

ISSUE 80

SUMMER 2022

PROTECT IMPROVE LEAD INSPIRE



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.



A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Elan Lipschitz

I've recently been reflecting on two important milestones for Little Forks Conservancy this year. The first is the two year anniversary of the catastrophic dam failures that devastated portions of our community. Even after two years, we continue to see recovery in the impacted areas. Due to the flooding, Little Forks has a new home office downtown Midland at 125 McDonald Street, losing the 105 Post St office from 5 feet of water in the lower level. Our preserves and easement properties absorbed much of the floodwaters and although some were impacted with debris and damage to structures, they served a vital purpose by protecting areas along the waterways.

The second important milestone is the 25-year anniversary of our founding! It is truly amazing to reflect on how far we have come and the many lives and lands that have played a part in helping us grow into a strong local conservation force. This has only been possible due to the support and encouragement of you, our many members and friends throughout the years. In 2021, we hit a monumental milestone of 4,000 acres of protected land, and we continue to see an uptick in the number of people spending time in nature, our preserves had more visitors than ever.

My big goal this year is to connect with more of our supporters, past and present, and to ask for feedback regarding "how we are doing" and "what more can Little Forks do." We hope you will look for our staff in downtown Midland at our new office or enjoying the many concerts, art fairs, expanded outdoor gathering space (the Commons). you can also join us for a volunteer event, a group hike, or at our upcoming fall event. We will continue to protect, improve, lead and inspire to make this area a healthy, vibrant community with a strong connection to the outdoors. Enjoy our latest newsletter and I look forward to connecting this year!

Denny Brooks



SAVE THE DATE - LITTLE FORKS CELEBRATION

September 24th, 2022

More Details to Come!



On a warm spring day, volunteers from The Dow Chemical Company's RISE employee group from the Great Lakes Bay Region and Central Michigan University's Alternative Breaks program came out in force to make a difference on Earth Day at Riverview Natural Area, located in Homer Township of Midland County and is Little Forks' largest natural area with 419-acres with four miles of trail to explore year-round. The focus on this day, was cleaning up old homestead debris on the riverbank, some items had been there since at least the 1930s!

Twenty-two volunteers met the challenge and removed over 1,800 pounds of trash. These two groups working alongside Little Forks volunteers really made this Earth Day one to remember. "Seeing everyone come together to help us on Earth Day was wonderful, and to get some heavy items from the field was a great accomplishment" said Preserve and Volunteer Manager Sara Huetteman. The debris included glass containers, metal parts from old farm equipment or furniture, and many used tires.

This day would not have been possible without Tina Queary Corporate Volunteer Manager of United Way, we can always reach out to her for big projects and she connects us to Dow Chemical employees. If you have a volunteer group that is looking for a project, contact Sara at shuetteman@littleforks.org. We can accomplish so much more with the help of our community to improve our local lands.



CEDAR RIVER PROPERTY PROTECTED FOREVER

Located along the Cedar River and Smiths Creek, you find a property that contains mature forest and farmland which makes up one of the more unique properties in the Cedar River Watershed. Working with Lee Ricky, and his two sons, Dylan and Levi, this 172-acre property is now protected forever with a conservation easement. This conservation easement was made possible through a federal grant administered by the State of Michigan to protect water quality of the Cedar River Watershed.

The property has been in the Ricky family for over 70 years and they has a long history of wildlife management going back to Lee's father, Lowell Ricky. This is the 14th project in the Cedar River watershed where Little Forks has protected over 1,170 acres to date and 9 miles of shoreline. "The culmination of this project took several years, but was well worth the effort as it is an important property upstream from Wiggins Lake and adjacent to the Gladwin Recreation Area" commented Elan Lipschitz, Executive Director. "We hope that this project can help us protect other lands in the neighborhood".

The Cedar River Watershed, located in Gladwin, Clare and Roscommon County, is a priority conservation area for the Little Forks Conservancy. This watershed contains a section of blue-ribbon trout stream, rolling topography, a wide diversity of wildlife habitat, and provide recreation opportunities on the river from fishing to kayaking. To benefit the overall health of a watershed we work with landowners to protect the river but also the surrounding land, as it makes a huge impact on water quality and biodiversity of the region.



Conservation Easement is voluntary legal agreement between the landowner and Little Forks Conservancy that limit certain activities on the property in order to conserve its valuable natural resources permanently.

Little Forks Conservancy is an Accredited Land Trust meeting the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence. To learn more or set up a meeting to discuss protection of your land contact Land Conservation Specialist, Shelby Cain at scain@littleforks.org or call at (989)835-4886- ext 103

VANDERKELEN FAMILY DONATES LAND

Tom and Barbara VanderKelen generously donated a 42-acre property to the Conservancy at the end of 2021. The property is highly visible with its three ponds and large wetland areas located along Union Road near US-10 West.

"Our family enjoys the four seasons in Michigan, and we enjoy hunting, fishing, and the natural beauty of our state. We feel that donating the land to a local nature conservancy is a positive contribution to the future of our local area and State," commented Tom VanderKelen on their decision to protect this family property.



This property provides an incredible opportunity to develop a nature preserve in close proximity to the City of Midland and provide a benefit to the surrounding community with opportunities to hike and fish. In the 1950s when US-10 was constructed, soil was taken from this property to create the overpass and in turn created the ponds on the property. This change produced a unique ecosystem of open water, wetlands and uplands providing habitat for a wide variety of wildlife including migratory waterfowl and a family of beavers who resides on the property.

