

THE LITTLE FORKS CONSERVANCY



Spring 2011

Preserve Today, Ensure Tomorrow

Issue 52

Couple Conserves 30 Acres



At The Little Forks Conservancy's office Michael and Kathy Helmick sign a conservation easement which permanently protects their 30 acre retreat in Clare County.

When Michael and Kathy Helmick were looking for a northern retreat, it didn't take them long to decide on 30 acres of forest located in Clare County. Now, Mr. and Mrs. Helmick have donated a conservation easement to The Little Forks Conservancy to ensure that their forested retreat is protected forever.

"I was looking for some property," Mr. Helmick said, "and we went out there and said 'This is it.'"

Since purchasing the land in 2007, Mr. Helmick has thousands of photographs and video taken from trail cameras of deer, bobcat, turkey, coyote and more. "When I bought the property I was hoping there were a few deer," he said. "I had no clue that there was that much wildlife."

Mr. Helmick said that his father "always wanted to get a place up north and do what we're doing so we

Continued on page 2

Family Protects 4,400 Feet of River



From left: Fred Hubert, Rosalie Miller, Land Protection Specialist Elan Lipschitz, and Maurice Miller pose after signing a conservation easement to protect 40 acres in Midland County.

Over six decades ago Fred Hubert and Rosalie Miller's parents settled their family along the banks of the Pine River in Midland County. Today, they have donated a conservation easement to The Little Forks Conservancy to protect 40 acres along that river forever.

The land, once part of a larger farm, was used as pasture for sheep. "It used to be full of sandburs," Fred Hubert recalled. "While grazing the sheep's

coat would just get covered in burs."

Heavily grazed, the land had only a few trees when the family purchased it. "It was just open," Mr. Hubert said. "Everything was mowed off to the dirt."

Most of the trees were planted over the years by the Hubert family. Rosalie Miller remembered how her uncle "would go to the Conservation District tree sale and buy hundreds of

Continued on page 2

OUR MISSION:

The Little Forks Conservancy permanently protects land with natural and cultural resources that add to the quality of life in our community.



Couple, Continued

dedicated it to him. His name was Whitey, so we call it Whitey's Woods."

Mrs. Helmick added, "I figure he's the one bringing all the animals there."

Mr. and Mrs. Helmick first learned about the Conservancy from their neighbors, Robert and Susan Piesko, who donated a conservation easement on 140 acres of their land in 2007. After discussing it with their neighbors, Mr. Helmick knew that a conservation easement would be a good fit for his property. A conservation easement is a voluntary, legal agreement between The Little Forks Conservancy and a landowner which determines the uses of the

property in order to best conserve its natural condition forever.

He said, "I bought the property with the intention of keeping it in its natural state, so it only made sense to make it permanent."

Elan Lipschitz, the Conservancy's land protection specialist, said, "It's great to be able to add 30 acres to an already protected 140 acres. Building on the amount of conserved land in the area enhances wildlife habitat, protects water quality and preserves the feeling of wilderness."

To learn more, please contact our office at (989) 835-4886 or visit our website at www.littleforks.org.



A large emergent wetland covers a portion of the Helmicks' primarily forested land.

ENHANCED FEDERAL TAX INCENTIVES RENEWED

The enhanced incentive raises the deduction a donor can take for donating a qualifying conservation agreement from 30% of their adjusted gross income in any year to 50%, allows farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100% of their adjusted gross income and increases the number of years over which a donor can carry over unused deductions.

The enhanced incentives have been extended to the end of 2011. To learn more, contact our office.

Family, Continued

trees. He would bring a wash tub full of trees for us to plant." The Hubert family estimates that they have planted tens of thousands of trees over four decades.

"It's hard to imagine looking at the beautiful forest today that it once was bare pasture," said Elan Lipschitz, the Conservancy's land protection specialist. "The entire Hubert family has put a lot of time and love into this land and it shows."

The Hubert family participated in some of the Conservancy's very first meetings to promote awareness of conservation easements

and land conservation options. The conservation easement is a voluntary, legal agreement between The Little Forks Conservancy and a landowner which determines the uses of the property in order to best conserve its natural condition forever. The land remains privately owned and is not open to the public.

While the family remained interested in completing a conservation easement through the years, Mr. Hubert said, things came up that put the project on hold.

"The completion of this project reflects the decades



The Pine River as it flows past the Hubert Family property. The property is located along 4,400 feet of the river.

of good stewardship by the entire Hubert family," said Douglas Koop, executive director of the Conservancy. "They all reached the decision to protect it and worked through the process together to make it a

reality. The Conservancy is so pleased to be a part of protecting this amazing family land."

Mrs. Miller concluded, "We like to leave it wild. We want people to be able to see it and enjoy it."

