



# THE LITTLE FORKS CONSERVANCY

Protecting the places we love for future generations

Summer 2003

Issue 26

Serving the Tittabawassee, Chippewa and Pine River Watersheds

## 236-Acre Conservation Easement Donated



and wants to make sure his land does not suffer the same fate.

The property will continue much as it always has, the open land used for agricultural production and the woods managed for a healthy forest, with one significant difference: "This conservation easement will ensure that the property will never be developed," says Elan Lipschitz, LFC Land Protection Specialist, noting that this farm will continue to contribute to Montcalm County's rich history in farming and timber production. In addition, the easement will forever preserve the rural character of the land.

"The Conservancy is very excited about this conservation easement," says Dan Cline, LFC President. "Mr. Bauer's generosity and foresight is a model for his fellow conservationists. He realizes the importance of wildlife habitat and the protection of our natural resources."

Mr. Bauer is also working with the Conservancy to protect an additional 80 acres of adjacent property in the near future. To date, The Conservancy has protected 688 acres through voluntary conservation easements.

When Ceo Bauer thinks about the future of his property, he envisions farmland and forestland with no future development. In January of 2003, Mr. Bauer began working with The Little Forks Conservancy to make his vision a reality.

On July 11, Mr. Bauer donated a conservation easement over 236 acres of his property in Montcalm County to ensure that those features he treasures will remain in a natural state. Mr. Bauer's property has been in his family since the early 1900s, when his grandfather Edward Bauer purchased the land. The Bauers have a proud history of stewarding the productive

farmland, mature forest and tranquil Butternut Creek that flows through the property.

Over the years, the Bauers have increased the acreage under their care to expand the productivity of the land and to allow for more enjoyment of the outdoors.

Mr. Bauer's motivations for placing a conservation easement on his land are quite simple. He says he wants to "preserve open space areas in their present natural state and to combat urban sprawl, which is occurring at an increasing rate all over the nation." Mr. Bauer has seen rampant development gobble up farmland throughout the state

# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

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The time spent calling, meeting, mailing, presenting, creating strategies and thinking up innovative approaches to protect land is paying off well this summer. As you can



DOUGLAS L. KOOP

read in our cover article, the Conservancy is a **choice** for landowners like Ceo Bauer who would rather see their unique properties remain as natural resources for their communities.

In addition, we are nearing the close on the Steiner acquisition, our first effort to raise funds in order to protect a sensitive property.

Completing this purchase involves additional fundraising by us and contributions by you, but it has the desired effect of setting aside one-half mile of river shoreline as a natural landscape.

We should not, however, think that either of these properties will never be used again. Rather, the use will simply be the same as it is now. These lands will grow crops, trees, wildflowers, and wildlife. These are things that we can not manufacture. We can simply protect and steward the land and let nature take its course.

And, through our occasional education trips to the Steiner preserve, perhaps it can influence a child to enter a career in the natural resources. Or, it can teach about the balance of nature, about how an understory is different from a canopy and about how sediment and erosion affect the quality of our water.

For the Conservancy to acquire our second preserve on the heels of our first preserve at Averill is exciting. But, we will be facing new challenges as an organization as we deal with the stewardship of these sites. Soon we will be asking for volunteers to help us with projects, both to imagine them, and to complete them. We hope you will consider ways that you might help.

In the meantime, enjoy the natural world around you while we meet with landowners who want to make a choice to conserve the special natural resources of their land, now and forever. We can do that because you make it happen.

For those of you who are reading our newsletter and have not become contributing members of The Little Forks Conservancy, we are asking you to make that important decision to join with your friends and neighbors

to ensure that each landowner has the option of conserving their land—protecting the natural resources now and for future generations. When the open spaces disappear under pavement or the rivers fill with sediment, they are nearly impossible to restore.

I hope that you read this newsletter cover-to-cover. This issue contains a number of exciting announcements. From the donation of a 236-acre conservation easement by Ceo Bauer, to the purchase of one-half mile of river shoreline in Lee Township. From the completion of our \$1 million campaign to build an organizational endowment to a challenge from the Charles J. Strosacker Foundation to match each new member contribution.

