



## With Help, Invasives Species Don't Have a Chance

Lurking in the woods and fields of our nature preserves is a threat that may not be recognizable to a first-time visitor. They may look innocent enough. They may even have interesting flowers. But, these plants are insidious – they are invasive species.

Due to their lack of natural predators, invasive species can easily take over an entire landscape. Over time, they choke out native plants and animals in a region.

For the last few years, The Little Forks Conservancy has been doing battle with several invasive species on our preserves including autumn olive, spotted knapweed and buckthorn.

Now, the Conservancy has help in the fight against these non-native invasive plants. The Little Forks Conservancy is thrilled to welcome AmeriCorps member Erin Quetell to our team.

Originally from Rochester, MI, Erin is a recent graduate from Grand Valley State

University with a bachelor of science in biology.

As part of her service as Watershed Stewardship Coordinator, she will be leading invasive species control workdays for the Conservancy.

"For anyone who likes getting their hands a little dirty, workdays are a lot of fun," said Erin.

"I'm excited to get to know the Conservancy's volunteers and to help improve the preserves."

In partnership with the Leon P. Martuch Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Erin will also serve the Cedar River Watershed. Her service there will include stream restoration and mapping.

"I am very excited to start my service with Little Forks Conservancy and the Leon P. Martuch Chapter of Trout Unlimited," said Erin.

Erin is serving through the Huron Pines AmeriCorps program through the end of October. Huron Pines is a Gaylord- based not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization with a mission to conserve the forests, lakes and streams



of Northeast Michigan.

AmeriCorps is a network of three programs— AmeriCorps\*State and National, AmeriCorps\*VISTA, and AmeriCorps\*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC)—that each year support the engagement of nearly 75,000 Americans in service to meet critical needs in education, the environment, public safety, homeland security, and other areas.

If you would like to help Erin and the Conservancy fight invasive species, please contact her at (989) 835-4886 or [equetell@littleforks.org](mailto:equetell@littleforks.org). Or, join us at our office for a Volunteer Open House on Wednesday, April 10 from 6 to 8 p.m.

**OUR MISSION:**  
The Little Forks Conservancy permanently protects and preserves natural lands that add to the quality of life in our mid-Michigan community.

## From the Director: Leave The Trust Fund Alone



Decades ago, a compromise was achieved with the oil and gas industry which sought to extract publicly owned resources from under the Pigeon River State Forest—a vast tract of forests, wetlands, unique habitats and wildlife including newly re-established elk populations.

In exchange for the extraction of the non-renewable oil and gas resources, a royalty would be paid into a trust fund. The purpose of this fund would be primarily to assist local governments (cities, townships and counties) to acquire and develop recreation lands for their residents at a share of the full cost.

Only twice has the model been tweaked—mainly to deal with the percentages allocated to acquisition vs. development and to establish a cap on the fund with excess flowing to assist in State Park management. Twice the voters have

constitutionally protected the program. With overwhelming support, the citizenry approved such a move because they feared control by the legislature would see the purpose of the Fund violated for any “immediate” funding shortfall they did not have the political will to fix themselves.

Today’s attack is centered on dredging harbors. Due to low lake levels (one of the predicted consequences of climate change) many harbors on the Great Lakes are facing access issues.

Funding to dredge the big commercial harbors (including Saginaw Bay and River) is available through the Corps of Engineers. More funds are available through the Waterways Commission.

The Governor has made a reasonable proposal to use funds from the Commission and add General Fund dollars to dredge nearly 50 recreational harbors around the state.

Some legislators see this as their opportunity to open the Trust Fund for a redirection of proceeds, removing those funds from local government access for their local recreational needs.

While such a use sounds blandly innocuous, a little bit

of research finds that many of the proponents have previously floated opening up the Trust Fund for road and infrastructure improvements, road building into state forestland to increase timber harvests, school funds, and any number of recent pet projects deemed more worthy of these restricted funds by any number legislators, on both sides of the aisle.

Only a few years ago Michigan won the dubious rank of 47th in per capita expenditures on conservation – and that included the \$20 million spent from the Trust Fund! That amount equates to about \$2 per person per year, hardly a significant investment to protect “Pure Michigan.”

