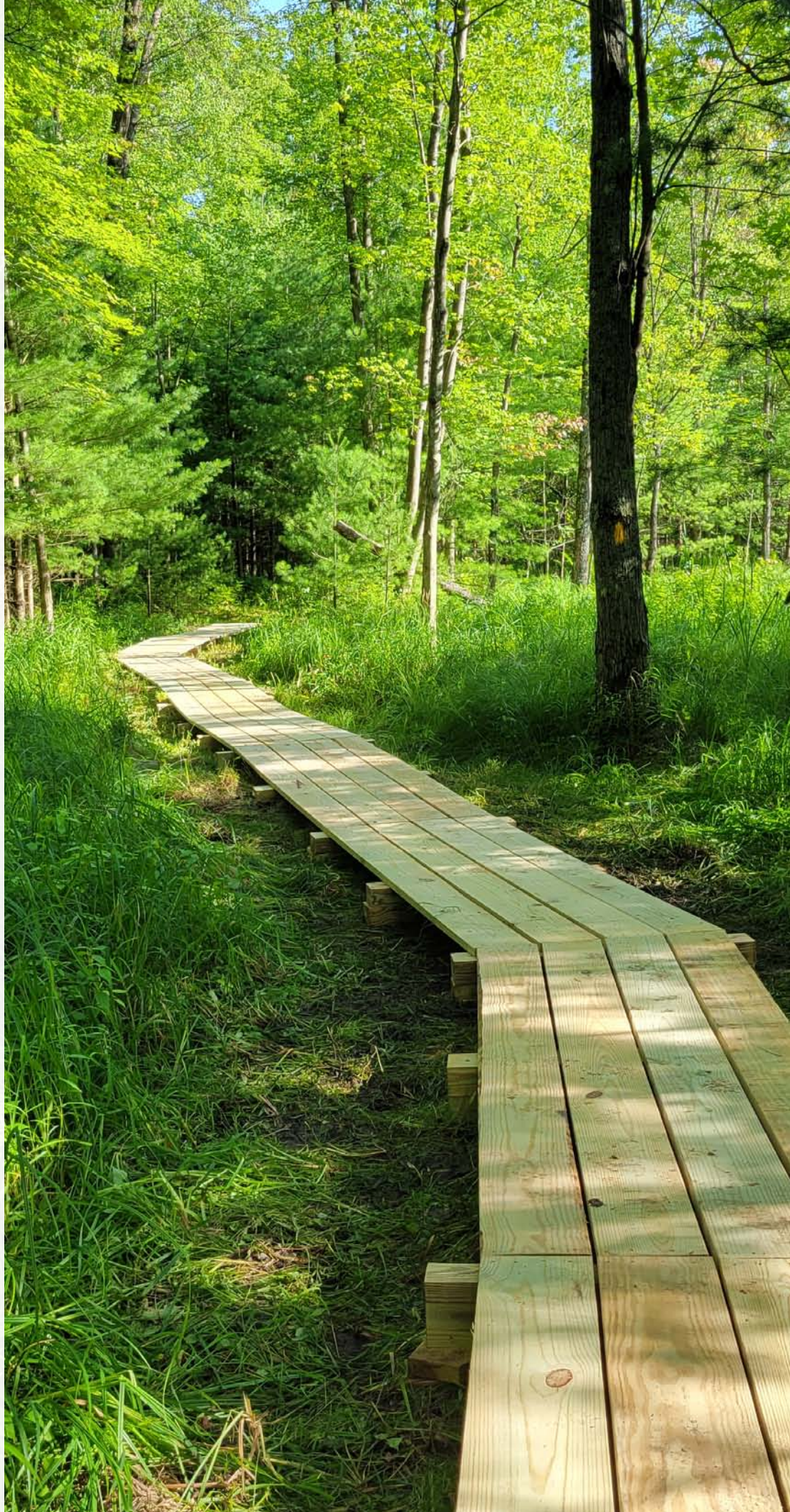




WINTER / SPRING 2023

ISSUE 81





A LETTER FROM The Little Forks Conservancy Executive Director

Last fall I had the privilege of presenting at the Midland Area Community Foundation's "Ripple Effect" on the origins of Little Forks. To prepare, I thoroughly enjoyed digging into the historical documents that described how Little Forks got its start, and the organizations that provided help and guidance along the way.

One thing that stood out as I pored over this material was our consistent focus on the Tittabawassee River. This focus is what makes it so exciting to announce our Nelson Woods project in this newsletter. It isn't every day we have an opportunity to acquire such a significant piece of property along the Tittabawassee River. This property is just upstream from downtown Midland and ties so well into the origins of Little Forks. It has been a real treat working with the Nelson Family; hearing about how much the family has enjoyed this property over the years and how much they are looking forward to it being available for our entire community to enjoy.

