



# NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

HELP LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY FOR THE NORTHWOODS

*Canoe the Upper Wisconsin River this fall with the River Alliance of Wisconsin and the Northwoods Land Trust - see page 8 for details.*

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

September 2012

## A way to give back...

### NWLT conservation agreement in Oneida County protects two “wild lakes”

“It is a way to give back,” explained conservation easement donor Carol Ritter. “It is an acknowledgement that the land has a value that goes a lot deeper and is more meaningful to us as a group of human beings than just the monetary value of the land to individuals.”

Carol and her husband, Michael Eaton, granted a perpetual land protection agreement on 82 acres of land in the Towns of Cassian and Lake Tomahawk in Oneida County. The conservation project preserves the natural shorelines on two “wild lakes,” plus additional frontage on another, heavily-developed lake.

“With the modernization of society, we have lost a lot of our connection to the land, and I think that is regrettable,” she continued. “Getting some of that back, however we can, is important to who we are.”

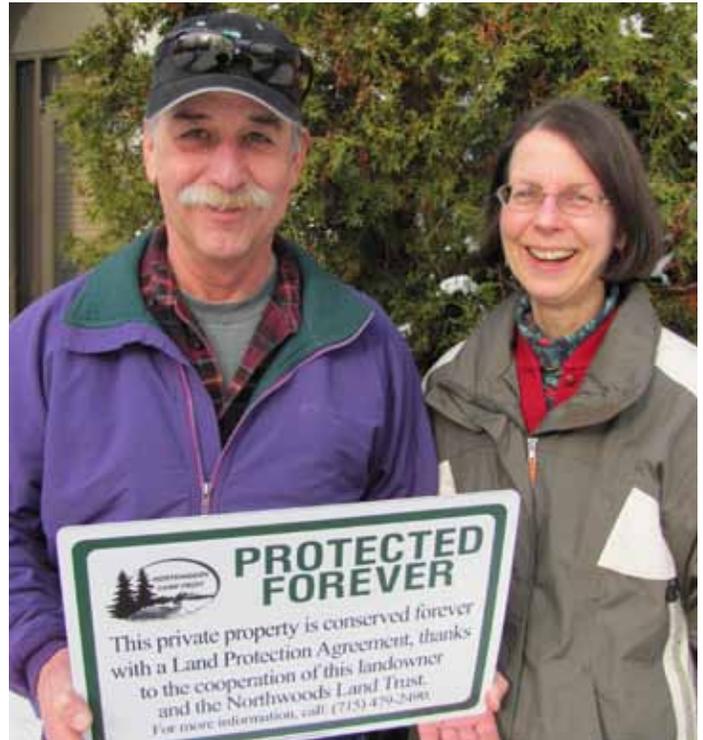
Michael was from San Diego, “where we met when I was finishing my training,” said Carol, who grew up in central Michigan near Midland. “We moved here for a pathologist’s job for me – at Howard Young for a couple of years and then at St. Mary’s Hospital.”

It took time for Carol and Mike to acquire all of the land they chose to protect. “We were thinking of building and were looking for acreage,” noted Mike. “We purchased the first 60 acres in 1982, a couple of years after we moved to Wisconsin in 1979.”

*“It is a way to give back.*

*It is an acknowledgement that the land has a value that goes a lot deeper and is more meaningful to us as a group of human beings than just the monetary value of the land to individuals.”*

*- Carol Ritter*



*Michael Eaton and Carol Ritter celebrate the signing of their NWLT conservation easement protecting two “wild lakes” in Oneida County.*

“We wandered into a real estate office in Lake Tomahawk,” Mike continued. “The realtor kept his eyes and ears open for us. He knew of an older guy who owned land here and was trying to sell. He had split up all the lots on Alva Lake, but then was going to sell the back acreage – that was 60 acres. He also had one more lot left that wasn’t really buildable on Alva. He made us a deal that we couldn’t resist.”