I believe we are just getting started. After 6 years of completing land deals that partner with private landowners to conserve 742 acres, I think that the opportunities for land conservation in the Tittabawassee River watershed, and nearby areas in Mid-Michigan will continue to present themselves, year after year.

It is important to our community that those landowners who want to make sure their property remains natural, forever, have the right and the capability to do that. That is why this organization was started. We were, and are, fortunate to receive local foundation support (as you can read on page 6). But, it is vitally important that you help us build our capacity to work with private landowners. Without a growing base of individual contributors (members) we will not be as successful as we can be.

Your annual contribution(s) keeps us going. Not only does it help meet the requirements of the IRS to maintain our status as a publicly supported non-profit, but, more importantly it gives us the energy to do our work.

You may use either the envelope or the membership form on page 7 to make your contribution. And, don't forget that if you join now your gift will be doubled by the Strosacker Foundation.

—Doug Koop

# Thanks A Million!

WE'VE DONE IT! Through a combination of grants from private foundations, gifts from individuals and proceeds from the sale of two properties, the Conservancy has raised \$500,000 for The Little Forks Conservancy Endowment Fund. The Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation has graciously provided matching funds, bringing our endowment fund balance to \$1,000,000.

While this closes our first campaign to raise money for the Conservancy's endowment, it will likely not be the last time we seek to build this fund. A special thank you to everyone who made a contribution to this fund. And, any additional contributions to the Midland Area Community Foundation-Little Forks Conservancy Endowment Fund will still qualify for the State of Michigan tax credit. (Check with the Community Foundation for details on that program.) *For a short description of the Endowment Fund, please see page 6.*

We had a fantastic day in Averill for the Conservancy's 4th annual picnic. The most significant announcement at the picnic was made by Denise Spencer, President and CEO of the Midland Area Community Foundation, as she officially announced the decision by the Foundation to transfer ownership of the Averill Property to the Conservancy.

We also said thank you to Bill Gibson, Gene Kenaga and Hugh and Eileen Starks for their years of service to LFC. We then welcomed new board members (pictured from left to right) Chris Velasquez, Steve Kin, Carol Feider and Elyse Rogers. New board member Judy Enger was unable to attend.



## HAVE POWERPOINT, WILL TRAVEL!

Beginning earlier this year, Conservancy Executive Director Doug Koop has made several presentations to various community groups.

In January, he made a presentation to a study group at Aldersgate United Methodist Church. In April, Doug was invited to speak at a gathering of the American Association of University Women held at the home of Virginia Morrison. Also in April, Doug brought the Conservancy's message to Delta College as part of the school's Earth Day event.

In May, we presented the findings of the Greenways Project to a joint meeting of the City of Midland Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation

Commission. This was followed by a presentation to the Midland Rotary Club, a trip to Clare County to share our story with the Bertha Lake Property Association, and participation in the Chippewa Nature Center's BioBlitz event.

We have several upcoming events scheduled, including RIVERDAYS in July, a presentation at the Chippewa Nature Center in November, and a presentation to the Voyageur Club at Memorial Presbyterian Church in February 2004.

If you would like us to give a presentation to your service club, study group, or organization event, please give us a call at 989-835-4886.

# Fund Drive Continues for First Purchase Project

Nestled along the banks at the confluence of the Big Salt Creek and the Chippewa River sits a beautiful little 10-acre property that needs our care. Covered with hemlock, maple and oak, this quiet oasis of forest is slowly returning to the majestic mature woods of decades past. In the spring, the floor of the forest is home to trout lilies, jack-in-the-pulpits and other native wildflowers. Birds often stay to nest and rear their young. The river babbles along peacefully, the sun glittering off the ripples as it moves along the property for nearly a half-mile.



Nancy Steiner and her father, Richard Stroebel actively sought out the Conservancy to help them keep this family property forever “wild” and natural. As you can see from the photograph, the property boasts a beautiful shoreline.

