌲

Conservation Stats:

- 265 acres of land
- 8,160 feet of Beaver Creek shoreline
- 950 feet of a bog shoreline on a poor fen (floating mat) with muskeg (tree bog) habitat
- Black-spruce tamarack swamps
- Vernal ponds and wetlands
- Mature and old-growth hemlock



Fall sunset over the wetlands and bogs found at Beaver Creek Hemlocks Conservation Area.



NWLT birding hike at the property this spring.

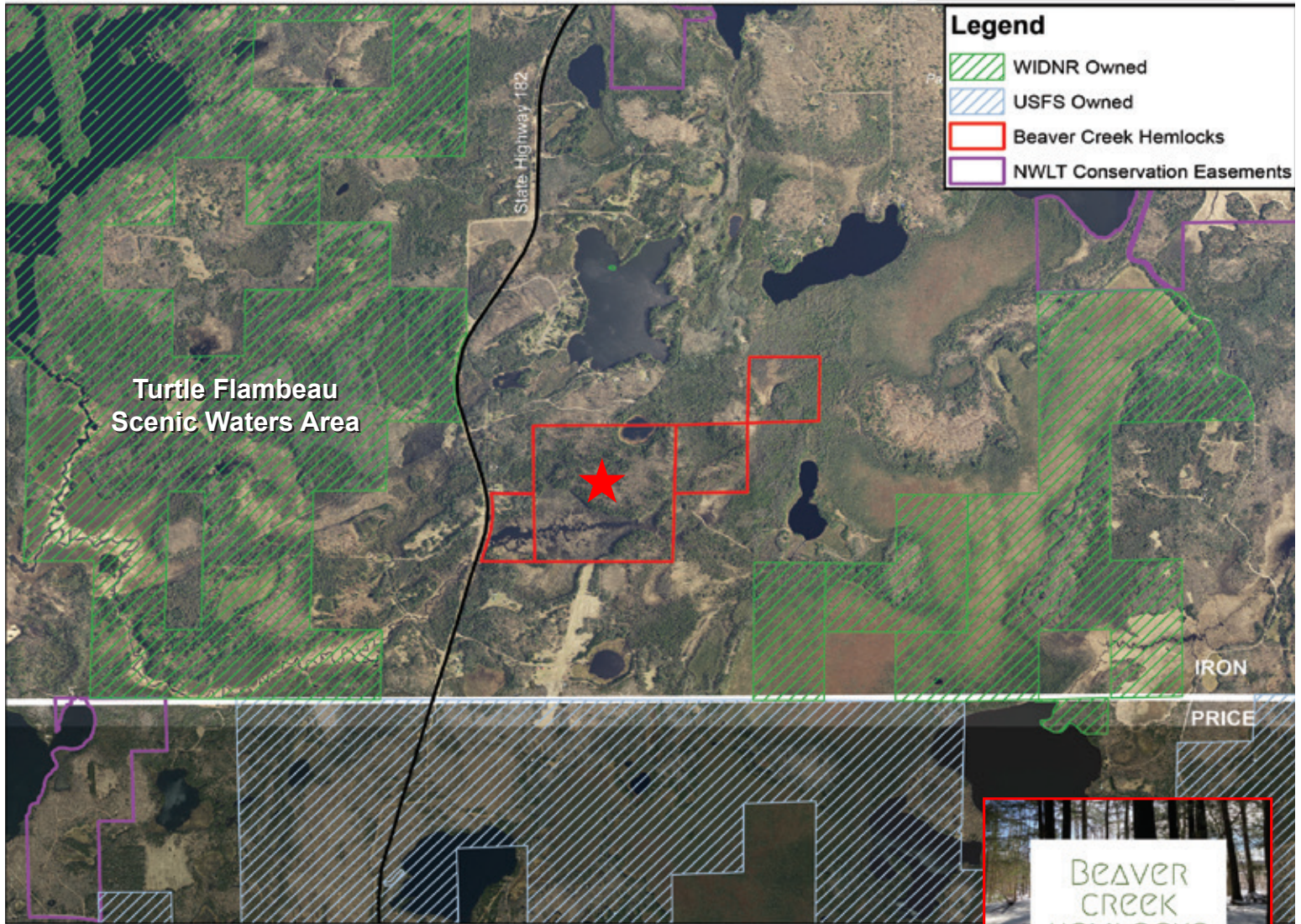
Watch Newly Released Video on YouTube

Celebrate with NWLT by watching the newly released video on our YouTube channel featuring John Bates and Ron Eckstein, NWLT board members. A goal of NWLT's Old-Growth Forest Initiative is to educate landowners and the public about the importance of our rare old-growth forests. The Beaver Creek Hemlocks includes mature and old-growth hemlock-hardwood forest, with only about 0.2% of such forest types remaining in northern Wisconsin compared to pre-settlement forest cover.



Beaver Creek Hemlocks Conservation Area and Nearby Protected Lands

0 0.275 0.55 1.1 Miles



The Beaver Creek Hemlocks is within a mosaic of conservation lands and flows into the Turtle Flambeau Scenic Waters Area.



Campaign Donors and Funders

Thank you to all of our campaign supporters for making this remarkable project happen!

Donors

Alice Bricker
Anne & Scott Small
Beth Tornes & William Dickens, Jr.
Christine Paulik
Chuck Stonecipher
Clifford Haskins
DiAnne & Terry Hatch
Donald & Mary Spencer
Edward Marshall
Gregory Riemer
Ian & Monie Shackelford
Jacklyn Dickens
James & Erinn Letts
James & Patricia Puchter
James & Roberta Vaughan
Jane Schley

John Bates
John Huppert
Joseph Benbenek
Judith Farling
Kristiana Karshna
Mary Lou Findley
Michael Eaton & Carol Ritter
Pampered Chef
Peter McKeever & Marena Kehl
Richard & Carol Phillips
Robert Martini & Kathleen Vick-Martini
Ronald & Janet Eckstein
