



NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

Leaving a Lasting Legacy for the Northwoods

A Wild Lake for Future Generations



Two-thirds of Perch Lake, a 35-acre seepage lake, was protected through two conservation easements granted by the Letts family. The easements include over a mile of natural shoreline on this "Wild Lake."

For Dr. James & Erinn Letts of Maplewood, MN, protecting a large piece of "wild lake" shoreline in the northwoods is all about their kids and the generations to come. "My kids are the 5th generation of family to come up to the northwoods," commented Jim. "Hopefully, in 100 years our kids' grand kids will be running around and exploring the forest."

Jim grew up in a small town in southern Minnesota, St. Peter, with his parents, brother and sister. He went to college at UW-Eau Claire where he got a degree in chemistry, then received his M.D. at the University of Minnesota medical school. "I have a family medicine practice with HealthEast Clinic at Roselawn in the Twin Cities," said Jim.

"Both of my parents, Connie and Neil Letts, were teachers, so they had a good chunk of time off in the summer," he reflected. "We used to come up to the northwoods every summer as little kids. We'd camp at Franklin Lake east of Eagle River in the Nicolet National Forest."

"My great grandpa was the first to start coming up from the Chicago area," he continued. "My grandparents, Helen and Lou Letts, were from the Twin Cities area, and they bought a cabin on Seven Mile Lake, so that became our home base after that. Over the years of hiking, swimming and wildlife watching, my parents and grandparents instilled in us a deep love and respect for nature."

(Continued next page)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- A WILD LAKE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS
- ACCREDITATION RENEWAL
- DAN WISNIEWSKI AWARD
- BOARD UPDATES
- THANK YOU'S
- MARSHALL DEDICATION

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.



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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Wild Lake - *continued*

Erinn grew up in Delevan in southern Wisconsin. “We met at UW-Eau Claire,” said Jim. “Her degree is in special education and she was a special education teacher before taking time off for the kids. Erinn’s parents, Rick and Paula Stewart, live year-round in Manitowish Waters, so we spent time between Eagle River and Manitowish Waters.”

“I had read an article about 15 years ago about how the timber companies were divesting of their lands which was causing problems for conservation,” commented Jim. “We decided we wanted to do some little thing to try to conserve a piece of property.”

The couple checked out websites, newspaper ads and real estate publications while in the northwoods. “We kept our eyes open for a few years before we came across this 80-acre property on a small lake in Price County. We bought the 80 acres from Plum Creek. A few years later, we negotiated with another timber company based out of Georgia to buy the additional 40 acres. That was how we ended up with 120 acres.”

“We didn’t do it in a way that a financial advisor would approve of,” noted Jim. “The property is so unique though, we thought it was important enough that it was worth going out on a limb for.”

“We love spending time in forests and on lakes and trails,” confessed Jim. “We also wanted to have a spot where we could spend time as a family, so we can go fishing, hiking, camping and exploring nature.”

“There are some massive old white cedars - some that are 130+ years old. It is a pretty neat place for people who love the forest like we do.”

- Jim Letts



*Above: Evan sits among old white cedar trees. Letts family photo.
Below left: Owen explores the west bay of Perch Lake.*



“Perch Lake is 35 acres and the deepest point we have found is 18 feet,” said Jim. “It has largemouth bass, bluegills, crappies and perch. It also has lots of painted turtles and wood frogs.”

“One of the things we love about this property is the diversity of trees,” he commented. “We basically have every species of northwoods trees except for Jack pine and elm. Those are the only two we haven’t found on the property.”

“The hemlock forest is really cool,” continued Jim. “We have some medium maturity hemlocks and some younger, regenerating hemlock forest. The Managed Forest Law report we have also shows that certain sections of the wetland forest haven’t been logged since the late 1800s. There are some massive old white cedars - some that are 130+ years old. It is a pretty neat place for people who love the forest like we do.”

“We’ve seen bear, turkeys, eagles, lots of deer, raccoons, and a fisher,” he noted. “We’ve had bobcat on our trail camera, and we are hoping some day to see elk, because we are not far from an elk reintroduction site in the Flambeau State Forest.”

“Our family has always been pretty conservation-minded,” Jim reflected. “We are members of various conservation organizations, and we actually called The Nature Conservancy first. They referred us to the Northwoods Land Trust.”

Jim commented that they learned about conservation easements from the landowner conservation packet the land trust sent. “We became members of the Northwoods Land Trust, and we love getting the newsletter. It is inspiring

(Continued next page)

Wild Lake - *continued*

to see all the stories of people conserving their family land. That kept us motivated. It seemed like the right route to go.”