“Plus, he wrote a land contract,” added Carol. “We didn’t have a great deal of money at the time, so that seemed like a good deal. We were living nearby in Hazelhurst, and we paid him off in three or four years.”

*(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](mailto:nwlt@northwoodslandtrust.org) Web site: [www.northwoodslandtrust.org](http://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



## Two “wild lakes” protected - *continued*

“I would go out periodically and hike around on the land and walk with the dogs,” said Mike. “I came to her one day and said ‘either push or shove - either we build on it or sell it.’ In 1994 we started construction and we moved in July 1st.” “Mike was a daily presence on the work site, which was very helpful for getting the house built and for the upkeep of the property,” noted Carol.

They also added more land. “The realtor was always sharp in ways to lure people into buying more land,” Carol commented. “He contacted us and said he’d heard this land next to us was up for sale and that it might be bought by some developer. We said ‘over our dead bodies,’ so that strategy worked. We didn’t really want the little cottage, but it came with the 20 acres. The generation that owned it got old, and their kids didn’t really want it anymore.”

The 20-acre addition added over 1,100 feet of natural shoreline frontage on Liege Lake. Liege Lake has only a few residential structures on it. A large section of the lake shoreline is included within the Oneida County Forest. Liege Lake was identified by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources as a “wild lake” warranting enhanced protection for its outstanding fish and wildlife habitat and natural scenic beauty. Liege Lake is one of 88 rated “wild lakes” in Oneida County. The lake provides exceptional habitat for a diversity of wildlife species including many types of waterfowl, beaver, otter, bald eagles and osprey. Like many lakes in the region, the water levels have suffered from nearly a decade of drought conditions.

The property also includes approximately 1,600 feet around the entire shoreline of a small, roughly 5-acre, un-named bog pond. This “wild lake” is also excellent habitat and utilized by many species of wildlife.

*(Continued next page)*

*Left: An existing small cabin and boathouse are the only structures to ever be located on over 1,100 feet of shoreline frontage on Liege Lake under the conservation agreement.*



*Carol Ritter and black Lab Zoie survey part of the roughly 82 acres of scenic woodlands and wetlands now protected in Oneida County.*

### You Can Help!

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.

## Two “wild lakes” protected - *continued*

In addition, the conservation agreement protects a small lot with about 185 feet of frontage on Alva Lake, which is otherwise heavily developed. The cobbled rock and firm bottom nearshore habitat provides spawning areas for several fish species with public recreational value.

The protected property features northern hardwood and conifer forest habitats along with wetlands. Red oak, white pine, red pine, balsam fir, aspen, paper birch and other tree species are common. The property is adjacent to Oneida County Forest land on the south and west sides, as well as on Liege Lake. The site also includes a bit of history from the early logging days.