Steven Seymour
Wolfgang & Edna Epstein
Timothy Wycoff & Susan West

Grantmakers

American Natural Heritage
Foundation
Annenberg Foundation
Caerus Foundation, Inc.
James D. & Jane P. Watermolen
Foundation, Inc.
John C. Bock Foundation
Modestus Bauer Foundation
Wisconsin Land Fund of the
Greater Green Bay Community
Foundation

The Eastern Hemlock's Story

By Ron Eckstein, NWLT board member and
Rhinelander resident

The story of eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) in the Northwoods includes an Ice Age, a long migration, an interesting life history, white-tailed deer, and an obscure state agency.

The Northwoods was covered with ice 25,000 years ago and forests of eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) were confined to the protected coves in the southern Appalachian Mountains. Researchers studied pollen cores from wetlands and learned that, as the climate warmed, hemlock began a slow migration north along the Appalachians into Pennsylvania and New York, then across southern Canada and Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and arrived in Wisconsin about 3,000 years ago.

For the last 3,000 years, hemlock was one of the dominant trees across much of north central and northeastern Wisconsin. Hemlock seedlings and saplings are extremely shade tolerant and can live hundreds of years under dense shade. When nearby tall trees are toppled by a storm or old age, the hemlock saplings reach for the sun and can live another 300 years as large old-growth trees.

When Europeans arrived in the Northwoods, they saw the forest as a resource to be exploited. In the lifetime of a lumberjack, between 1880 and 1940, the old-growth hemlock, white pine, yellow birch and sugar maple forests were cut. Vast forest fires burned millions of acres. The fires eliminated most of the hemlock seedlings and saplings.