Do you want to learn more about what we are working on or how you can help support future activities on this property? if so, contact our office, we'd love to hear from you!



VISIT [LITTLEFORKS.ORG/NATURAL-AREAS](https://www.littleforks.org/natural-areas)

Little Forks Conservancy owns and manages over 870 acres for recreation and habitat, each one offering a different experience. Check out their informational pages on the website to find maps, what to expect and any current trail notices. In addition to downloadable maps there is an interactive map you can explore and see what is near by to plan your trip.



THANK YOU FOR GIVING LOCAL!

Give Local is a chance to donate directly to the endowment fund of nonprofits in Midland County. This year in just 24 hours, 889 donor participated in the event raising over \$450,000 for 72 nonprofits. Little Forks Conservancy recieved \$6,370 from 39 generous donors.

With your help, we will continue to provide natural spaces that invite all to spend time amongst the wild. We will continue to bring conservation knowledge to the community and protect the river systems of mid Michigan.

VERY GOOD CONDITIONS IN THE CEDAR RIVER

Teams were out at six locations to monitor the health of the Cedar River Watershed this spring. This is our seventh year coordinating this citizen science project. Our dedicated volunteers collect macroinvertebrates, which are insects in their nymph and larvel stage visible to the naked eye from sampled from a varitey of habitats in the river. We are able to determine the overall health of the river with these insects and our results showed that all sites scored very good to excellent.



We will be back in the river this fall on October 8th. This event is family friendly and is a great opportunity to get out into parts of our region you might not know about. After the sampling, everyone gathers to tell stories about their day and have a meal.



This program would not be possible without support from our volunteers. To get involved, reach out to Erin Dodd our Huron Pines AmeriCorps member who coordinated the event, at edodd@littleforks.org. No previous training is necessary to get started, even for identification night!



BUY A SHIRT, SUPPORT LITTLE FORKS!

Back by popular demand! We have reopened a second round of our anniversary shirt sale through Bonfire. A huge thank you to all who have purchased so far! We raised \$353 with your support as profits directly benefit Little Forks.

Shirt Description: the front has a special 25th Anniversary Logo. The back is the outline of the entire Tittabawassee River Watershed with Clare, Gladwin, and Midland Counties highlighted and across the top our mission words "Protect.Improve.Lead.Inspire".

Little Forks Conservancy ANNIVERSARY SHIRT SALE



\$353 Raised

52 SHIRTS

GOAL TO SELL 100 SHIRTS

Get yours today at
bonfire.com/lfc-25th-anniversary-shirt/



VOLUNTEERS GET THINGS DONE : MARY HASLAM

Mary Haslam joined our board in 2017 and has been a dedicated volunteer ever since. She has taken on projects she can do on her own time, such as maintain a pollinator garden in Emerson park, and volunteers as a Preserve Monitor at Riverview Natural Area. We reached out to Mary to see what she enjoys most about volunteering with Little Forks Conservancy. "I enjoy volunteering with LFC because land conservation in mid-Michigan is important to me, and Little Forks is a great steward of the lands they protect. Also, it's fun to meet other volunteers and to spend the day outside making improvements to a beautiful natural area."

A fond memory Mary has while volunteering happened during the Spring Stream Sampling in 2021. While at the George and Sue Lane Preserve, picking macroinvertebrates from a tray and finding a small trout added to the excitement of the event! The young trout was returned to the river quickly.

Mary thinks others should become a volunteer at Little Forks because "there's something that everyone can do. It's great for families, businesses, and retirees to sign up and provide much-needed muscle for improvement projects." We are thankful for all Mary does for Little Forks.



THANKS FRIENDS OF THE PERE MARQUETTE RAIL TRAIL FOR
CONTINUED PARTNERSHIP AT THE AVERILL PRESERVE.



LITTLE FORKS CONSERVANCY
125 MCDONALD ST
MIDLAND, MI 48640



HIKES AND PROGRAMMING

Summer Solstice Hike at Averill Preserve
June 21st at 5:30 - 6:30 PM • 1 mile • Easy

Salamander Meander at Riverview Natural Area
June 22nd at 10 - 11:30 AM • <1 Mile • Easy

Dog Days of Summer Hike at Riverview Natural Area
July 17th at 10 AM • 1- 3 Miles • Easy to Moderate

CNC Story Hour at Nature Play Area of Averill Preserve
July 27th at 10AM • 1600ft • Easy

Floodplain Hike with Elan at Forestview Natural Area
August 11th at 6-8 PM • 2-3 miles • Moderate to Difficult

National Dog Day Hike At Forestview Natural Area
August 26th at 6-7 PM • 1.3 Miles • Easy

Logging History at Averill Preserve/Averill Rollway Pavilion
September 21st 6-7PM • Easy

Visit littleforks.org/events to see the latest list of events.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Nolan Gay - Treasurer
Mary Haslam - Secretary
Steve Wilkowski - At-Large

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MEMORIALS & HONORARY

In Memory of Jill Pontious Zakett and Tom Zakett
Dr. Eugene and Deana Beckham

In Honor of Tom Misner
David Misner

In Memory of John Winchester
Sandra Berger

In Honor of Reverend Karen Blatt
Regina Raine

In Memory of Barbara L. Shaheen
Deb and Tim Broderick

In Memory of BJ Scogg
Herb Scogg

In Memory of Fred A. Blanchard
Hydrogeologic Inc.