



NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER

PROTECTING OUR WOODS & WATERS

SPRING
2023



A LEGACY IS LEFT ON THUNDER LAKE

The Pinkertons Add to the Mosaic of Protected Lands

On October 24, 2022, Tad and Hannah Pinkerton donated nearly 66 acres of land to the Northwoods Land Trust (NWLTL). The property is in Three Lakes Township in Oneida County and lies on the southern end of Thunder Lake. It boasts over one mile of lake frontage that encompasses the entire southwestern bay.

This donation builds on decades of conservation work on Thunder Lake. In 2006, an anonymous donor gifted 144 acres of land to NWLT on the northeast side of the lake. This property borders the 3,000-acre Thunder Lake State Wildlife Area. The Pinkerton property serves as a permanent addition to these conserved areas (*see map on page 3*).

Much of the 6,100 feet of shoreland protected by the Pinkertons is made up of bog communities with emergent and floating vegetation, and is dominated by spruce and tamarack forest. The undeveloped shoreline offers an abundance of wildlife habitat as well as the protection of water quality.

The Pinkertons acquired their Thunder Lake land in stages to add to the 12-acre cottage

lot they bought in 1985. "We were intrigued by the point – a steep-sided esker that juts out into the lake. We could see it from our cottage, and wanted to keep it from being developed. We were eventually able to purchase it," said Tad.

After realizing their dream of owning the woods, peninsula and shoreline as a place to protect, they enjoyed years of studying the flora and fauna throughout the seasons. "Thunder Lake is really unique. It's considered a 'wild lake' by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. It's large and shallow, so there isn't a lot of boat traffic, which helps preserve the quality of the shoreline and serenity of the area," said Hannah.

"Our two sons were grown when we bought the additional property, but our daughter has enjoyed coming up regularly through the years. In addition to hiking the land to the point, we have regularly canoed the shoreline and ventured out to the islands," said Hannah. "I've kept a phenology journal all these years and have fond memories of discovering turtle nests outside of our cabin and loon nests along the shoreline."

Thunder Lake is an 1,800-acre shallow lake that is classified as a 'wild lake' by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Typically, this designation is given to smaller, more isolated lakes. Because Thunder Lake has a low level of development on its shores and much of the surrounding area is conserved, it fits the standards set by the agency.

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NWLT's Kari Kirschbaum with Hannah & Tad Pinkerton

Tad and Hannah first contacted NWLT in 2007 to discuss conservation options for their land. They were concerned with the changes they observed on the surrounding landscape. Many of the lake's seasonal cabins and resorts were being modernized into year-round homes and condominiums. "As more people started building bigger homes, we realized that we value the wildness aspect of cottage life and wanted to keep it that way," said Hannah.

While they considered permanently protecting their property, they became interested in learning more about land stewardship principles and management



The open peatland found at the Thunder Lake State Wildlife Area is full of sphagnum and other mosses that spend thousands of years accumulating carbon in their underground layers. Peatlands are rich ecosystems – pockets of biodiversity. If peatlands dry out due to shifts in climate, we risk releasing all that stored carbon into the atmosphere.



"It is wonderful to see sunrises, sunsets and moonrises over the lake." -Hannah Pinkerton

practices. "We learned a lot through attending the Wisconsin Coverts Program at Kemp Natural Resources Station on Tomahawk Lake, which inspired us to actively manage the land. But forestry management was difficult with an isolated small upland acreage so we ended up leaving it largely undisturbed," said Tad.

This led to the rugged quality of the landscape seen today, although there are a few lingering signs of past human disturbance, including an attempted rail spur from the Thunder Lake Railroad.

Before accepting the land gift, NWLT discovered that the mineral rights underneath the property had been reserved by previous owners in the early 1900s. It is fairly common in northern Wisconsin to find that subsurface mineral rights are held by a third party. The mineral rights had not been used in the last 20 years, so Tad and Hannah were able to complete the donation of the

surface rights to NWLT, and NWLT was able to reclaim the mineral rights as the new surface owner. (*See page 3 for a feature on mineral rights in Wisconsin.*)