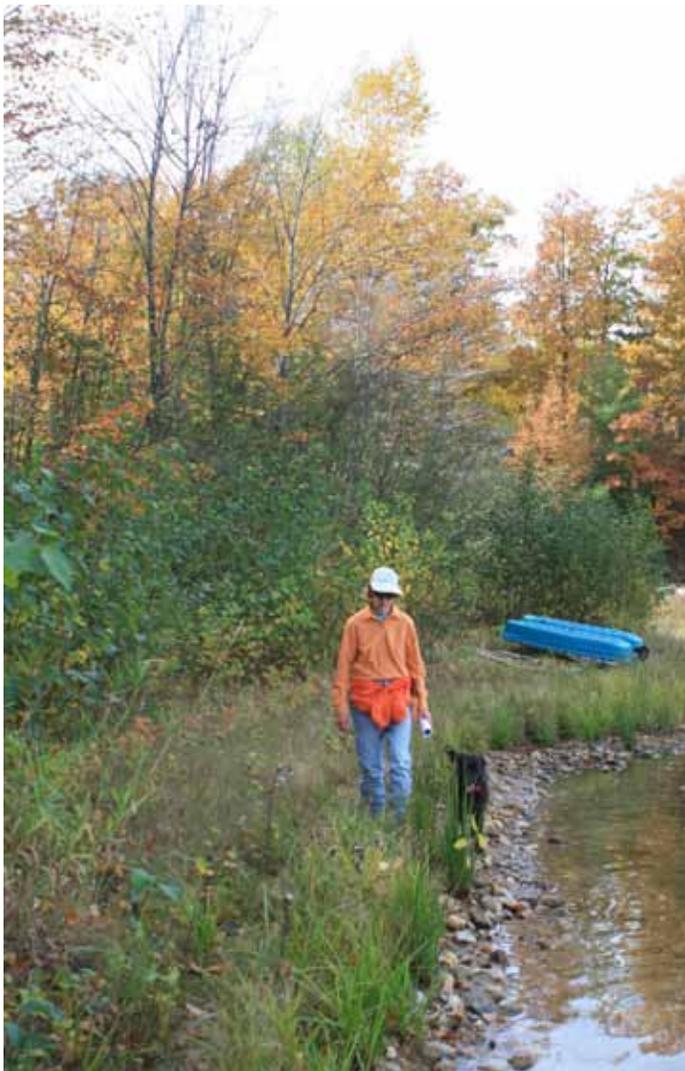
“The tote road has been there since before we bought it, part of an old narrow-gauge railroad,” said Carol. “That is how I would access the property when I was out in the winter time with the dogs.”

Michael and Carol have most enjoyed the solitude and wildlife, “especially in the winter when there is really



*Above: Visited by otters, and home to beavers and many species of waterfowl, the entire 1,600 feet of natural shoreline around this 5-acre bog pond was protected by Carol Ritter and Michael Eaton through the perpetual conservation agreement they granted on their property.*

*Below left: Carol Ritter walks a 185-foot shoreline parcel also protected under the conservation agreement on Alva Lake - one of the last “wild” pieces of shoreline remaining on the otherwise heavily-developed lake.*



nobody around,” said Carol. “When you go outside, it is absolutely quiet. Because we are on the opposite side of the road from Alva Lake, most of the lake noise goes away from us, so it is still pretty quiet in the summer time.”

“I am a great walker and hiker,” Carol added, “I put on five or six miles minimum a day. “Some is on the roads, but a lot of it is through the trail system on the tote road and on county land. We put on a lot of miles snowshoeing in the winter time, which is nice because I can just go out my back door and rarely meet anyone.”

“You see the most amazing things, and learn things about wildlife just by observing,” she noted, “like going around the bottom of a tree during the wintertime and wondering why the tree is staining the snow like this? Those are just the kinds of things I like to do.”

“We’ve seen wolf tracks, and coyotes come through the yard quite a lot,” Mike said. “We have fishers, bears and lots of deer. The fox comes right up to the house to check us out. Some years we’ve had quite a few otter playing on the pond when there was a lot more water, going up and down through holes in the ice. For quite a while we had a whole crowd of beaver until the drought really took over and they had to move.”

“Turtles come up in the spring from the pond, including mama snapping turtles who try to scrape out a nest for laying eggs next to the patio,” said Carol.

*(Continued next page)*

## Two “wild lakes” protected - continued

“Soon after we moved here we found a loon in our yard that we had to rescue,” Carol said. “He was sitting on our grass. Mike got on fireplace gloves and a big box, and the loon raised up on its legs and charged him with its pointy beak – right into the box. Mike took the box down to Liege lake and let it go. We’ve seen pileated woodpecker babies in their holes, and broadwing hawks which must nest nearby.”

In future years, they’d like to see higher water levels come back in the pond and lake, but “it can look just like it does now as far as I’m concerned,” said Mike. “It would be ok if it closed in more too, if things grew back up into more of the building site so it became absorbed back more by the natural land,” Carol said. “We have partially settled the area, so it is not like it is totally wild. We have changed it. But in retrospect, we’ve tried not to change it a great deal. The vast majority of the property is unchanged.”

