

ISSUE 78

WINTER/SPRING 2021

PROTECT IMPROVE LEAD INSPIRE





SAD GOODBYES - A NEW CHAPTER

In February, Little Forks' staff and board said goodbye to Greg Yankee after 4 years as our executive director. Greg's time with us felt short, but looking back we can clearly see that Little Forks has had a lot of incredible milestones during this time. Greg summed up a few aspects that he is most proud of from his time with Little Forks.

"We opened our first preserve outside of Midland County, completed the Averill Access for All path, closed on the largest conservation easement in our organization's history, and launched innovative programming aimed at underrepresented communities in the conservation and outdoor recreation worlds, while proactively addressing diversity, equity, and inclusivity issues both in the organization and alongside other partners."

While we are saddened to see Greg leave, we wish him luck as he starts a new chapter and position with the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan. We are accepting applications for a new executive director to lead our organization and further our mission. Find the full job description on our website or know someone perfect for the job, have them send their resume to LForksED2021@gmail.com by April 15th.

MEMORIALS & HONORARIES

In Memory of Glenn Sanford
Arthur Curtis III

In Memory of Gloria Schultz
Paul Schultz

In Memory of Tapani & Ritva Isotalo
Tim & Deb Broderick

In Honor of Paddy Hobohm's Spirit of Rotary Award
Midland Rotary

GOOD LUCK SHELBY!

We said farewell last November to Shelby our Huron Pines AmeriCorps member. Little Forks board and staff are thankful and proud of what Shelby was able to accomplish through an unpredictable service. We wish her all the luck as she tackles her next adventure!

Applications are being processed for a half-term AmeriCorps member to assist with land priorities this upcoming field season.



FISHERMAN'S PATH AT LANE

On a chilly morning in September, Sara our preserves & volunteers manager and Shelby our previous Huron Pines AmeriCorps member met up with Little Forks and Leon P. Martuch Chapter of Trout Unlimited volunteers to work together on building a path at Little Forks' Lane Preserve, from M-18 to the Cedar River.

The area consisted of a steep hill to one side and a wetland to the other. The group worked to cut into the side of the hill a level single-track trail allowing those who fish to access the river. The trail is about a quarter-mile long and allows users to enter and fish roughly a half-mile section of the stream.

Additional fishing access points have been identified and the trail to the south is still in development, but should be finished this season. These access points are rustic and not well defined yet, So if you decide to venture out on them, please use caution. You can find the trail map on the Lane Preserve's page of our website.



ACCREDITATION RENEWAL

The Little Forks Conservancy is pleased to announce that it has applied for a renewal of accreditation. Little Forks was first awarded the accreditation seal in 2010. Accredited organizations must apply for renewal every 5 years, in turn demonstrating sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance and lasting stewardship.

The accreditation seal is a mark of distinction recognizing land trust organizations as having met the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence.



STEWARDSHIP SERIES

Little Forks is hosting a series of virtual workshops focusing on the environment, wildlife, and land management. This series is geared towards landowners, volunteers, or anyone interested to learning more about stewardship. There are two workshops remaining, please join us!

April 21st at 12pm - Watershed Health
May 19th at 12pm - Environmental Landscapes

The workshops are free and will be held virtually. Registration details and topic summary can be found here: <https://www.littleforks.org/stewardship-series.html>

GIVE LOCAL MIDLAND

Give Local Midland is coming up on May 4th! Little Forks will be participating again in this fast-paced and exciting 24-hour annual online giving campaign.

If you would like to make your donation dollars go further, AND protect and improve our local natural environments, please join us for Give Local Midland on May 4th! Donations during this event support operations via our endowment fund, and are generously matched by the Midland Area Community Foundation.



MICORPS CEDAR RIVER STREAM SAMPLING

Little Forks invites you to be a part of our Cedar River Stream Sampling Event on Saturday, May 15th at 10am. We will be taking samples of macroinvertebrates that live in the river to determine the water quality using a biodiversity index.

Each team consists of a trained Team Leader, a collector that stays in the water, a runner, and pickers that hunt for and pick the living macroinvertebrates from trays. It doesn't matter if you have years of experience or none at all, we would love to have your help! Learn more and register here: bit.ly/streamsampling2021.



LITTLE FORKS GIVES BIG THANKS!

After the flood in May of 2020, Forestview Natural Area experienced a great deal of damage. The main trail is a 1.3 mile loop that includes a bridge at the halfway point. This bridge was lifted from its position over a creek and destroyed - resulting in unsafe passage to the second half of the property. In addition, the outer banks of the natural area were littered with large structural debris such as docks, a small water craft, tires, and other unusual items. Forestview was closed for a number of months as staff assessed the damage and began disassembly of the bridge.

The AmeriCorps program through Gaylord-based Huron Pines selected Forestview as their project for their annual Day of Giving, a day dedicated to giving back to the community. Little Forks received help from about 13 AmeriCorps members along with staff from Huron Pines, Chippewa Nature Center, Michigan United Conservation Clubs, and the U.S. Forest Service! The team of AmeriCorps members assisted Little Forks' staff with building a new bridge and removed more than a dumpster's worth of debris. Thanks to help of these incredible individuals, Little Forks was able to reopen Forestview shortly after, allowing the public to once again recreate in this beautiful habitat safely.







