



THE LITTLE FORKS CONSERVANCY

Protecting the places we love for future generations

Spring 2002

Issue 22

Serving the Tittabawassee, Chippewa and Pine River Watersheds

CONSERVANCY ASSISTS IN AVERILL MASTER PLAN



Imagine a pile of logs stacked five or six rows high. Imagine this pile extending along the banks of the Tittabawassee River for more than one half mile and reaching back nearly one quarter mile from the river's edge.

In the hamlet of Averill, between Midland and Sanford, you will find the exact spot that served as the largest log-banking grounds in the world about 125 years ago. Cut logs from throughout the Tittabawassee River watershed, particularly in Midland and Gladwin Counties, were transported by rail to this site, awaiting the rising springtime waters of the Tittabawassee River to float these logs to saw mills in Midland, Saginaw and Bay City.

Ten years ago, the Midland Area Community Foundation purchased the abandoned Pere Marquette Rail line, at the same time acquiring 40 core acres of this log-banking ground. The Foundation retained ownership of the 40 acres when they transferred the rail line to Midland County Parks and Recreation.

In fall of 2001, the Conservancy received a grant from the Foundation to prepare a plan for the eventual development of the site. Previous studies of the property showed that the natural features of the site were quite substantial given the small size of the land. The Conservancy was charged with obtaining input from the neighbors and key stakeholders to determine the appropriate level of development for the site.

The Conservancy contracted with the planning and landscape architecture firm of O'Boyle, Cowell, Blalock and Associates (OCBA) to assist with the project. In February, a

public meeting was held to gather input from neighbors near the property. In March, representatives from the Midland and Sanford Historical Societies, the Midland County Road Commission, Lincoln Township, Midland County Drain Commission, Midland County Parks and Recreation, as well as the Foundation and the Conservancy, each met with the consultants to give their perspectives on the future development of the property.

At the conclusion of those meetings a rough sketch was drawn and brought to the Lincoln Township hall, where neighbors were invited back to review the plan and give additional input. OCBA submitted a draft of a development plan to the project steering committee of Douglas Koop, Executive Director of LFC, Brian Jackson, Program Officer for the Midland Area Community Foundation and Paul Pounders, Director of Midland County Parks and Recreation.

The steering committee evaluated the plan and made recommendations for changes. The changes will be incorporated into a final draft for presentation to the Trustees of the Foundation, along with a development schedule and estimated cost for the project. The final draft should be ready in early May. Following receipt of the plan, the Trustees of the Foundation will make a determination of how best to proceed.

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COME DISCOVER THE TITTABAWASSEE RIVER GREENWAY!

On May 4, 2002, 9 a.m.–1 p.m., The Little Forks Conservancy will present **Tittabawassee River Greenway Discovery Day**. Free and open to the public, this event will take place along the Pere Marquette Rail Trail between Midland and Sanford.

Along the eight miles of Rail-Trail that stretch from Downtown Midland to Sanford, there will be six interpretive booths, each highlighting aspects of greenway systems that benefit the community. Because of its ample parking area, the Arts in Nature booth at Dublin Avenue is the *recommended* starting point for the Tittabawassee River Greenway Discovery Day; however, this is a drop-in event and any or all of the sites can be visited at leisure from 9 a.m.–1 p.m.

The booth closest to downtown Midland will be at the confluence of the Sturgeon Creek and the Tittabawassee River near Emerson Park. The booth will feature a presentation by the Midland Conservation District on the initial results of their investigation of water quality on the Sturgeon Creek, and possible strategies to improve the health of this watershed.

Heading down the trail toward Sanford, the next booth will be at the new Trailside Senior Center on the corner of Dublin Avenue and Saginaw Road. This booth will highlight Arts in Nature, exploring how greenways bring or keep nature nearby to inspire art. Guest artists at this booth will be doing demonstrations as well as answering questions. In addition, Cheryl Smith, Director of Campus Arts for Northwood University, will have a display highlighting nationally recognized artists inspired by nature.