Although the terms of the conservation agreement allow for forest management with an approved plan, Carol and Mike have no plans for harvesting timber. “I’d hate to see forestry on the land between the two building zones – that would bother me I think, as it would change the whole character of it,” said Carol. “The other 40, maybe.”

“I used to walk all the time along the tote road, and I think that is how I got interested in preserving it,” said Carol. She explained that she saw Oneida County crews come into the adjacent County Forest land to do a timber harvest and the trees were all gone. “That is when they clearcut it and put it back into pine plantation. I thought, ‘let’s not do that to our land.’ That is when I decided I didn’t want anything done to it. I didn’t know about the land trust until quite a bit later, but that is why we didn’t do anything to the property in the interim.”

*“We wanted to keep it from being developed – period, the end.”  
- Michael Eaton*



*The protected land includes 82 acres of forest and wetland habitats which serve as natural buffers adjacent to the Oneida County Forest.*

“I cut an article out of the newspaper (about the Northwoods Land Trust) a couple of years ago,” continued Carol. “I kept it next to my computer for almost a year before I actually looked it up on the website. I ended up talking to Pat Dugan (who donated conservation land on Squash Lake to NWLT).”

“We wanted to keep it from being developed – period, the end,” said Mike. “That is the total reason. It doesn’t need to be divided up.”

Carol questioned “How many other people have a place they have gone to for generations, and all of a sudden the next year they go there and someone is knocking the trees down and scraping the dirt off to put up a mini-mall or something? I think that attitude is changing now. I’m hoping it is.”

“The whole northwoods does not have to be built up,” she said. “If we don’t at least slow the trend, the northwoods won’t exist anymore. Every little bit that people can contribute – I think that is fine.”

“If it feels right, do it,” explained Mike regarding granting the conservation agreement. “It is hard to wrap your head around what you are doing, because everything is so geared in our society to do things always for profit. But it doesn’t really need to be for profit. It can be where you are satisfied with what you have and that is it.”

“To me the land has a greater value as a whole,” added Carol. “I’m assuming there are other people like me out there who would agree, and who would appreciate having something left.”



## Funding conservation stewardship for the long haul

Granting a perpetual land protection agreement (conservation easement) is a major commitment for any landowner. Although income tax benefits may be a partial incentive for some, no property owner enters into a permanent agreement without a real desire to see their land protected.

In accepting an agreement, the Northwoods Land Trust assumes the legal obligation to carry out the landowner's desires by upholding the terms of the easement forever. So, although the landowner has granted something of great significance, NWLT has also assumed a perpetual responsibility. The landowner is not likely to violate their own agreement, of course, but eventually others will own the property. The land trust must be prepared to monitor and defend the easement, including taking on costly legal battles when necessary.

The NWLT Land Stewardship Fund was established for that very purpose. Interest and dividends from this segregated, board-designated Land Stewardship Fund cover the costs of annually monitoring and defending our land protection agreements.

We are required to make annual visits to each property, meet with the landowners, and gather current information about the land. We must also defend the easement in the event of a future violation. As the Fund builds, it will insure our ability to take whatever actions are necessary to uphold the terms of every agreement.

The initial transaction costs to the land trust for developing and recording a land protection agreement can also be considerable - usually in the range of several thousand dollars. In order to be sure the conservation easement is legally sound and suitable for the property, we must incur expenses for such things as baseline studies, title searches, aerial photographs, maps, easement drafting and legal review fees. For acquisitions, the expenses include costly independent appraisals. The Northwoods Land Trust is generally willing to cover these costs.

Because the Northwoods Land Trust must operate on a business-like basis, and meet national land trust standards, we have established a policy of funding each conservation easement at the time it is accepted in order to cover annual monitoring and future defense costs. Often this adds up to \$6-9,000, depending on travel distance and the provisions of the easement. We do ask each landowner to consider making an independent cash contribution for these purposes.