LOOKING BACK ON 25 YEARS

Twenty-five years ago in 1996, a small group of conservation-minded citizens in Midland banded together to permanently impact the community in the best way they could think of; by starting the area's first and only land trust.

Born out of a determination to ensure that parts of the Tittabawassee and Chippewa River watershed systems were protected from development, Little Forks Conservancy's first board was comprised of individuals whom to this day continue to help the conservancy serve the original mission of preserving and protecting Mid-Michigan's natural habitats.

Since then, Little Forks has added over thirty easements and six preserves. Conservation easement lands remain in private ownership with the conservation values protected by Little Forks, while five of the six preserves owned by Little Forks Conservancy are open to the public. In addition to protecting over 3,800 acres of land, twenty miles of shoreline and providing over ten miles of trails, the conservancy has grown to embrace all aspects of conservation. Along with the completion of its first ADA-accessible trail, Little Forks has pioneered programming that stewards the notion that nature is for EVERYONE.

In the last twenty-five years, Little Forks Conservancy has seen a lot of change. The first executive director Doug Koop served the organization for twenty of those years, with a small but dedicated staff and hundreds of volunteers who have poured their efforts into building and growing the non-profit. Greg Yankee took over after that, navigating two floods and fostering the growth of an evolved mission.

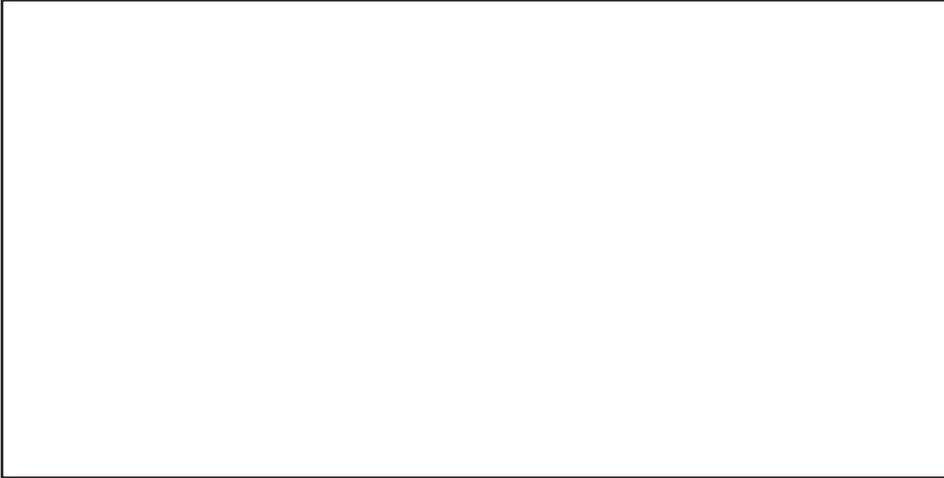
Our interim director Elan Lipschitz has poured over twenty years of hard work into creating an easement program that gives landowners the peace of mind that only 'forever' can bring. Director of programs & partnerships Andrea Foster has put the organization on the map as a trailblazer of outdoor diversity and inclusion efforts. Sara Huetteman, preserves & volunteers manager, tirelessly manages volunteers who help her improve our natural areas that the public have come to love so dearly. Our outreach coordinator Alyssa Walters has been instrumental in keeping outreach and communications like the one you are reading beautiful, accurate and inviting to all. Armed with tenacity, grit, and a team that lives to serve, today the organization excitedly anticipates the next chapter in leadership of what has become a beloved community organization.

Looking forward, Little Forks Conservancy will continue doing what it always has. "In Perpetuity" (conservation's favorite word) means that this work will be done forever, by protecting and preserving our region's beautiful habitats and sanctuaries. We will always strive to do more, to be better, and to provide safe, managed spaces that invite in all those who seek to spend time amongst the wild. We will bring knowledge to the community, and educate those who wish to learn. Most importantly, we will never give up. With your help, we will grow and continue to provide what we can; to the earth, to the wildlife, and to you, our faithful and generous supporters.

Here's to the next twenty-five!



LITTLE FORKS CONSERVANCY
PO BOX 2847
MIDLAND, MI 48641



The Little Forks Conservancy permanently protects and improves natural environments in Mid-Michigan by leading and inspiring actions that conserve vital habitats and waterways for the benefit of our entire community.

Since 1996, we've protected over 3,809 acres of land, 20 miles of shoreline, and 10 miles of trails.

We strive to have places in nature that inspire connections and communities, serve as a healing and educational space, and allow all ages and abilities access to nature - now and for future generations to come.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chuck Martin - President
Roger Garner - Vice President
Robyn Galbraith - Treasurer
Mary Haslam - Secretary

Sue Erhardt
Paddy Hobohm
Josh Jones
Stephanie Richardson
Claudia Walecka-Hutchison
Steve Wilkowski

STAFF

Elan Lipschitz
Director of Land Conservation
elipschitz@littleforks.org

Andrea Foster
Director of Programs and Partnerships
afoster@littleforks.org

Sara Huetteman
Preserves & Volunteers Manager
shuetteman@littleforks.org

Alyssa Walters
Outreach Coordinator
awalters@littleforks.org

CONTACT

PO Box 2847
Midland, MI 48641

989.835.4886
info@littleforks.org

www.littleforks.org