This, I think, is one of those times when, “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” Leave the small dedicated funding in place and make a responsible decision that asks for an allocation of general fund dollars to support a short term fix to a current problem that may or may not be a permanent situation.

History tells us that a few years from now we will either be discussing normal lake levels or it will have gotten drastically worse. Only time will tell.

## Grant Extension Means More Land to Protect

Our work in the Cedar River Watershed is not done yet!

Our second grant from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to protect land in the Cedar River Watershed has helped protect an additional 189 acres and nearly two miles of rivers and streams in the region.

The grant, which was set to expire at the end of last year, has been extended through May 31, 2013.

Our goal is to complete at least one more conservation easement project in the

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*“Our second grant...to protect land in the Cedar River Watershed has already helped to protect an additional 189 acres and nearly two miles of our region’s rivers and streams.”*

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Cedar River Watershed.

Elan Lipschitz, director of land conservation, said, “We’re grateful for the grant extension, which allows us to protect more land in this important cold-water fishery.”

Through this project, landowners sell a conservation easement to the Conservancy at an amount less than its appraised value. The difference between the

appraised value and the amount paid to the landowner is considered in-kind match.

“Without this match, it would be impossible to leverage the funding from the State of Michigan to complete these projects,” said Elan.

If you are interested in learning more about this program, please contact Elan at 989.835.4886 or [elipschitz@littleforks.org](mailto:elipschitz@littleforks.org).

## Conservancy to Assist Kawakawlin River Project

One of our region’s unique watersheds has been awarded a nearly one million dollar grant from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Fund.

The grant will focus on improving water quality in the Kawakawlin River Watershed, which spans portions of Gladwin, Midland, Saginaw and Bay Counties.

The region’s mix of farmland, forest and urban areas provides a challenge for maintaining the water quality of the Kawakawlin River.

“Each of these land uses has a different

impact on our waterways,” said Elan Lipschitz, director of land conservation.

To address these impacts and protect the region’s water quality, a management plan was developed for the Kawakawlin River Watershed.

From this plan, the Bay County Drain Commission will be leading the collaborative effort along with local landowners and community partners.

As part of the grant, the Conservancy will receive \$100,000 to purchase



conservation easements in the Kawakawlin River Watershed.

“Conservation easements can play a pivotal role in maintaining water quality in our region,” said Elan.

He added, “We’re thrilled that conservation easements have been selected as part of this multifaceted approach to protecting water quality across such a diverse landscape.”

To learn more about the Conservancy’s work to improve the Kawakawlin River Watershed, contact our office.

## Last-Minute Project Sends 2012 Out on a High Note:

### 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 Hehnlín, 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



#### Daniel Laur and Suzann Barry-Laur Conservation Easement December 2012

Five days before the end of 2012, Director of Land Conservation Elan Lipschitz drove to the Gladwin County Courthouse to record our fifth conservation easement for the year.

Only a few weeks before the end of the year, Daniel contacted the Conservancy to donate a conservation easement on more than 25 acres of his property along 2,500 feet of the Tobacco River.

"This stretch of river is ideal for trout," said Elan Lipschitz, director of land conservation. "The forested banks sustain the cool water temperatures needed for trout to flourish."

A unique mix of land types, the property contains wetland areas as well as prime farmland.

"We're truly grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Laur for protecting this beautiful property," said Elan "and their patience as we worked quickly to complete this project."



#### The Guthrie Family Conservation Easement November 2012

The Guthrie family of Monroe has been gathering for over 60 years to hunt in Clare County.

For the last thirty years, Richard Guthrie and his wife Mary, Thomas E. and Darla Guthrie, Thomas W. and Connie Guthrie, and Gregory R. and Kathy Stanifer have enjoyed their 40-acre property for deer, turkey and even partridge seasons.

Now the family has once again come together, this time to make sure that the property they purchased together is conserved forever. The family signed a conservation easement with the Conservancy to permanently protect this cherished hunting land.

Richard said, "I just enjoy sitting out in the woods. If I shoot anything it's secondary to just being out there."

The property was protected through the Conservancy's Cedar River Project, funded by a grant by the State of Michigan.



#### Kernie and Jackie Gilliam Conservation Easement October 2012

After purchasing their property in Gladwin County, Kernie and Jackie Gilliam became interested in maintaining the health of the Cedar River which flows for 1,500 feet along their property.