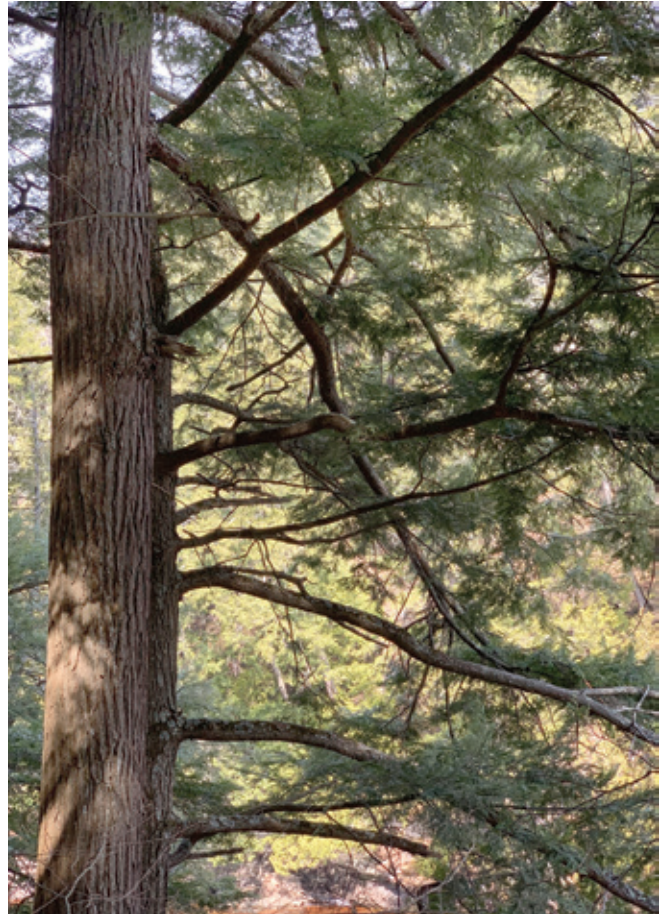
Attempts to convert the Northwoods to agriculture failed, the land went tax delinquent, and by 1950 fire control and forest conservation efforts began the slow process of reforestation.

Today hemlock is an uncommon and rare tree (outside of the Menominee Indian Reservation). It occurs on less than 2% of its former range. Attempts to replant and regenerate hemlock have failed. In addition, white-tailed deer browse and kill hemlock seedlings and saplings in winter.

There are few places where stands of hemlock with old-growth characteristics still occur. One example is land controlled by a small state agency called the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL). In the 1800s, the federal government granted Wisconsin millions of acres of land to be held by BCPL. The land was sold and the proceeds created the School Trust Fund to support public education, even today.

BCPL still owns widely scattered parcels in the Northwoods. Some BCPL properties have been sold to other conservation agencies and organizations because they are not compatible with their forest management directive. Many of these sold parcels lacked suitable access for logging, and as a result, they remain as great examples of intact natural forest communities.

In recent years, the Northwoods Land Trust has worked with BCPL staff to identify parcels of interest, many containing remnant old-growth forests. The Sack Lake and Beaver Creek Hemlocks in Iron County are two of NWLT's recent acquisitions that were original BCPL lands. They conserve a rare and important feature of Northwoods biodiversity, old-growth hemlock forest. 🌲



Hemlocks are uncommon or declining, and have greatly diminished from historic levels.



Hemlock branch and cones.



*Commonly called 'hemlock varnish shelf' (*Ganoderma tsugae*), due to their shiny appearance, grow on hemlock trees.*

Goodbye Trisha!

In early July, Trisha Moore departed from the NWLT staff as its Conservation Coordinator. During her 12-year career with NWLT, she was Monitoring Coordinator for six years, and served in various outreach and membership support roles. She helped attain NWLT's first national land trust accreditation status in 2014, and was instrumental in its re-accreditation in 2019. In the year before she departed, she became quite knowledgeable about conservation easement drafting and was the staff lead on several projects, working closely with donating landowners to achieve their conservation goals.

"One of the most incredible rewards of working for NWLT over the past 12 years (and there are many!) has been the people. The family stories, commitment to conservation and generosity of landowners will stay with me for life," said Trisha.