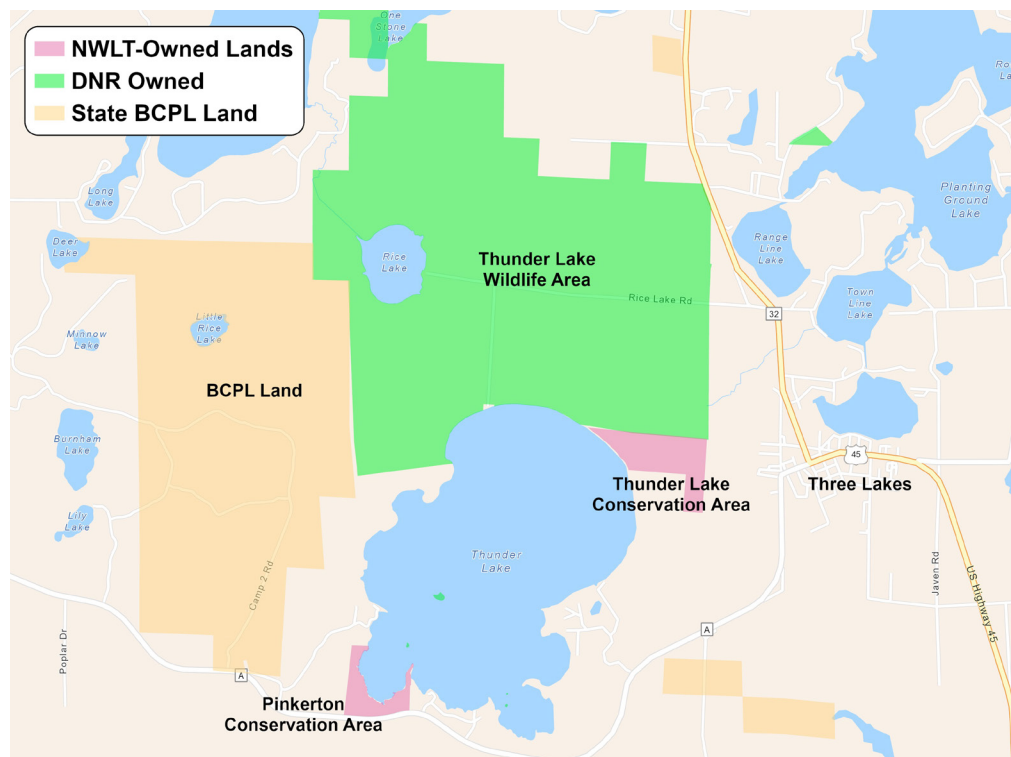
"Wisconsin has such beautiful land, and especially with climate change and remote working, people are moving from southern climes to the northwoods. We want to protect our state's heritage, and this seemed a good place to do it," said Hannah.

"We knew from friends that NWLT was a good organization to work with. From personal experience and being involved in the group that protected Picnic Point on Lake Mendota in Madison, we saw how a community can rally around conservation, and it's exciting to be a part of such efforts again," said Tad.

Now, NWLT is a proud owner of the Pinkerton Thunder Lake Conservation Area. The public is welcome to enjoy the property. The land is accessible

"WISCONSIN HAS SUCH BEAUTIFUL LAND, AND ESPECIALLY WITH CLIMATE CHANGE AND REMOTE WORKING, PEOPLE ARE MOVING FROM SOUTHERN CLIMES TO THE NORTHWOODS. WE WANT TO PROTECT OUR STATE'S HERITAGE, AND THIS SEEMED A GOOD PLACE TO DO IT."

-HANNAH PINKERTON



from water or Highway A, where there's a small pull-off on the north side of the road. It leads to an unmaintained former easement road that serves as a path most of the way out to the scenic point.

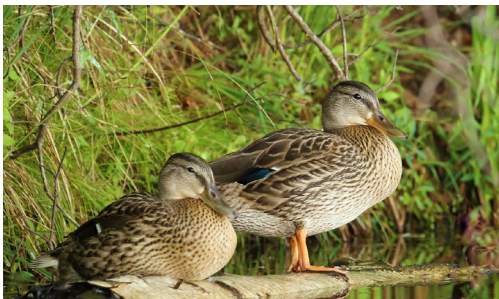
"Tad and Hannah have a real love of this land. It has been a privilege to help them achieve their goal of protecting it. Many people in the community, including my own family, enjoy the peaceful solitude, beautiful scenery and excellent fishing on Thunder Lake. I'm thrilled that NWLT is able to be part of protecting its long-term health and scenic beauty," said Kari Kirschbaum, NWLT's Land Protection Director.

"We like leaving the land essentially unchanged. It is a kind of oasis, adding

on to what the state and NWLT have already conserved around the lake. It is an area worth protecting and we hope to set a positive example that will inspire others to do the same," said Hannah.