**We are excited to announce that The Conservancy has agreed to purchase from Nancy Steiner these 10 acres of land in Lee Township for a bargain sale price of \$10,000.**

In order to purchase this property and other properties in the future, LFC has created a special *Land Acquisition Fund*. The goal for the fund is to build and maintain adequate monies to provide the means to purchase sensitive properties, like the Steiner property, as worthwhile opportunities arise. *(To learn more about the Conservancy's Land Acquisition Fund, see page 5.)*

As our first purchase project, the Steiner property will require \$17,000, which will go toward the purchase of the property and some of its stewardship needs. Under Conservancy ownership, the land will be cleaned up and maintained as a nature preserve to be used for occasional visits and educational programs hosted by Conservancy staff or volunteers.

We have already raised over \$14,000 from appeal letters, but we still *your* help to complete the deal... **And we need it by July 30.**

If we exceed our goal (and with your help that is possible) any additional funds raised through this campaign will remain in the Land Acquisition Fund,

dedicated to costs related to future projects—purchase price, surveys, appraisals, stewardship, etc.—*not* for general operations.

We are asking you to make an investment in something priceless—the protection of some of our rapidly disappearing undeveloped riverfront. We hope you will consider this request a tremendous opportunity to preserve this natural asset in our community, to protect the water quality of the Chippewa River, to improve wildlife habitat and to keep our riverfront beautiful.

You may use the enclosed envelope to make a contribution to the Land Acquisition Fund. Simply make your check payable to LFC-Land Fund and indicate the gift is for the Steiner purchase in the memo line.

Thank you to everyone who has donated so far. Contributors through July 16 are listed on page 7.

# What *Is* a Land Acquisition Fund?

The Land Acquisition Fund is a restricted fund which may only be used to purchase land, to purchase conservation easements, to secure options for purchase projects and to cover hard costs of land projects such as surveys, appraisals, recording fees, title insurance and closing costs.

## DOES THIS MEAN THE CONSERVANCY IS NOT INTERESTED IN RECEIVING DONATED LAND OR CONSERVATION EASEMENTS?

Absolutely not. The best land protection tool we can use is a landowner's decision to donate a property or a conservation easement. The tax incentives for charitable gifts will continue to play a key role for many conservation minded landowners. We recognize, however, that for some property owners the only way we will be able to achieve protection of the conservation values of that land will be to pay for it. The Land Acquisition Fund simply provides us with another powerful tool in our toolbox.

## CAN THESE FUNDS BE USED FOR GENERAL OPERATING EXPENSES?

No. These funds must be used for the acquisition of land or interest in land. Operating costs will still need to be covered by membership contributions, grants and earnings from the LFC endowment fund.

## HOW MUCH MONEY IS NEEDED FOR THE LAND ACQUISITION FUND?

We will always seek contributions for this fund. The more you contribute to the fund, the more land we can protect. If the projects selected are fee simple purchases, to be held by the

Conservancy forever as preserves, the fund will need to be substantial.

Because land values are based, as we have all been told, on "location, location, location," prices can range from \$1,000/acre to more than \$10,000/acre. Assuming an average price of \$2-3,000 per acre, if we were to set a goal of owning, through

*"...the amount needed for the fund will depend on how it gets used"*

purchase, 5,000 acres over the next ten years, we will need \$10-15 million just to cover the purchase price. As you can see this is a very expensive way to achieve land protection.

If we are able to purchase conservation easements, the value of which can range from 5-90% of the fee-simple purchase, we could protect that same 5,000 acres for less money; we could protect significantly more acreage for the same amount of money; or we could protect higher-priced land closer to town.

It is also possible that a landowner may wish to donate property to us, but is not in the financial position to do so. They may be willing to "bargain-sell" the property to the Conservancy for well below full-market price, preferring to sell to us rather than a developer. The landowner may choose to sell at a reduced price and take a charitable tax deduction for the balance of the land value.

Each project is tailored to the landowner's needs and wishes, so...

the amount needed for the fund will depend on how it gets used!

## HOW WILL LFC DETERMINE WHICH PROPERTIES QUALIFY FOR FUNDS?

The Conservancy has adopted criteria for land projects. We will also use the Conservancy's strategic plan and focus areas as a filter for project selection. Our highest priority properties will continue to be larger, forested, waterfront parcels. We will also consider purchase price. We must weigh the value of protecting a smaller, high-priced parcel versus property with greater acreage but a lower per-acre cost.