"I am proud of the way NWLT has stayed very focused on its mission. The work is slow and steady, yet, it has the greatest impact of any environmentally-focused work I have had the privilege of learning and being a part of! NWLT does an amazing job of keeping private land and water protection its number one priority," she ended.

Trisha served as a mentor and shared an abundance of knowledge during a period of growth and transition after Bryan Pierce's (former executive director) retirement in 2019. The board and staff greatly miss her radiating positivity and dedication to all aspects of NWLT's mission. 🌲



Trisha enjoyed sharing conservation quotes when working for NWLT, and we found this one relates well to her experiences here:

"Conservation viewed in its entirety, is the slow and laborious unfolding of a new relationship between people and land." ~Aldo Leopold

Lake Leader Training Benefits Shoreline Protection Efforts

NWLT staff members Ted Anchor and Kari Kirschbaum graduated from the Lake Leaders training program on October 8, organized by the Wisconsin Lakes Partnership. The Partnership is made up of the Extension Lakes Program at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the citizen advocacy organization Wisconsin Lakes.

Together they recognized the need for enduring leadership in the management of our lakes and created the Wisconsin Lake Leaders Institute in 1996.

Taught during three, two-day seminars, the mission of the Institute is to assist citizen lake leaders to develop both their technical and people skills, ultimately enriching their communities and the waters within them. Through this training Ted and Kari gained a better understanding of lake ecology and how to work with state and local governments to advance lake protection efforts. The seminars were held at Green Lake in Green Lake County, Kemp Station near Woodruff and Durward's Glen near Baraboo, with the graduation ceremony performed outside of the Aldo Leopold Shack (pictured).

This was the 13th class, totaling over 300 graduates, who are now making contributions to address a host of diverse water management challenges and to enhance lake stewardship and protection. For more information about the program contact the Extension Lakes program staff at (715) 346-2116. 🌲



*2021 Lake Leaders graduates at the Aldo Leopold Shack near Baraboo.
Photo courtesy of the Wisconsin Lakes Partnership.*

The landscape surrounding the Aldo Leopold Shack and Farm informed the vision in his conservation classic, "A Sand County Almanac," including his call for a "land ethic."

New Volunteers Join Board of Directors

Steve Petersen

“In 2017 I resigned from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources after nearly 30 years of state forest and state park management and administration. Since then, I have been working in the real estate business out of offices in Minocqua, first at Redman Realty Group then as broker for the First Weber Realtors offices in Minocqua and Park Falls and the Wisconsin business out of Bessemer.

From age 7, I spent my summers and weekends in the Minocqua area and worked at the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest (NHAL) State Forest through high school and college. In 1988, I went to work for Wisconsin State Parks and worked in Sturgeon Bay, Kenosha, Cassville and Madison, where I was budget director and chief of operations between 1997 and 2000. In 2000 I moved north, to the Brule River State Forest where I was superintendent during the development of a significant masterplan and successfully worked to improve relations with local constituencies. In 2006 I ‘moved home’ to the superintendent position at the NHAL State Forest.

Along the way, I served on multiple boards including a liaison role to the North Lakeland Discovery Center in Manitowish Waters. I served a six-year term on the Minocqua Area Chamber of Commerce including three years as president. I also was a member of the Minocqua Breakfast Rotary Club and was president there for two years.

I’ve stepped back from volunteer work for several years to focus on my new career and feel the time is right to return to conservation work. I look forward to participating with the board and organization to help advance this important work.”

Ben Meyer

“Although I have only lived in the Northwoods for ten years, I am a Wisconsin native, originally from Mount Horeb. I have spent the vast majority of my professional career in Northwoods journalism. From 2012 to 2019, I served in a variety of reporting and leadership roles at WJFW-TV in Rhinelander. Since then, I have worked as a journalist at WXPB Public Radio in Rhinelander. There, my central focus has been production of The Stream, a weekly series highlighting environmental and natural resources issues in the Northwoods. I am also currently entering my second year of law school at Mitchell Hamline School of Law. I live in Rhinelander with my wife Erika, and we are delighted to be expecting our first child in November.