“We didn’t have to do much work,” related Jim. “Nothing made us nervous about the conservation easement. It was all professionally done, so we appreciated that about working with the Northwoods Land Trust.”

According to NWLT Executive Director Bryan Pierce, the process didn’t go entirely smoothly however. “We discovered through title searches that the east parcel had reserved mineral rights, and the entire property lies directly over a fault line that has received significant mineral exploration interest. Because of the mineral rights issue, we ended up doing two separate conservation easements.”

“The conservation easement on the east 40 was donated, but could not be claimed as a charitable contribution for federal income tax purposes because of the severed mineral rights,” Pierce stated. “The second conservation easement was granted on the west 80 which did not have the mineral rights issue, so that did qualify for a charitable deduction.”

Within the conservation agreement, the Letts family reserved one building zone on the west property. “We thought of eventually building a modest cabin to fit in with the wild nature of the place,” said Jim. However, more recently the family purchased a neighbor’s cabin on an adjoining five acres. “We will most likely just build a gazebo near the lake in the building zone, and leave it at that.”

The only other property with shoreline on this DNR-identified “wild lake” is a hunting cabin.



Mia and Evan found moccasin flowers, or pink lady slipper orchids, down in the sphagnum moss. Letts family photo.



A total of 3,660 feet of natural shoreline on Perch Lake, a DNR-listed “wild lake,” is now permanently protected through two conservation easements granted by the Letts family.

The east parcel actually includes about 42 acres with roughly 1,040 feet of entirely natural shoreline on Perch Lake.

The west property totals 84 acres and features another 2,620 feet of frontage. Together the two conservation easements now permanently protect about 2/3rds of the entire shoreline of Perch Lake.

Protecting the “wild” Perch Lake shoreline was a highlight for the family. “In 10+ years of looking through listings, I haven’t seen anything quite like this place pop up on the market as far as the amount of shoreline and how remote it is,” recalled Jim. “We are very lucky.”

(Continued on page 4)

“Each summer I’ve taken each kid up for a solo camping trip. It is unique and different to have them one-on-one. We love our family trips too, but the one-on-one time is really when they fall in love with the forest.”

- Jim Letts

“We come up for camping trips every year,” he commented. “Owen is 12, Evan is 10 and Mia is 7. All three of our kids have heard wolves howl. I hadn’t heard a wolf howl until I was in my 30s, but they’ve all heard wolves howl up here.”

The Letts family also has a special kids’ tradition. “Each summer I’ve taken each kid up for a solo camping trip,” noted Jim. “It is unique and different to have them one-on-one. We love our family trips too, but the one-on-one time is really when they fall in love with the forest.”

“The last time when I was up here with Evan, we literally spent hours around this old decomposing log, breaking it apart and exploring it,” Jim said.

Owen learned what poison ivy looks like along one of the logging trails. He washed his bare legs good with soap and water and didn’t get itchy.



Mia and Jim Letts celebrate the granting of the two perpetual conservation easements.



A one-on-one camping trip for each kid with Jim is a special tradition with the Letts family on their Perch Lake property.

Mia said she likes to go on hikes, and go to the bog. She had fun playing with puffballs and some frogs caught in the fire pit after a big rain. “She really likes to lay in the sphagnum moss,” related Jim. “She also likes to check the trail camera and go fishing with her grandpa, Erinn’s dad. He is a pretty great fisherman and taught all three of the kids to fish up here.”

Jim stated that “I think it is just really good for them to be up here sort of by themselves, but with me obviously. That has been kind of a tradition I started for each kid when they turn about three years old, so they’ve had lots of quality time up here.”

In 100 years, Jim would like to see the property have some old growth hemlock forest, but otherwise have it look pretty much the same way it looks now for the next five generations to enjoy!

NWLT Applies to Renew National Land Trust Accreditation

The Northwoods Land Trust (NWLT) is pleased to announce it is applying to renew its national land trust accreditation. A public comment period is now open. The Northwoods Land Trust was awarded national accreditation in 2013, which is in effect for a five-year period.

The land trust accreditation program recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the national Land Trust Alliance, conducts an extensive review of each applicant's policies and programs.

Over the past 17 years, the Northwoods Land Trust has worked with private landowners who want to voluntarily conserve their natural shorelands, woodlands, wetlands and wildlife habitat. NWLT works in areas of Vilas, Oneida, Forest, Florence, Iron, Price and Langlade Counties in northern Wisconsin. Since it formed in 2001, the land trust has helped landowners protect over 11,000 acres of land and over 60 miles of lake and river shorelines, as public benefits for both present and future generations.