A property map, directions and list of public uses are available at northwoodslandtrust.org. Note, the path on the scenic point is easily walkable for the first 400 yards, and then becomes rustic and moderately difficult for the final 200 yards.

The expenses related to this project were supported by a grant from the Caerus Foundation and gifts from two donor families and the Pinkerton family.



Common species that frequent Thunder Lake include mallards, blue-winged teal, ring-necked ducks, great blue herons, sandhill cranes, Canada geese and numerous species of wetland songbirds. Three rare species - the Nelson sparrow, merlin and the yellow rail - nest at the Thunder Lake State Wildlife Area. The property may be a good place to observe waterfowl species during spring and fall migration given the abundance of suitable habitat.

(Photos by Anne Small [left] and Bev Engstrom [right])

MINERAL RIGHTS

In Wisconsin, property ownership rights are categorized between the right to use the surface of the land and the right to own and use the minerals underneath. In northern Wisconsin, it was fairly common for lumber companies that owned land in the early 1900s to retain the mineral rights when they eventually sold that land.

NWLT oftentimes has to address this separation of rights before a conservation project can be completed. A property that could potentially (although unlikely) later be excavated for minerals, oil or gas by a third party may not be one that NWLT can permanently protect. Severed mineral rights can also impact the eligibility of a conservation easement donation for a charitable income tax deduction.

If severed mineral rights are discovered through a title search, NWLT staff will work with landowners to pursue a variety of solutions to allow a conservation project to go forward. These can include helping the landowner reclaim the mineral rights (if they are eligible), getting a professional geological assessment of the risk of mineral extraction on the property or occasionally working with the mineral owner to release the mineral rights.

A recent Wisconsin Court of Appeals' decision looked at the effects of non-use on ownership of mineral interests: *Lakeland Area Property Owners Assoc. v. Oneida County*, 2021 WI App 19, 957 N.W.2d 605. Under Wis. Stat. § 706.057(3), mineral interests that are inactive for 20 years or more can revert to the owner of the surface interest in the real estate if the surface owner files a statement of claim to the minerals. Under Wisconsin law, an interest in minerals can be "used" in a variety of ways, including actual exploitation of the minerals, a conveyance of the mineral interests, or as in Lakeland, if the owner of the minerals records a statement of claim in the real estate records. (Source: www.reinhartlaw.com)

If you are unsure whether you own the mineral rights underneath your property, you can work with a local title company to search for mineral reservations, and if needed, file a statement of claim.

“THIS MUST BE PROTECTED!”

Experiences in the outdoors led to the donation of the 39-acre Little Muskie/Muskie Lake Conservation Easement



Karen & Mike McFadzen on Muskie Lake. Photo by Mike McFadzen.

For decades Mike and Karen McFadzen would take a northwoods vacation in the heart of winter. The trip would start out with Mike skiing the Birkebeiner followed by a romp through the north to ski, snowshoe and explore. Eventually they started looking at property to buy and in 1991 they found something truly special in Oneida County. The snow was so deep the realtors didn't want to show it.

“It had everything we were looking for and more. It borders the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest. It includes most of Little Muskie Lake with frontage on Muskie Lake and Muskie Creek. It has wet lowlands and dry highlands. We kept thinking this is too good to be true,” said Mike. There was one small problem- the parcel was landlocked. After a successful negotiation, they purchased neighboring land to secure legal access to their bit of paradise.

This began their tradition of leaving their home in Greenbush, Wisconsin throughout the warmer seasons to camp on the property. “Our camping spot is on a high ridge where we can enjoy both sunrise and sunset. We love having coffee on the lake and watching the warblers come through in spring. As we would sit there, I'd repeat the mantra-

this must be protected!” said Karen.

Both Mike and Karen grew up in communities near Lake Michigan where their appreciation for nature originated. As youth, they each had outdoor, camp related experiences that resulted in deep-rooted love for water and land. Their shared values and philosophy translated into the donation of a conservation easement to the Northwoods Land Trust (NWLTL) late last year.