To make this project a reality, we really need your support as we finalize the purchase of the Nelson property in March 2023. After that, we need funds to begin creating a nature preserve with an accessible hiking trail, a gathering space for families, a place to walk your dog, and a spot to enjoy nature's tranquility. Nelson Woods would make Little Forks' founders proud by staying true to that primary goal of protecting land along the Tittabawassee River for current and future generations to enjoy. Please reach out to hear more about what we have planned and how you can make a difference today!

Warmest regards,

Elan

ELAN LIPSCHITZ
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
THE LITTLE FORKS CONSERVANCY



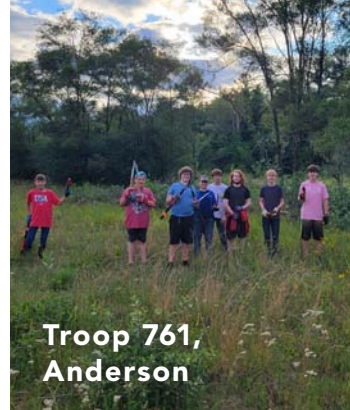
Volunteers are GETTING THINGS Done!

One of our biggest successes of 2022 was the work we accomplished with the help of our fantastic volunteers.

We had over 700 hours of volunteer service, which was more than the previous three years combined. Many different groups volunteered last year, ranging from scouts, high school students, college students, and corporate groups. Volunteers improved trails, built boardwalks, cleaned up our nature preserves, and cleared acres of invasive plants.

As a small mission driven organization, we are ever thankful for all of the help we get along the way in creating and maintaining healthy, accessible nature preserves for all to enjoy.

If you are interested in volunteering, please visit littleforks.org or call the office at 989-835-4886.



Little Forks Conservancy IS PARTICIPATING IN THE MSU Science Festival BioBlitz THE ENTIRE MONTH OF APRIL!

A BioBlitz consists of finding and identifying as many species as possible in a specific area over a short period of time.

We invite you to participate in Midland County at Riverview Natural Area, where you can use the app iNaturalist to document any animals and plants you come across!

This citizen science app makes events like this easy to implement and participate in, so come on out and explore from April 1st-30th!





Nelson Woods

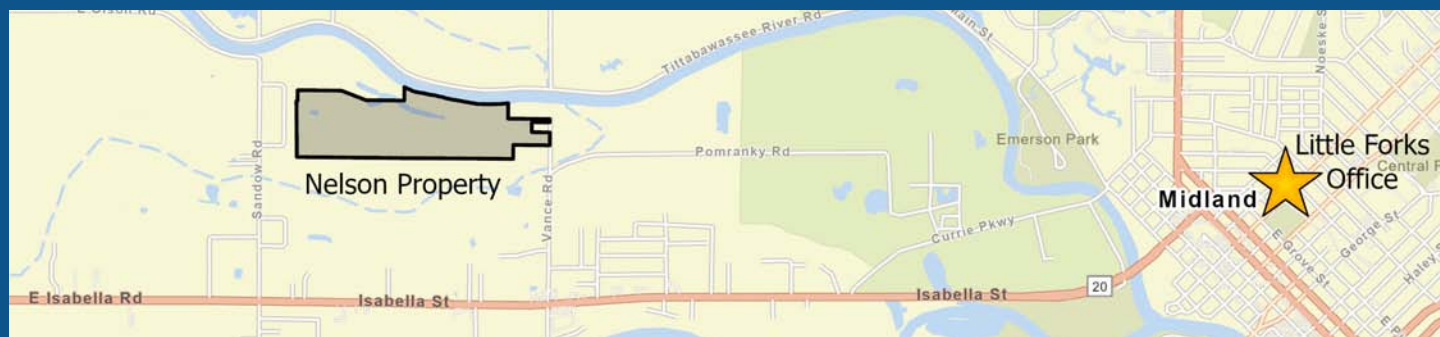
We are excited to announce the acquisition of 106 acres of undeveloped land along the Tittabawassee River three miles upstream of downtown Midland, that provides critical floodplain habitat, mature maple forests, and is home to a range of wildlife. To protect this important habitat forever, the Little Forks Conservancy is working with the Nelson family to acquire this property and create the Conservancy's newest nature preserve.

"This is the Conservancy's first land purchase in over 10 years," says Elan Lipschitz, Executive Director of the Little Forks Conservancy. "We couldn't think of a better property to protect – and it perfectly ties into our original goal of focusing on land along the Tittabawassee River."

The total project cost is \$600,000 for land acquisition and the estimated costs necessary to develop a nature preserve that is accessible to all. Once acquired, Little Forks will work on improving the habitat and creating amenities, including an accessible path to the river, a parking area, interpretive signage, and benches to create a nature destination within our community.

We are so grateful to be working with the Nelson Family to help them meet their objective of keeping the property protected. "My late father Rodney Nelson, who purchased the land in the 1980's, loved to walk the land", said Dan Nelson. "Both he and his children always enjoyed bringing others out to give tours of the land, and neighbors were also permitted to enjoy walks within the woods. With this in mind, our family embraced the modification of this land into a preserve, because, in our minds it already was."