The Northwoods Land Trust board and staff are committed to excellence. NWLT continues to work toward meeting all national land trust accreditation standards in an on-going process to ensure the organization is able to meet its perpetual conservation stewardship responsibilities into the future.

The Commission invites public input and accepts signed, written comments on pending applications. Comments must relate to how Northwoods Land Trust complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust. For the full list of standards see <http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org/help-and-resources/indicator-practices>.

To learn more about the accreditation program and to submit a comment, visit the website at www.landtrustaccreditation.org or email your comment to info@landtrustaccreditation.org. Comments may also be faxed or mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments: (fax) 518-587-3183; (mail) 36 Phila Street, Suite 2, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866. Comments on Northwoods Land Trust's application will be most useful by April 30, 2018.

For more information on the Northwoods Land Trust, contact Executive Director Bryan Pierce at (715) 479-2490 or nwlt@northwoodslandtrust.org.



Perch Lake, Price County

Wild Lakes and some of the last remaining natural shorelines on otherwise developed lakes have been the highest priorities for conservation efforts by the Northwoods Land Trust.

Congratulations to Dan Wisniewski!

NWLT board member and conservation committee chairman Dan Wisniewski achieved highest honors when he received the Harold "Bud" Jordahl Lifetime Achievement Award from Gathering Waters - Wisconsin's Alliance for Land Trusts. The award was presented by Trout Unlimited representative Duke Welter at the Gathering Waters 2017 Land Conservation Leadership Awards Celebration on September 21st.

Dan lives in Middleton with his wife, Fran DeGraff. He has worked tirelessly over the decades influencing public policies to benefit land and water conservation in Wisconsin. Dan served on the staffs of three Wisconsin governors, including four years as chief of staff for Governor Tony Earl. He was instrumental in encouraging the support of each of the governors for a host of conservation programs including maintaining the authorization and funding for the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

Dan was appointed Secretary of the Wisconsin Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL) and served for five years before retiring. While at BCPL, he was responsible for the management of about 80,000 acres of forests and wetlands in northern Wisconsin.

Through his 30 years of volunteering at the local, state, and national levels with Trout Unlimited (TU), Dan has also played a critical role in securing funding for stream restoration and improved public access while fostering cooperation among TU, land trusts, and government agencies. We congratulate Dan on this well-deserved Lifetime Achievement Award!



Dan Wisniewski (right) receives the Gathering Waters' Harold "Bud" Jordahl Lifetime Achievement Award. Photo credit: Michelle Wimmer Photography.

Board of Directors Update



Welcome back to Cathy Techtmann

Former NWLT board member Cathy Techtmann, who first served from 2003-2005, has now volunteered to rejoin the board. Cathy is a UWEX Environmental Outreach State Specialist based in Iron County.

One of her current major projects is partnering with the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission, U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service to create the “Gikinoo’wizhiwe Onji Waaban (Guiding for Tomorrow)” or “G-WOW” Changing Climate, Changing Culture initiative. This innovative project is a climate change literacy program that integrates place-based Ojibwe traditional ecological knowledge with climate science.

Cathy formerly worked for UWEX at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center in Ashland and as a Community Resource Development Agent in Iron County. Cathy and her husband Harold live on the Gile Flowage southwest of Hurley. Cathy also serves as President of the lake association. 🌲

Terry Hatch Joins the Board

Dr. Terry Hatch is also joining the NWLT board of directors. Terry and his wife DiAnne, from Mahomet, IL, are no strangers to NWLT.

The Hatch family has granted two conservation easements held by NWLT in the Town of Sherman in Iron County. Located near the historic community of Springstead, the first project included 75 acres and over 1,000 feet of frontage on Charnley Lake. Charnley Lake is a kettle-formed seepage lake of about 67 acres. This conservation easement was granted to Gathering Waters Conservancy in 1999, before NWLT was organized. Gathering Waters transferred the easement to NWLT in 2005.

Also in 2005, Terry and DiAnne completed a second conservation easement with NWLT on 59 adjacent acres. This property includes over 950 feet of frontage on Norma Lake and an additional lot on Charnley Lake. Norma is a small, 7-acre, bog-fringed lake.

Terry recently completed his two terms as a board member of Gathering Waters - Wisconsin’s Alliance for Land Trusts. Terry is a pediatrician, gastroenterologist and medical educator for the Carle Foundation Hospital in Urbana, IL. DiAnne is a Presbyterian Church Pastor. Terry and DiAnne received the Land Legacy Award at the Gathering Waters Conservation Leadership Awards Ceremony in September. 🌲



Photo credit: Michelle Wimmer Photography.