Project Partners

-1999-

- Don Blades, 274 acres

-2000-

- Hugh & Eileen Starks, 40 acres
- Borys & Lubo Zura, 44 acres

-2001-

- William H. Meek, 75 acres
- Glenn & Carol Sanford, 20 acres

-2003-

- Ceo Bauer, 236 acres
- The Midland Area Community Foundation, 41.5 acres
- Nancy Steiner, 9.8 acres

-2004-

- Phil & Janet Hehnl, 5 acres
- Dr. Kyung-Sik Ahn, 31 acres
- Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy, 39 acres
- George & Sue Lane, 191 acres

-2005-

- Ceo Bauer, 78 acres
- Scott & Kathryn Whalen, 119 acres

-2006-

- Blanche Stark, 79 acres
- Shellenbarger Land Company, 80 acres

-2007-

- David & Anna Spencer, 154.5 acres
- Norman & Patricia Engel, 190 acres
- George & Sue Lane, 80 acres
- Robert & Susan Piesko, 140 acres
- Richard & Kathy Shellenbarger, 73.4 acres
- Jon & Elizabeth Ringelberg, 70 acres
- Gerald & Pamela Schmiedicke, 80 acres
- Elizabeth Levi, 8.5 acres

-2008-

- Robin & Ardith Arbury, 219 acres
- L. Charles Christensen, 200 acres

-2010-

- Robert & Cheryl Duda, 24 acres
- Michael and Kathy Helmick, 30 acres

-2011-

- The Hubert Family, 40 acres

Stewardship Volunteers Needed

Help us get our preserves ready for visitors! The Conservancy is gearing up for stewardship season, and we need your help.

- **Blaze a trail.** Help us construct a trail this spring. The new trail will take preserve visitors from the parking area to the Tittabawassee River. An Eagle Scout project will help with the cre-

ation of this trail and building of boardwalk as necessary.

- **Adopt a planter.** Grab your gardening gloves and help us replant the planter box at the Averill Preserve Overlook.
- **Join our team!** Our Tuesday Averill Stewardship Team, led by Ed Elliott and Glenn Sanford, will continue their work



improving our trails, removing invasive species, and taking care of existing plantings.

If you are interested in lending a hand, contact our office at (989) 835-4886.

Funds Still Available for Conservation Easements

If you own land in the Cedar River watershed, now may be the best time to protect it with a conservation easement. The Conservancy has \$250,000 in grant funds to purchase conservation easements from landowners in the Cedar River watershed.

The Conservancy can pay up to 50% of the value of the conservation easement as determined by a qualified appraisal. The other 50% may qualify for a fed-

eral income tax deduction. However, time is running out. The funding for the conservation easement purchase program is available until September. Enhanced tax incentives for 2011 are available only until the end of the year.

This may be the last time any funding is available as these types of programs are being targeted for budget cuts. Now is the time to begin the discussion as it takes several months to

complete a conservation easement.

Properties must be located in the Cedar River watershed and protection of the land must benefit water quality. This grant is funded through the State of Michigan. To date the Conservancy has protected almost 800 acres of land in the watershed and over 18,000 feet of waterway and shoreline.

Contact Elan Lipschitz at (989)835-4886.

What's New at Riverview

Thinking about visiting Riverview Natural Area? Thanks to a generous grant from the Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation, Riverview now has a parking area and a sign!

The new parking area can accommodate approximately 15 cars.

The Conservancy will be working this spring to link the existing trails to the



Our new sign!

new parking area.

For directions and a map of Riverview Natural Area, stop by our office or visit our website.



The Conservancy would like to thank **Geoffry and Jenifer Kusch** for donating a walk-behind mower and trailer. This will be a tremendous help in maintaining the trails at the Averill Preserve and Riverview Natural Area. Their gift is greatly appreciated as we rapidly prepare for stewardship season.



The Little Forks Conservancy
105 Post Street
Midland, MI 48640



On the Land:

RIVER OTTER TRACKS

Eldon and Judy Enger recently discovered river otter tracks at Riverview Natural Area. In winter, look for flattened trails in the snow, known as “slips,” where an otter has slid on its stomach between lopes.

Snowshoe Hikes at Riverview



Thanks to everyone who came out to Riverview Natural Area for a snowshoe hike this winter!

We offer a special thanks to Dennis Pilaske and Tom Lenon of Chippewa Nature Center for leading us and for lending their snowshoes.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

| | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Eric Brubaker | Maureen Craig |
| Judy Enger | Carol W. Feider |
| Bill Gebo | Bethany Goodman |
| Jill Gushow | Geoffry Kusch |
| George Lane | Jan McGuire |
| Dan Rader | Elyse M. Rogers |
| Glenn Sanford | Jerry Ziarno |

STAFF

Douglas Koop
Executive Director
Elan Lipschitz
Land Protection Specialist
Joelle Ferguson
Communications Specialist

Phone: 989-835-4886

www.littleforks.org

info@littleforks.org