## CAN THESE FUNDS BE USED TO LEVERAGE OTHER FUNDS?

Absolutely. There are many strategies for obtaining the necessary funds to close a project. For example, many government programs require a match component in their decision to award grants. We may be able to protect larger, more costly properties, by bringing the match to the table, as opposed to the entire project cost. We can also use the funds to create the match for private foundation grants.

# CONSERVANCY FUNDS DEFINED

**Operating Fund:** This fund consists of membership contributions, grants and endowment earnings used for the day-to-day programs and operations of The Little Forks Conservancy. These gifts are generally provided as unrestricted contributions.

**Land Acquisition Fund:** This is a donor restricted fund and is limited in use to cover the costs of acquiring ownership in land, purchasing a conservation easement and in project related costs such as surveys, appraisals and closing costs. Obviously the more money that is raised for this specific purpose the greater the number of acres we can protect.

**Endowment Fund:** We have established an endowed fund at The Midland Area Community Foundation. The Little Forks Conservancy Endowment Fund will be used to hold contributions that are permanently restricted to using only the earnings to support the work of the Conservancy. The Conservancy is limited to receiving no more than 5% of the fund balance (over a 20-quarter lagging average) as an unrestricted grant each year. Donations to the Community Foundation for this fund qualify for the State of Michigan Tax Credit (contact the Community Foundation to learn the limits on such gifts).

**Defense Fund:** The Conservancy has established a fund to be used solely for the defense of our interests in land created either by ownership or through a conservation easement. The Conservancy must be able to defend against a future violation or challenge to each conservation easement we receive.

## Charles J. Strosacker Foundation Sets Membership Challenge

The Charles J. Strosacker Foundation added a nice incentive to its award of a two-year operating grant for the Conservancy. Beginning this year and lasting through 2004, the Strosacker Foundation will match, dollar-for-dollar, all new member contributions.

Also, if a donor has not given to the Conservancy since 2000, their "renewing" membership contribution will also be matched.

The Strosacker Foundation is making \$20,000 available for this matching membership program. While we have through 2004 to match those dollars, our goal is to bring in as many new members, and as much new or renewing contributions as possible this year.

So, if you are considering becoming a member, or have not made a contribution in a couple of years, here's your chance to double your money and support the conservation of land throughout our community.

## Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation Awards 5-Year Grant

It is with great pleasure that we are able to announce another significant grant awarded to the Conservancy by the Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation. In June, we were informed that our grant request of \$280,000 spread out over a five-year period would be awarded. The grant will initially cover about 1/3 of our annual budget (2004), but decrease to about 1/5 by 2008, the final year of support.

The Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation has been most generous to the Conservancy, providing significant operating grant funds in our first six years and a spectacular challenge grant of \$500,000 to create an organizational endowment. Please see page 3 for the latest news on the endowment challenge drive.

These funds will be added to prior grants awarded by the Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation (\$120,000 over three years beginning in 2003), the Charles J. Strosacker Foundation (\$20,000 over two years, plus a \$20,000 challenge for new member contributions beginning in 2003) and the Alden and Vada Dow Family Foundation (\$10,000 for 2003). The balance of operating funds will need to be raised through membership contributions (\$35,000 goal this year, up to a \$60,000 goal by 2008) and earnings from the LFC endowment fund at the Midland Area Community Foundation.

We welcome the following new members to The Little Forks Conservancy. Each of their

gifts was matched by a grant from the Charles J. Strosacker Foundation (January 1, 2003 to July 17, 2003).

Margaret and Lawrence Ault  
Ceo Bauer  
Richard and Marge Darger  
Kay Harley-Fahlgren and Charles Fahlgren  
Fred and Mary Fletcher  
Kenneth and Audrey Harding  
Alan and Judy Isquith  
Roger and Suzanne Jennings  
Ronald and Linda Keller  
L.G. and Kathleen Linaberry  
Roy and Phyllis McNeil  
Craig and Pam Murchison  
Diane and James Myers  
Peter and Ellen Owen  
Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Ryan  
Paul and Gloria Schultz  
Sally Ann Sutton  
Deb and Terry Temperly  
Don and Charli Van Orden  
Joe and Cindy Weir