On December 28, 2022, they conveyed the easement that forever guarantees 39 acres of land and 3,915 feet of natural shoreline in the Town of Cassian and its quiet solace will stay intact. Before conveying the easement to NWLT, the McFadzens had to address the issue of the severed mineral rights. The Yawkey Lumber Company (who donated over 400 acres to NWLT in 2018) owned the rights, and willingly released them to

The conserved property surrounds most of the nine-acre Little Muskie Lake. Although not a state-identified ‘wild lake,’ it has very little development on its shores. The easement also protects nearly 700 feet of natural shoreline on Muskie Lake, a 46-acre low-development lake. Approximately 500 feet of Little Muskie Creek, a cool-warm headwater stream, runs through the property. The north boundary of the property abuts the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest.



“My spiritual spot is a little dells on Muskie Creek where I sit on boulders, soaking it in.” - Karen McFadzen. Photo by Mike McFadzen.

“CONSERVATION EASEMENTS ARE PERMANENT AND PRESENT A PERSONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ANY LANDOWNER. LANDOWNERS ARE AT THE HEART OF MAKING IT HAPPEN.”

-MIKE MCFADZEN

**“THEY ARE NOT MAKING MORE LAND AND WATER.
WE SHOULD ALL HAVE A ROLE IN PROTECTING THESE
SPECIAL PLACES FOR THE FUTURE.”**

-MIKE MCFADZEN

allow NWLT and the McFadzens to move forward with the project. (See page 3 for a feature on mineral rights in Wisconsin.)

“Conservation easements are permanent and present a personal opportunity for any landowner. Landowners are at the heart of making it happen. Saving the rivers, streams and lakes help protect aquifers. We all know that having clean drinking water is vitally important, especially in this era of PFAS and other kinds of contamination that reach far beyond industrial zones. Protecting climate-resilient habitat allows native plants and animals to flourish,” said Mike.

In addition to the core purpose of the conservation easement – permanent protection of the land and natural resources – the McFadzens are guaranteed the option to build a small residence on the land someday if they, or a future owner, wishes to do so. Their forestland is currently enrolled in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources’ Managed Forest Law Program for sustaining forest resources and promoting responsible forestry practices, so some selective harvesting will occur in the future.

“It is so great that land trusts work with willing private landowners to find the best ways to conserve their land forever. The process of developing a conservation easement with NWLT really helped us think about what we wanted for our property in the future, beyond our lifetimes. We feel that it is a very special place. For us it’s like being in Canada. The land is undisturbed for the most part – it’s never been built on, and we didn’t want to see it ever be divided and developed. We didn’t want to see house after house bordering these lakes and wetlands. The property is a natural corridor between old corporate forestland and the state forest. It’s a pathway for many different animals,” said Karen.

“We’re grateful that Mike and Karen are such committed stewards of this beautiful property. Their decision to partner with

NWLT ensures that the property will be protected into the future. Their patience and commitment to seeing the project through, even as we had to find creative ways to address the severed mineral rights, was critical to the success of this project,” said Kari Kirschbaum, NWLT’s Land Protection Director.

“They are not making more land and water. We should all have a role in protecting these special places for the future. People head north for the natural draw. Many people think there is a lack of well-planned development. At some point we have to limit sprawling development and protect the remaining larger tracts of land. By keeping this land intact, it prevents habitat loss and we are also reducing our climate footprint,” ended Mike.



The McFadzens enthusiastically installed a protected forever sign after the easement was granted to NWLT.

The expenses related to this project were supported by a grant from the Caerus Foundation and a gift from a private donor.



THIS EASEMENT & ITS NATURAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS



The 14+/- acres of wetlands can store about 5 million gallons of water!

The 25+/- acres of forest store about 1,000 tons of carbon!

The stream and proximity to public lands provide safe migration for plants and animals as Wisconsin warms.

CONSERVATION IS CLIMATE ACTION

KEEP IT WILD

UPCOMING FEATURED EVENTS

WILD & SCENIC FILM FESTIVAL JUNE 28, 2023



The film fest is coming to the Three Lakes Center for the Arts on the evening of June 28. The two-hour program will include newly released independent films with themes of climate, water, recreation and community. Funds raised will support NWLT's land protection and stewardship programs. A film line-up, with trailers, can be viewed at northwoodslandtrust.org or by scanning the QR code. Tickets are \$20/adult & \$12/youth and can be purchased at TLCFA.org or by going to the Center during operating hours. If tickets sell out early, a second showing may be offered on June 29.

Thanks to our local business sponsors!



This event is part of a nationwide tour. See wildandscenicfilmfestival.org/events.