Thank You to Kirk Mueller

NWLT board treasurer H.K. (Kirk) Mueller recently submitted his resignation from the board for personal reasons, although we are hoping he will consider rejoining in the future. His attention to detail, expertise in finance and human resources, and willingness to provide a diversity of perspectives have been greatly appreciated.

Kirk is a long-time supporter of NWLT. Through his American Natural Heritage Foundation and the Mueller Family Charitable Trust, Kirk provided one of the very first foundation grants and also offered his technical assistance to help the land trust get started on firm ground. More recently, Kirk helped to fund a significant new initiative focused on the identification of some of the last remaining old growth forest habitats in Vilas County, which is still in progress. Thanks Kirk for all of your help and support! 🌲

Tractor donated to NWLT

In the summer 2017 NWLT newsletter, we included a wish list of equipment we felt would be very helpful for use both in our office building and visitor center, and also for taking care of our conservation properties in the field. One of those items listed was a garden tractor/mower for keeping the trails cleared.

Thanks to the exceptional generosity of Kenneth Aldridge, donor of the Minocqua Winter Park conservation easement, that wish was granted even more than we hoped! Ken recently donated a lightly-used 2009 John Deere sub-compact utility tractor.

Ken's tractor also came with a snowblower attachment on the front, and a rear blade in the back. We intend to use the snowblower at the office, but the rear blade will be particularly useful for helping to clear and smooth hiking trails on our conservation lands.



A John Deere sub-compact utility tractor was delivered as a gift to NWLT from conservation easement donor Kenneth Aldridge.

We explained to Ken that it would be useful for us to acquire a brush hog unit to pull behind the tractor for clearing rough trails. Ken then stepped right up and purchased a brand new Frontier brush hog rotating cutter unit. He also had it installed for us prior to the tractor being delivered!

Maybe it's a "guy thing," but Bryan was really excited to get this tractor donation in November as a great early "Christmas present." Thanks Ken for your wonderful gift to NWLT!

NWLT Thank You

Our wish list also resulted in several other gifts. Special thanks for these donations to help our work:

From Kate Hartley -

- Wheelbarrow, measuring wheel, bow saws, ax, rubber mallet, log spitting wedges, hack saw, hammer drill & drill bits, cross-cut saws, hole saw, tape measure, tool set (wrenches, socket set, hammer, pliers, level, screwdrivers), work gloves & others.

From Laura Aldridge -

- Shovel, leaf rake with metal comb, three garden rakes, garden tiller.

From Ed Drager -

- Splitting maul.

From Pat Marinac & Sterling Strathe -

- Field guides, natural history and interpretation books.

From Carol Ritter & Michael Eaton -

- Biodiversity book.

From Willa Schmidt -

- Land trust board book.

From Vilas County Land & Water Dept. -

- Invasive species and other publications.

Corrections

Our list of 2016 contributions missed:

- Donald Sargent & Judith Hall
- Rich & Kitty Swiontek
- Bob & Lisa Sorge

Thank you for all of these donations!



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Leave a Lasting Legacy for the Northwoods

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.

Name(s): _____
 Address: _____
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Please remember the Northwoods Land Trust in your annual and planned giving. Give a gift that will last forever!

Leaving a Lasting Legacy for the Northwoods

Marshall Wildlife Conservation Area Dedicated

At the NWLT Annual Meeting on September 29th, the Marshall Wildlife Conservation Area property was officially dedicated. The new entrance sign was unveiled by Edward Marshall who gifted the 96-acre property to NWLT. The sign is located next to the main trailhead on the north side of North Squaw Lake Road.

The trail travels through an area where many young paper birch have been successfully regenerated. The trail then goes down a hillside to the edge of a large beaver pond on Koernet Creek.

Ed Marshall also opened with a ribbon cutting the newly-constructed wildlife observation pier. Birders and others will especially appreciate Ed's generous donation in the spring when migrating and nesting waterfowl, including swans, and many other wildlife species can be observed from the new pier.

For a brochure map of the Marshall property with directions, visit the NWLT website at www.northwoodslandtrust.org/conserved-lands/nwlt-owned-properties.

Thanks again Ed for this wonderful gift for all future generations - of people and wildlife!



NWLT board members and staff participating in the Marshall Wildlife Conservation Area dedication were from left: (front row kneeling) John Huppert, Bill Dickens, (standing) John Bates, Ron Eckstein, land donor Edward Marshall, Sandy Lotto, Bryan Pierce and Beth Tornes.