Approximately 1.5 miles west of Dublin Avenue, at the Duck Hunters' Memorial, is the third booth-site. At this site, Assistant Professor Wendy Skory from Delta College will focus on the wildlife and wetland areas that benefit from the presence of a greenway system.

One-and-a-half miles from the Duck Hunter's Memorial is the Historic Averill Log Banking Grounds. Here a representative of the Sanford Historical Society and Gary Skory of the Midland County Historical Society will work together to tell the story of the logging days of the late 1800s that devastated the landscape of this part of Michigan.

The fifth booth will be at Veterans Memorial Park. Come out and visit with Bart Heil of Chippewa Nature Center, and learn about the old-growth forests that characterized Michigan's landscape prior to the late-1800s logging era. Take a peek at the best patch of old-growth White and Red Pine forest remaining in the Lower Peninsula of Michigan.

The sixth booth will be at the Arbutus bog, less than a mile from Veterans Memorial Park. Here Chippewa Nature Center Senior Naturalist Phil Stephens will guide you through a look at the Unique Plant Community at the Arbutus Bog and explain how greenways can help protect sensitive areas from disturbance.

PARTICIPANTS WHO VISIT AT LEAST FOUR OF THE SIX INTERPRETIVE BOOTHS WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO REGISTER TO WIN ONE OF THESE FABULOUS DOOR PRIZES:

- A *mountain bike* donated by The Little Forks Conservancy
- A *get-away package for two* donated by the Ashman Court Hotel in Downtown Midland
- A *trip for two* on the tall ship Appledore IV donated by BaySail
- Functional Art inspired by nature...a set of *decorative wood and glass coasters* donated by Little Forks Outfitters
- A *60 quart Igloo cooler* donated by Ace Hardware

You're invited to join us for our 3rd Annual Picnic

SATURDAY, MAY 18 • 11:30 A.M.

Donald Blades' 274-acre Protected Property on the Tobacco River, near Beaverton

GUEST SPEAKER

Denise Spencer, President and CEO, Midland Area Community Foundation

Naturalist-led walks of the property will follow the program

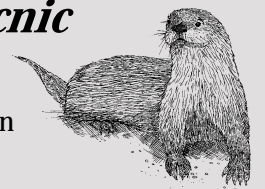
Directions will be provided upon registration

Car pooling will be available

Lunch provided by "Catering by Rachel"

\$5 per person

RSVP: 989.835.4886 by May 10



Endowment Campaign Continues

We are approaching our goal of raising \$500,000 for The Little Forks Conservancy Endowment Fund at the Midland Area Community Foundation. The Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation will match each dollar raised for the endowment fund through December 2003, up to \$500,000.

There has been some recent confusion regarding the fund. First, the fund is held and managed by the Midland Area Community Foundation. Donations to the Fund sent to the MACF are gifts to the Foundation and may qualify for the Michigan Tax Credit up to the amount allowed by law. The Foundation will send the donor the appropriate documentation for tax purposes. Donations sent to the Conservancy designated for the endowment are donations to the Conservancy and will not qualify for the Michigan Tax Credit. LFC will send a receipt to the donor for the gift. The Conservancy will subsequently send the funds to the Foundation to be placed in the LFC Agency Endowment Fund.

During the matching grant campaign the Conservancy has been awarding complementary membership

to contributors to the endowment fund. Once the match has been reached we will only count as members those who make contributions directly to LFC.

We are only able to recognize those donors to the MACF if we are told about the contribution. To protect the privacy of donors, the MACF does not release the names of the donors to any endowment fund unless specifically instructed to do so. Therefore, if you make a donation to the LFC Endowment Fund and you want us to be aware that the contribution has occurred, please let us know.

We are now about \$80,000 shy of our \$500,000 target! While we have until December of 2003 to close out the campaign, please consider making a contribution now to help finish the drive this year.

While the endowment is important to the sustainability of the Conservancy, we ask that you continue to make contributions directly to LFC for ongoing operations. These gifts will be used immediately to help conserve land in the Tittabawassee River Watershed.

Regional Greenway Planning Progresses

In 2001, The Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network provided funding to the Saginaw Bay Greenways Initiative to produce an atlas of greenways opportunities for the tri-county region.