SHORELAND LANDOWNER WORKSHOPS JUNE - JULY

If you own lake or river shoreland property and would like to learn about best practices and programs to protect water quality and habitat, as well as permanent conservation options through NWLT, please join us! Pre-register at our website event page at northwoodslandtrust.org. A light lunch and beverages will be served.

JUNE 26 @ 10 AM:

Northwoods Center in downtown Eagle River.
Co-sponsored by the Vilas County Land & Water Conservation Department and Vilas County Lakes & Rivers Association.

JULY 21 @ AT 10 AM:

Noboken School Forestry Building on Hwy J in Pearson, 12 miles north of Antigo. Co-sponsored by the Langlade County Conservation Department and other organizations.

LAND TRUST DAYS JULY - SEPTEMBER



Get outside during the 6th annual Wisconsin Land Trust Days, a series of outdoor activities and family-friendly events hosted by land trusts across the state. NWLT is offering three outings.

JULY 11:

Geology and Paddling on the Gile Flowage

AUGUST 15:

Bog Hike at Tower Nibiiwan Conservation Area

SEPTEMBER 29:

Two Towers Trail Hike at Minocqua Winter Park

Find out more and register online at northwoodslandtrust.org.

A full list of Wisconsin Land Trust Days events is available at havefunoutside.org.



GREAT WISCONSIN BIRDATHON APRIL 15 - JUNE 15



Our team, the "NWLTurkeys," is raising funds for bird conservation by participating in the Great Wisconsin Birdathon. Consider making a pledge of support before June 30. Funds raised will benefit Wisconsin's Bird Protection Fund for piping plovers, whooping cranes, warblers and more, as well as NWLT's mission.

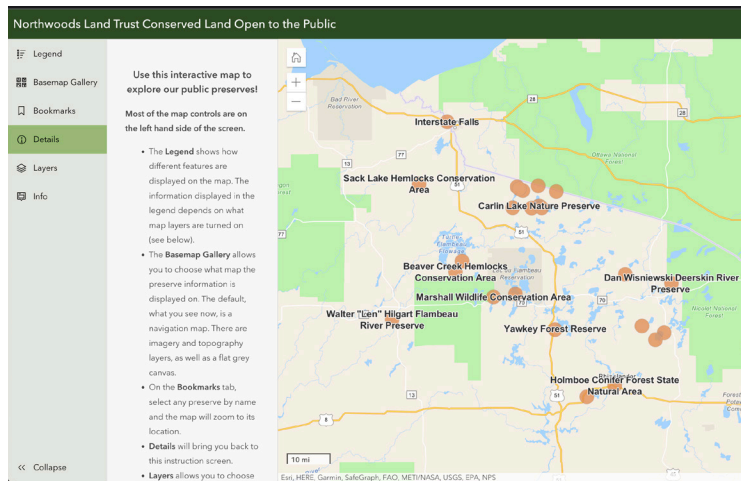
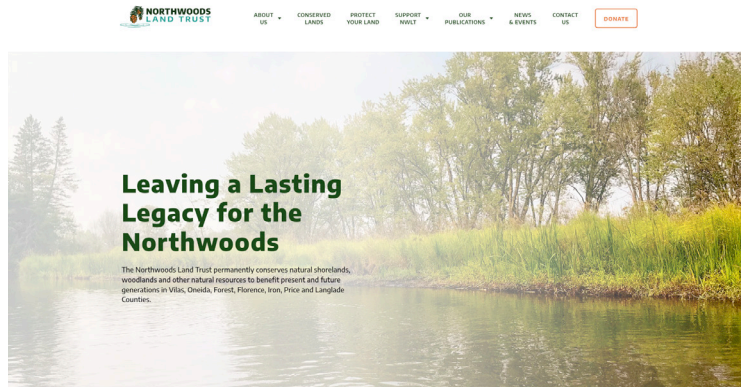
Pledges can be made in a lump sum, or on a per bird basis. To pledge with a credit card, go to wibirdathon.org or scan the QR code. By check, payable to Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, Attn: Birdathon, 211 S Paterson St, Suite 100, Madison, WI 53703 and include 'Team NWLTurkeys' in the memo.

And you too can bird for a cause. Anyone can participate between April 15 - June 15 as an individual or by forming a team to count birds.



NEW WEBSITE:

Explore the Places You Help Protect!



An interactive map is available at our new website for you to explore 30 conservation properties open to the public. Each property has its own featured page, with a downloadable map and directions to easily experience the wonder of our protected natural areas. If you enjoy paddling wild and remote lakes and rivers, there are a lot of options to discover.