I hope to serve on the board, first and foremost, because the Northwoods is my beloved, adopted home and I hope to see its natural treasures protected for generations to come. I have had the privilege of covering many NWLT endeavors over my years in media. I’ve found the organization to be focused, energetic, professional, and in pursuit of interests that match my own. Northwoods nature is where I find peace. I want my children, and everyone else who lives here in the future, to have that same opportunity.” 🌲



Welcome Frank!

Frank Schroyer joined the NWLT staff in September as Land Conservation Associate to support the stewardship and monitoring of conservation lands, as well as to assist with our public educational and outreach programs.

In the past few months, he has been in the field monitoring conservation easement properties and getting acquainted with NWLT-owned lands, especially the Beaver Creek Hemlocks preserve. He is working to complete the baseline documentation there, which includes photographs, maps, natural resource reports, and management plans necessary for every new conservation property. He is also in the early stages of planning the hiking trail system at Beaver Creek, and inventorying needs for upgrades at the Holmboe Conifer Forest.

Frank graduated from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee in 2017 with a B.S. in Biological Sciences and B.S. in Conservation and Environmental Sciences. Prior to coming to NWLT, he worked most recently as a Watershed Technician for the Ottawa Conservation District in Michigan, and prior to that as Conservation Assistant for the Michigan Natural Features Inventory, Ecological Field Technician with Battelle’s National Ecological Observatory Network, and Natural Areas Technician for the Milwaukee County Parks System.

Frank now lives in Rhinelander, where he will spend his free time enjoying the outdoors by birding, fishing, hunting, and canoeing. “It is exciting to know the work we do with the Northwoods Land Trust is having a direct impact on the well-being of our local ecosystems, public health, and community resilience,” said Frank. 🌲



Minocqua Thoroughfare Conservation Easement *Cont. from pg. 8*



Eliza, they continued the family tradition of coming to the Northwoods. “I grew up every summer coming to visit, my mom grew up coming in the summers, and her grandparents who lived in Rhinelander would often come up, and it just became a family tradition,” said Eliza.

Sandra inherited an interest in the property after her parents passed away. Over time, it became difficult living in Michigan and owning property in Wisconsin, so the Gellis’s transferred their ownership to a family member. “Just like nature has its cycles, so do people’s lives and routines. It was very hard for us when we no longer had the cabin; it disrupted our yearly routine emotionally and as a family,” said Eliza.

For the next 12 years, Sandra dreamed about reestablishing her family’s connection to Winat Road. She kept an eye on real estate and took notice of the subdivision of the former Semsch family land that was adjacent to her grandparents’ land. Upon calling local realtor Steve Petersen, she learned a home was coming up for sale on Winat Road. She acted quickly to secure the house and articulated that her vision was to also acquire neighboring land.

In 2020, the 20-acre parcel to their south came up for sale. “I always had my eye on the property, because it was next to our family’s land and used to be owned by the Semschs. I knew it was kind of swampy, and never developed. It’s not original growth forest but it kind of looks like it because it’s been left now for 100 years. It has deadfall, and snags; it’s the way that it was supposed to have been. I said ‘let’s purchase it with the intent of conserving it.’ I didn’t have a clue at that time how to do that. Steve talked us through all of the possibilities, and he pointed us to the Northwoods Land Trust, and it was purchased with the intent of saving it to be the way that it is now,” said Sandra.

Eliza shared, “When my mom finally was able to purchase land, on ‘our’ road, we could once again walk and do things that we did when we were kids, like go fishing at the boat landing. There’s something very powerful about returning to a place that you loved as a child. It’s that feeling of ‘it’s really special, and just like I remember.’ There’s a timeless quality to

it. As an adult, you understand the power of preserving these places, especially if you have lost them at one time. The more you can save property like this, the more we can learn to have a healthy relationship with the land and with future generations. It’s really important to preserve the tradition as well.”