Their conservation easement is the result of their dedication to protecting the river. The Gilliams worked with the Conservancy to protect more than 33 acres of their land.

This beautiful place has been host to many meaningful events for the family. Perhaps the most special was held last year, when Kernie and Jackie's daughter got married there under a wooden arbor that Kernie built.

Kernie concluded, "I wish everyone would. If all [our neighbors] would get on board, [the river] would be protected for a good stretch."

The property was protected through a grant by the State of Michigan.

## Six Properties and over 250 Acres Conserved



### **Richard and Kathy Shellenbarger Conservation Easement July 2012**

Richard and Kathy Shellenbarger are no strangers to land conservation. In fact, they signed conservation easements with the Conservancy to protect 80 acres in 2006 and 73 acres in 2007.

Richard and Kathy signed their third conservation easement with the Conservancy to protect a three acre addition to the 80-acre property.

"Kathy and I have enjoyed our involvement with the Conservancy because it's maintaining the property the way we want it to be," said Richard.

He said, "Left unprotected, it would have impacted what we wanted to do on the 80-acre property. We have no plans to sell or subdivide it. We want to pass it along to our kids."

The property was protected through the Conservancy's Cedar River Project, funded by a grant by the State of Michigan.



### **Riverview Addition Land Acquisition July 2012**

One of the most spectacular things about visiting Riverview Natural Area is standing along the high bank of the Tittabawassee River and watching the bald eagles perched along the opposite bank.

We're excited to announce that The Little Forks Conservancy has purchased 70 acres located along almost 3,000 feet of Tittabawassee River frontage directly across from our 419-acre Riverview Natural Area.

"Once we learned that the property was up for auction, several key Conservancy supporters including Michael Dow, Dave and Patti Kepler, Margaret Riecker and Lynn White pledged their support," said Doug Koop, executive director. "Without their generosity and leadership, we would not have been able to protect this extraordinary property on such short notice."

For more information about our preserves, visit our website.



### **Jim and Beth Wallace Conservation Easement June 2012**

For Jim and Beth Wallace, signing a conservation easement is the culmination of their work restoring their land along the West Branch of the Cedar River.

Jim said, "The more you improve the land, the more you start thinking about the environment. We made it for our kids to play. Now, life has gone by and we're looking at it as a place for our grandkids to play."

Jim's work with conservation began in the 1970's. He said, "Bluebirds were a dying species then and people were starting to put up bluebird houses. With my special friend and neighbor, Dave Young, we built 50 bluebird houses."

Another neighbor, Norm Engel, told Jim about the Conservancy. Norm protected 190 acres in 2007 directly across the Cedar River from the Wallace family.

Both properties were protected through grants by the State of Michigan.

## Project Partners

- 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 & Kathy Helmick, *30 acres*

### **-2011-**

- The Hubert Family, *40 acres*

### **-2012-**

- James & Elizabeth Wallace, *90 acres*
- Richard and Kathy Shellenbarger, *3 acres*
- Robin and Ardith Arbury, *70 acres*
- Kernerie and Jackie Gilliam, *31.5 acres*
- The Guthrie Family, *40 acres*
- Daniel Laur and Suzanne Barry-Laur, *26 acres*

## Elan Promoted to Director of Land Conservation

Congratulations to Elan Lipschitz who has the new title of Director Land Conservation.

Elan joined the Conservancy's staff as the Land Protection Specialist in June 2000.

"We've asked Elan to take on more and more management of the Conservancy's land program over the years and this change in title reflects his increased responsibilities," stated Executive Director Douglas Koop.

Elan's role has expanded with each completed project. His stewardship

responsibilities include annual monitoring of all 29 conservation easement properties and managing the Conservancy's preserves.

In addition, he is the primary contact for negotiating new projects.

Doug added, "The success of our Cedar River Project is owed in large part to Elan's hard work and dedication."

Elan earned his bachelor's degree in



*Elan Lipschitz (far left) with Kernie and Jackie Gilliam on their protected land.*

Environmental Studies from the University of Kansas. After joining the Conservancy, he completed his master's degree in Environmental Science at Bard College.

## Out & About

Stop by and see us at one of these upcoming community events!