There's additional fresh web content including the Old-Growth Forest Initiative and a NWLT historical timeline. The support page spells out many giving options including annual, monthly, stock, IRA, honorary or memorial donations. While there, learn how you can join the Northwoods Legacy Society by including NWLT in your will or estate. If you are interested in protecting your own land, conservation easement and land donation considerations and benefits are outlined in an easy-to-read format.

VISIT NORTHWOODSLANDTRUST.ORG

Special Thanks To:



Funding support &
interactive map creation
gatheringwaters.org



Logo & website design
katkcreative.com

NEW LOGO:

Embodying the Woods & Waters



We are pleased to showcase the new NWLT logo through this edition of the newsletter. The logo features an eastern hemlock branch and cones - symbols of endurance and growth. Both the full artistic version, and encapsulated form, represent our main conservation focus- the protection of natural shoreland where our woods and waters interface.

Today, NWLT conserves over 83 miles of shoreline across our service area. With your support, even more shoreland may be saved for future generations. Please consider making a contribution with the enclosed envelope to support our programs and services.

ORDER APPAREL BEFORE JUNE 1ST!

Our storefront, offered by Vital Industries of Rhinelander, is open for a limited time. Promote your local land trust by purchasing apparel: canvas caps (5 colors & camo option), a recycled knit hat, polyester/cotton blend t-shirts (4 colors), and Eddie Bauer men's or women's fleece vests. Ship to your home, or pick up through NWLT; all orders will be ready at our Annual Meeting (see page 8). Think ahead for birthday and holiday gift giving! Each year the storefront will open for a limited time, occasionally offering new items.

PLACE YOUR ORDER BY JUNE 1ST AT:
www.vital.industries/NWLT





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NWLT PROTECTION TOTALS

15,011 acres **83 miles**
of land conserved of shoreline protected

715.479.2490 | northwoodslandtrust.org

CELEBRATE LOCAL CONSERVATION AT ANNUAL GATHERING

You are invited to the Northwoods Land Trust's (NWLT) Annual Meeting & Gathering on **Friday, June 16 at 1 pm** at the newly constructed Discovery Hall at the North Lakeland Discovery Center in Manitowish Waters. Together, we'll celebrate recent conservation projects and program accomplishments that you helped make happen. Refreshments and hors d'oeuvres will be served.

Guest presenter, geologist Mike Porter, will discuss how the area's glacial past has profoundly influenced the inter-relationships of landscape, soils, and forest ecology. The Winegar Moraine, a distinctive glacially-derived deposit, stretches east-west over 50 miles across the subcontinental divide in Iron and Vilas counties. The last glacial ice sheet 12,000 years ago created the moraine complex, recording geologic processes and related depositional environments along the glacial ice front. Mike will highlight a few of NWLT's properties in context of this rich glacial history.

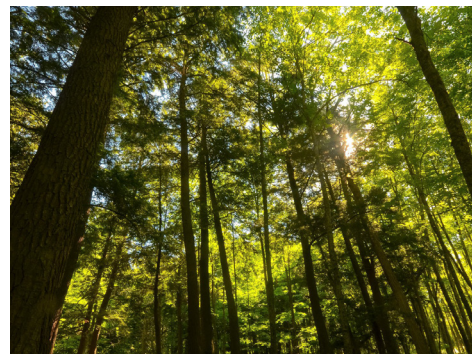
Two optional outdoor excursions will be held following the meeting. Space is limited.

3-MILE PADDLE launching from NWLT's conservation property on Van Vliet Lake in Presque Isle, led by Ron Eckstein. Paddlers will head north to Averill Lake.

1.5 MILE INTERPRETIVE HIKE at the Van Vliet Hemlocks State Natural Area's western trail network in Presque Isle, led by John Bates, with guest Mike Porter.



Mike Porter has a PhD in sedimentary geology from UW-Madison, and 33 years in geologic research and global exploration with ExxonMobil. Since 2018, he's lived full-time in Presque Isle with his wife Becky, enjoying volunteer activities, pickleball and all forms of outdoor-focused silent sports.



The nutrient-rich soils left by the glaciers support old-growth forests, swamps and wetlands with diverse plants and animals.

Photo by Joshua Mayer

RSVP BY JUNE 9TH

ONLINE: northwoodslandtrust.org

BY EMAIL: carrie@northwoodslandtrust.org

BY PHONE: (715) 479-2490