Using data collected from multiple sources, an inventory of the region's green infrastructure has been gathered to create resource maps.

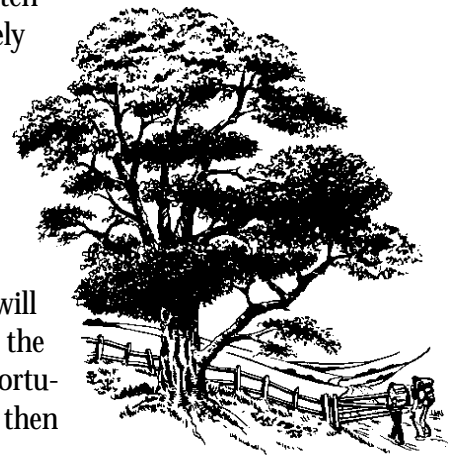
LFC Executive Director Doug Koop has been meeting individually with representatives from Midland County townships to ground truth the first set of maps. The base maps of publicly-owned land are being reviewed along with maps that show the primary land uses for each township. The meetings have yielded several corrections to the database including previously unmapped township properties.

At these meetings, Doug is also sharing the benefits of maintaining connected open space. The benefits include habitat for wildlife, water quality improvements, recreation and aesthetics, which in turn can bring eco-

nomical gains. The feedback will be valuable in ascertaining how a greenways program might be received and incorporated into township plans.

Once the meetings are completed, the corrected data will be subjected to several analytical models within a Geographic Information System (GIS) to evaluate the landscape for greenway opportunities. Several dozen potential greenways are likely to be identified.

This fall, members of the Greenways Initiative will hold a sharette with all the township representatives, who will be invited to evaluate the initial greenways opportunities map. They will then



CONSERVANCY ELECTS DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

At the monthly Board of Directors' meeting held April 10, Tom Bradley, Ed Elliott, Tom Misner, Glenn Sanford and Wendy Skory were each elected to a three-year term on the board of The Little Forks Conservancy.

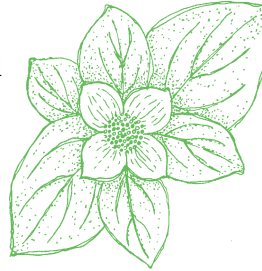
Glenn Sanford is joining the board as the only new member. As many of you may recall, Glenn and his wife Carol donated a conservation easement over their property in Mecosta County. Glenn formerly worked in the Meridian School District and has family in the Sanford area. Please join us in welcoming Glenn to the board.

Greenways cont. from p. 3

scrutinize the greenways to narrow down the list to those which offer the greatest opportunity for actual creation.

Creating a greenway will involve coordination between public and private interests to achieve a corridor of protected lands that link communities throughout the tri-county area. If we are successful in mapping the opportunities, and can begin implementing the plan, we believe

Following the monthly board meeting, and according to the Conservancy By-laws, an annual business meeting was held to receive an annual report from President Bill Gibson and to elect officers of the Conservancy. Dan Cline will take over as President, Hugh Starks will remain as Vice-President, Ed Elliott will continue as Treasurer, Tom Bradley will continue as Secretary and Tom Misner will join the Executive Committee as a member-at-large.



the concept of greenways can then be expanded to neighboring counties, creating new connections to other communities through protected open space.

In a very real sense, a greenway is the minimum amount of land needed to conduct sustainable development. Ultimately, greenways integrate the need to use land with the need to preserve it.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Daniel Cline
President
Hugh Starks
Vice-President
Tom Bradley
Secretary
Ed Elliott
Treasurer
Gene Arnold
Bill Gibson
Eugene Kenaga
Elsie Misner
Tom Misner
Glenn Sanford
Will Sears
Wendy Skory
Eileen Starks
Dick Touvell

STAFF

Douglas L. Koop
Executive Director
Elan Lipschitz
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Debbie Anderson
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MISSION

The Little Forks Conservancy serves to assist the community to voluntarily protect natural and cultural resources.

**THE LITTLE FORKS
CONSERVANCY**

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