This donation is usually considered tax deductible. Payment options and other avenues for raising the funds for the contribution may be explored jointly by the land trust and the landowner, so these costs should not deter anyone from considering a land protection agreement.

However, not all landowners are able to make an additional cash contribution above and beyond donating

the conservation easement. Landowners typically also have additional personal expenses to cover. Such costs could include property survey expenses, appraisal costs (which must be borne by the landowner if they wish to use the easement as a charitable contribution), and their own legal and financial assistance.

Local lake associations and other conservation groups have sometimes partnered with NWLT and provided matching contributions to encourage the landowners on their lakes to permanently protect their shorelines.

In other cases, NWLT has submitted grant proposals to private foundations to help cover these expenses. We feel very fortunate to have been able to receive significant funding from a number of family foundations. These grants function as "landowner incentive funds," providing much-needed resources and leveraging many thousands of dollars of land conservation values through the donations of these conservation easements.

Implementing, monitoring and defending these agreements cost money. However, the rewards for these initial investments last well beyond our lifetimes.

*Special THANKS to the following family foundations for their recent Land Stewardship Fund grants:*

*James E. Dutton Foundation - \$27,000*

*John C. Bock Foundation - \$21,860*

*James D. & Jane P. Watermolen  
Foundation - \$10,000*

*Modestus Bauer Foundation - \$4,000*

*Other contributions are always welcome and will help the land trust preserve another special place in the northwoods!*



*Proceeds from the sale of this donated 100-foot lot on Pickerel Lake west of Eagle River will also support NWLT's conservation efforts. See the NWLT website for details: [www.northwoodslandtrust.org](http://www.northwoodslandtrust.org).*

## Update on national Land Trust Accreditation...

Over the summer, the Northwoods Land Trust board and staff have been working hard to prepare and submit our application for national Land Trust Accreditation. Starting with a pre-application, which was due on June 21st, NWLT has compiled documents, drafted narrative statements, and assembled other evidence in support of a diversity of Land Trust Alliance national standards and practices.

These indicator practices guide land trusts to conduct their land conservation work in a legal and ethical manner and for public benefits.

An adhoc committee of board members and staff appointed by (and including) President Mary Schwaiger needed two full work days at the NWLT office plus “homework” to prepare and assemble the materials. All together, four 3” ring binder notebooks stuffed full were assembled for the main application. In addition, two more notebooks of extensive documentation on six of our 59 conservation easement and land donation projects were prepared and then electronically copied onto CDs for the Land Trust Accreditation Commission.

NWLT’s application materials were shipped to the Accreditation Commission on August 31st prior to the due date of September 13th. The notebooks totaled 25 lbs in shipping weight!

After the application has been reviewed, members of the Commission’s volunteer board and staff will conduct a site visit or telephone conference with the land trust. The reviewers may also decide at that time that it needs more information or documentation. When all required documents are obtained, the Commission will perform a final review of the land trust applicant. The full Commission then meets to make a final decision on the applicant and votes to accredit, table or deny the land trust.

The Northwoods Land Trust has already benefited in many ways from the intensive internal reviews of our current policies and procedures. We believe that being an accredited land trust will make us a stronger, more sound and sustainable organization for having taken on this challenge. We hope that NWLT will soon be able to join the ranks of the five (of 50) land trusts in Wisconsin that can proudly display the seal of accreditation.

The Northwoods Land Trust would like to recognize the funding support of the Arthur L. & Elaine V. Johnson Foundation. The Foundation provided a grant to cover the costs of our accreditation application fees. We greatly appreciate the Foundation’s on-going support for NWLT as we continue to enhance our capacity to do conservation work in the northwoods. 

*Right: NWLT Conservation Specialist Trisha Moore and President Mary Schwaiger survey over 25 lbs. of notebook materials prepared by the Northwoods Land Trust for our application submitted to the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission.*

### **NOTICE: Public Comments are due October 28th!**

The deadline for public comments on Northwoods Land Trust’s application for national land trust accreditation is coming up soon. October 28th is the due date for comments most useful for the application reviewers at the Land Trust Accreditation Commission.