So far, we have secured over \$400,000 towards our \$600,000 goal thanks to generous support from The Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation, The Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation, The Charles J. Strosacker Foundation, The Midland Area Community Foundation, and The Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network.



SCAN THE QR CODE AND DONATE TO THE CONSERVANCY'S NEWEST NATURE PRESERVE, NELSON WOODS!

Conservation IN YOUR BACKYARD



Back in 2015, the Little Forks Conservancy partnered with The Conservation Foundation to implement one of the Foundation's programs, Conservation@Home, in the Conservancy's service area.

The program was created with the intent of encouraging people to conserve nature in their yards and recognize them for their efforts. Over the past few years, with the flood and the pandemic, Conservation@Home took a back seat as staff had to direct their time to other things. However, Conservation@Home is making a comeback!

In 2022, Little Forks Conservancy performed multiple site visits throughout the year and increased the number of certified properties by 17%!

Recently, the Conservancy has been seeing more passion within the community about the importance of sustainability and implementing environmentally friendly practices. People can get involved in Conservation@Home no matter what size yard they have. The program's guiding practices focus on eco-friendly lawn care methods, ways to manage stormwater, planting native species, controlling invasive species, and building habitat for wildlife.

If you are interested in learning more about the program or getting a free site visit, reach out to Shelby at sgentle@littleforks.org or (989)835-4886 ext. 103. We are looking forward to another great year of Conservation@Home!



Fazio Family



Starmann Family



Laudemann Family

Citizen Science



Are you interested in finding ways to get outside and volunteer with the Little Forks Conservancy? As a Little Forks Citizen Scientist, you can assist us with gathering and analyzing data for research purposes.

Little Forks Conservancy's Citizen Science volunteers play a crucial part in the work that we do; their time and support are invaluable. Citizen Scientists have helped the Conservancy monitor the health of the Cedar River since 2015. Each spring and fall, groups of Citizen Scientists help Little Forks staff sample and identify macroinvertebrates in the Cedar River. Stream sampling volunteer opportunities are for everyone – no matter what skill level or experience.

Other opportunities include vernal pool monitoring on our nature preserves. Vernal pools are special types of wetlands that do not stay wet all the time, and unlike other wetlands, they dry up at some point. Let us know if you are interested in helping us map and monitor those pools.

Contact our office at info@littleforks.org or (989)835-4886 to get involved in either of these important Citizen Science efforts!



WELCOME, Lily!

This January, we welcomed our newest Huron Pines AmeriCorps member, Lily, to our team!

Lily is a Flint native who graduated from the University of Michigan with a degree in Environmental Science. Her passion for the environment is what led her to pursue her AmeriCorps service at Little Forks. We are excited to see all that Lily will accomplish during her service this year!



GIVE LOCAL MIDLAND



Celebrating 26 Years of Conservation Leadership!

Little Forks Conservancy was created in 1996 by local conservation-minded citizens working together to improve our natural resources for current and future generations to come.

HELP US CONTINUE THESE EFFORTS BY PARTICIPATING IN #GIVELocalMIDLAND, ON MAY 2, 2023!



Spring Events AT LITTLE FORKS

- **BioBlitz** | Entire month of April at Riverview Natural Area
- **Garlic Mustard Pull at the Szok Preserve** | Thursday, May 4th, 4:00pm–6:30pm
- **Spring Cedar River Stream Sampling in Gladwin** | Saturday, May 13th, 10:00am–2:30pm
- **Macroinvertebrate ID Night at the Conservancy's office** | Monday, May 15th, 5:30pm–7:00pm



LITTLE FORKS CONSERVANCY
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LITTLEFORKS.ORG



Board of Directors

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Treasurer Nolan Gay	Ryan Weiss
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The Little Forks Conservancy is an Accredited Land Trust, meeting the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence.

Staff

Executive Director | Elan Lipschitz, elipschitz@littleforks.org
 Land Conservation Specialist | Shelby Gentle, sgentle@littleforks.org
 Huron Pines AmeriCorps Member | Lily Kelsey, lkelsey@littleforks.org

Memorials & Honorary

In Memory of Bonnie Shaw Nine Pint Hunting Lodge	In Memory of Michael Jeremy House Tom and Cathy House
In Honor of Griffin and Katie Paula Renker	Pat House Deborah Allen Weinlander Fitzhugh Foundation
In Honor of Delaney and Camp Paula Renker	John Lauer Kelly Brady
In Memory of Dawn Sauve The Sauve Family	Jessica Mazur Melanie Brand
Memorial Donation for Winnie Rickert Deb and Tim Broderick	Joan and Michael Roberts Hewlett Foundation Board of Directors Kristen Sheppard-Guzelaydin and Eren Guzelaydin

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.