“This is the 4th generation now on Winat Road, and someday there will be a 5th and 6th. When I was growing up, we built really close family relationships at the cabin. It was a special place to us because it’s where we built those relationships. To have the same relationship with my children and grandchildren that I had with my parents, I want to preserve the place where those relationships were formed. The place is important. You have to give them the woods and lake to come to,” Eliza expressed.

And there’s optimism that in the future their family will protect more land and shoreline on the Minocqua Thoroughfare. “We hope to purchase and conserve additional lands nearby, maybe even the old family land if given the opportunity. But if it doesn’t work out, I know I saved something,” said Sandra.

“This was an opportunity to save something that I was connected to. There is, for us, a very spiritual element to preserving the land. We feel there is a sacredness to the land that is difficult to convey in words. If the land is important to you, you should protect it. If you have the means and desire to do it, do it. Because it is forever. There’s something really powerful about those words, in perpetuity. It’s amazing,” ended Sandra.

“It was such a pleasure to work with Sandra and Mark. Their story of losing and then reestablishing their connection to this place is so relatable, and their determination to permanently protect it forever is inspiring. In addition to the beautiful natural communities, and the important connection it provides within the American Legion-Northern Highlands State Forest, the property will continue to conserve the quality of the adjacent lakes and provide beautiful scenery along Blue Island and Winat Roads,” said Kari Kirschbaum, NWLT Land Protection Coordinator. 🌲



Sandra and Mark Gellis, and daughter Eliza (left) her fiancée Jean Hause (right), at the signing of their donated conservation easement.



NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

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

NONPROFIT
US POSTAGE PAID
EAGLE RIVER WI
PERMIT NO 47

Electronic Service Requested

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mary Schwaiger, *Pres.*
Bob Martini, *Vice-Pres.*
Pete Davison, *Secr.*
Bill Dickens, *Treas.*
John Bates
Ron Eckstein
Terry Hatch
John Huppert
Ben Meyer
Mitch Olson
Steve Petersen
Meta Reigel Brandt
Cathy Techtman
Beth Tornes

STAFF

Ted Anchor, *Exec. Dir.*
Kari Kirschbaum
Carrie Rasmussen
Troy Walters
Frank Schroyer

715- 479-2490

nwlt@northwoodslandtrust.org
www.northwoodslandtrust.org

Leaving a Lasting Legacy for the Northwoods

Connecting Land and Traditions: The Minocqua Thoroughfare Conservation Easement

Sandra Brown Gellis and Mark Gellis of Flushing, Michigan donated a conservation easement to Northwoods Land Trust (NWLT) on July 7, 2021. The easement protects approximately 20 acres of land and 100 feet of frontage on the Minocqua Thoroughfare in the Town of Arbor Vitae in Vilas County.

The property includes mature northern hardwood - conifer forest, bogs and wet meadow, tamarack-spruce wetlands and frontage on the Minocqua Thoroughfare which connects Little Arbor Vitae Lake and Carrol Lake. The parcel ties together two areas of the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest – a detached peninsula to a larger block of forest – providing an important link between terrestrial and aquatic habitats for a wide range of species.

“While the property is smaller than what NWLT typically conserves in a single transaction, the connectivity it provides between state forestland and to the Brown and Gellis family traditions are what makes this project special,” said Kari Kirschbaum, NWLT Land Protection Coordinator.

The conserved property is on Winat Road, named after Sandra’s grandfather, Henry. He purchased a sizable tract of land on the Minocqua Thoroughfare 95 years ago, and being a highway district engineer and surveyor in the 1920s, he laid out the roadway.

In 1952, Sandra’s grandparents built a cabin there that became the summer retreat for her and her siblings. Here they explored the woods and waterways where they discovered remnants of earlier histories of narrow gauge railroads, logging by timber companies and attempted dairy farming.

After marrying Mark and then having their daughter,

Continued inside on page 7



The newly protected shoreline along the Minocqua Thoroughfare.