Conservation easement and land donors, volunteers, members, supporters, and any interested public are invited to submit comments on the Northwoods Land Trust’s efforts to assist private landowners with the voluntary conservation of their properties.

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 [www.landtrustaccreditation.org/getting-accredited/indicator-practices](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org/getting-accredited/indicator-practices).

To learn more about the accreditation program and to submit a comment, visit [www.landtrustaccreditation.org](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org). Comments may also be faxed or mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments: (fax) 518-587-3183; (mail) 112 Spring Street, Suite 204, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866. 



# Foundation & LEAP Grants support a new Land Stewardship Database

A special computer programming project funded with \$5,000 from a grant award received from the Arthur L. & Elaine V. Johnson Foundation, and matched with a \$5,000 grant from the Land Trust Excellence and Advancement Program (LEAP), is nearing completion. The LEAP grant was awarded by the Land Trust Alliance (through the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation) in cooperation with Gathering Waters Conservancy.

When finished, this project will provide NWLT with a new conservation land stewardship database, linked with our current membership database. This database program is a critical need for computer tracking of all of NWLT's conservation projects.

NWLT contracted for technical assistance to develop the Microsoft Access-based database program with Caleb Pourchot. Caleb has extensive experience in computer programming and also works as a Conservation Specialist with the Natural Heritage Land Trust in Madison, WI.

In addition to its use by NWLT, the database will also be made available at a minimal cost to other Wisconsin



land trusts through Gathering Waters Conservancy. The grants provided by the Arthur L. & Elaine V. Johnson Foundation and the Land Trust Alliance will therefore be leveraged into far greater positive conservation impacts when shared broadly with other land trusts.

A "beta" version of the draft land stewardship database was demonstrated for land trust board members and staff at the Wisconsin Land Trust Retreat on July 19th. NWLT will soon be starting our data-entry process to get the program up and running.

*Left and above: Volunteer monitors review a conservation easement property during a 2012 training workshop. The ability to track volunteer monitoring visits and annual monitoring reports on all of NWLT's 56 conservation easements is an important component of the new land stewardship database.*



## JOIN THE NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

HELP KEEP THE NORTHWOODS THE NORTHWOODS!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (w): \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (h): \_\_\_\_\_

E mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

### 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.

### Please make checks payable to:

Northwoods Land Trust, Inc.  
PO Box 321  
Eagle River, WI 54521-0321

- I am interested in the NWLT Council of Trustees.



# NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

P.O. BOX 321, EAGLE RIVER, WI 54521-0321

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



## YOU ARE INVITED!

### Autumn hues of the Upper Wisconsin - October 6th

Enjoy fall in its cool and colorful glory as you canoe or kayak along this forested section of the Wisconsin River, downstream of the Rainbow Flowage. The mostly flat-water 10-mile trip includes the Rainbow Rapids (easy Class I).

The River Alliance of Wisconsin is sponsoring this event with the Northwoods Land Trust as co-host. To date, NWLT has worked with seven private landowners along the Upper Wisconsin River to permanently protect their special lands. These projects include the Rich Eggleston property along this stretch of the river, where we'll stop to learn more about river protection efforts through donations of perpetual conservation easements.

**Where:** Put in just below the Rainbow Flowage on Hwy. D east of Lake Tomahawk, and take out at Bridge Road just east of McNaughton. The paddle is about 10 miles, and lunch is included in this excursion.

**When:** Saturday, October 6, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.  
**Cost:** \$25 - a fundraiser for the River Alliance.  
**Details:** Bring your own boat, paddles & life preserver.



*Join us for a fall colors canoe/kayak trip on the Upper Wisconsin River on Saturday, October 6th with the River Alliance of Wisconsin.*

Please register at <http://www.wisconsinrivers.org/details/20-autumn-hues>. For additional questions, contact the River Alliance of Wisconsin office at (608) 257-2424.