The following contributors also had their gifts matched under the criteria set in the Strosacker Foundation grant:

H. Bruce and Evelyn Ducker  
Sue Kimmel  
John Krieger and Valerie Ash  
Dave Ramaker  
Howard and Barbara Schoenherr  
Lawrence and Lucile Southwick

We are grateful to the following donors who have contributed to the Land Acquisition Fund and the Steiner Purchase. (Thru July 16, 2003 gifts total \$14,001)

Anonymous (2)  
Julie Arbury  
Wendy Baker  
Ceo Bauer  
Stuart and Ruth Ann Bergstein  
Fred and Alice Blanchard  
M. Victoria Bowes  
Tom Bradley  
Stuart and Catherine Branson  
Nancy Brown  
Mr. and Mrs. John Clever  
Daniel and Linda Cline  
Ced and Betty Currin  
John and Nancy Davis  
Kathryn Dawson  
Kent Dennis  
Ann and Steve Doyle  
Tad and June Eastman  
Ed and Dorothy Elliott  
Eldon and Judy Enger  
Jack and Shirley Failla  
Carol Feider  
David and Alma Fry  
Bill and Karen Gibson  
Carol and Glenn Gillespie  
Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Groom  
Jim and Sally Hahn  
Kay Harley-Fahlgren and Charles Fahlgren  
Mary Lou and Dick Hazleton  
Neil Hodges  
James and Mary Hopfensperger  
John and Barbara Hoshaw  
Robert J. House  
Norm and Ruth Hozak  
Robert and Betty Keil  
Duane and Joann Kenaga  
Steve and Mary Kin  
Brian and Deana Klingensmith  
Doug and Shelley Koop  
Janet Lanigan  
Charles and Elinor Lentz  
Carl and Sheree Lovell  
Rev. and Mrs. Wallace Mayton  
Janet and Allyn McCormic  
Fred and Marianne McKelvy  
William Meek  
Tom and Elsie Misner  
Mr. and Mrs. George Momany  
Frank and Jean Popoff  
Mrs. M. Sheldon Putnam  
Mary Cole Rack  
Ms. Zella Mae Rease  
Harold and Margaret Rockwell  
Ed and Elyse Rogers  
John and Barbara Rothhaar  
Elizabeth Corbridge Saddler  
Glenn and Carol Sanford  
B.J. and Herb Scogg  
Alice and David Sias  
George and Quita Shier  
Brian Sitrine  
Lawrence and Lucile Southwick  
Phil and Sue Stephens  
Sharron Such  
Tom and Paula Teft  
Russel Teyner  
David and Gayle Tompkins  
Dick and Jeanne Tovell  
Terry Townley  
Jenee and Chris Velasquez  
Dick Von Korff  
Jeff and Kay Wagner  
Kris Winterton  
David and Jane Wirth  
Dorothy Yates  
John and Pat Zimmerman



Yes, I believe The Little Forks Conservancy is doing wonderful things! Please accept my contribution to help protect significant natural resources in my community.

Membership Level:

- \$1,000  
 \$500  
 \$250  
 \$100  
 \$50  
 \$25  
 Other: \$\_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

I would like to make an additional contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the Land Acquisition Fund.

Please send me information on protecting my land.

# LFC Goes 21st Century!

Well, being on the cutting edge of technology as we are, we finally found this thing called the Internet! If things go according to our revised plan (as of course they always do!) we will launch our website in early August. Designed by Conservancy friend Jonathan Jarosz, the website will provide visitors with more than just the basics of the Conservancy.

Links to other conservation groups, editorials from regional or national authors, and updates of Conservancy activities will be featured on the site.

Our goal is not only to share this information with members, but to make it easy for non-members to learn about land conservation and to make the decision to join us and support our work.

Rather than read about it here, log on to [www.littleforks.org](http://www.littleforks.org) and check us out. Your comments will be greatly appreciated. By the way, if you accidentally log on to the Little Forks Outfitters site by mistake, check out their latest offerings before changing your .com address to .org!



*LFC Board member and conservation easement donor Glenn Sanford displays one of our news signs created for project partners*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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