### Mid-Michigan Farm and Garden Show

Thursday, March 23  
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Gladwin Community Arena  
402 James Robertson Dr.  
Gladwin, MI 48624  
Admission: Free

### Earth Day Expo

Saturday, April 20  
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
Midland Center for the Arts  
1801 W. St. Andrews Rd.  
Midland, MI 48640  
Admission: Free

### Michigan Lakes & Streams Conference

April 26 & 27  
Double Tree  
Riverfront Hotel  
1 Wenonah Park Place  
Bay City, MI 48708  
Admission: \$75 both days/  
\$45 one day

## Two Grants Provide Helping Hands at the Office

It's been a busy start to the new year at our office. In January, The Conservancy welcomed two new members to our staff.

Kelley Moore has joined our office as a part-time administrative assistant thanks to a grant from the Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation.

In 2012, the Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation awarded a \$50,000 grant to the Conservancy to assist with our outreach.

Kelley will help us with mailings and community events, so more people can discover the amazing properties we have helped to protect.

A long-time Conservancy volunteer, Kelley will be graduating this spring from Saginaw Valley State University with a bachelor's degree in history.

The Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation grant will also assist us with reaching out through media channels we haven't utilized to date.

One of those channels is social media. The Conservancy has received a grant from The Dow Chemical Company Foundation to help us increase our presence on



*Welcome Stephanie Hentschel (left) and Kelley Moore!*

social media. With the help of Northwood University student Stephanie Hentschel, the Conservancy will be evaluating our use of websites such as Facebook and develop a plan to provide better information on those websites.

## Sustainable Lands Program Up and Running

The Little Forks Conservancy is pleased to recognize the Molitor Family, Leon P. Martuch Chapter of Trout Unlimited, and Carol Busick as Sustainable Lands Partners!

The Conservancy created our Sustainable Lands Partner Program to recognize landowners who take steps to preserve the natural character of their land.

These properties feature a mix habitat types including rivers and waterways, mature forests, unique wetland habitats, and open fields.

This voluntary program provides our Sustainable Lands partners with education on invasive species as well as keeping them informed about natural



resources workshops in our region.

For more information, contact Elan at [elipschitz@littleforks.org](mailto:elipschitz@littleforks.org)

## Network Provides Assistance to Forest Owners

If you own forested land, the Saginaw Bay Forested Landowners Network wants to hear from you!

Lead by the Michigan Forest Association and other conservation organizations, the Network is a collaborative group working to preserve the health of local forests.

The Network hopes to assist landowners with

managing their forest, to work with landowners on forest management at a landscape scale and to connect landowners to resource professionals and programs.

Outreach to landowners will be focused on the Rifle River Watershed, the Cass River Watershed, and the properties along Carroll Creek near the Conservancy's 419-acre

### Save the Date!

Cass River Watershed  
Forestry Meeting  
April 26, 2013  
Caro, MI  
Contact our office for  
more details!

Riverview Natural Area.

For more information about the Saginaw Bay Forested Landowners Network, contact Elan at [elipschitz@littleforks.org](mailto:elipschitz@littleforks.org).

## Thank you!

We are extremely grateful to the help and support of these members and friends:

**Jim & Bette Tollar**  
for the donation of tools and equipment to help with our stewardship.

**Eldon & Judy Enger**  
for the donation of tools and equipment to help with our stewardship.

### 2012 Autumn Olive Exterminators Crew

Glenn Sanford  
Ed Elliott  
Dale Anderson  
Tammy Artl  
Justin Artl  
Megan Artl  
Denny Brooks  
Steve Bryant  
Dan Cline  
Linda Cline  
Mark Kuehl  
Chuck Martin  
Dan Radar  
Shelly Radar  
Bill Thomson  
John VanDalen  
Joyce VanDalen

## Preserves Don't Slow Down for Winter



The Conservancy's work on and at our preserves doesn't stop with snow on the ground. At left, Erin Quetell and Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy's Trevor Edmonds work on daubers for stewardship work days. At right, Kyle Bagnall of Chippewa Nature Center recently led an interpretive winter walk at Riverview Natural Area.



The Little Forks Conservancy  
105 Post Street  
Midland, MI 48640

## Save the Date for These Upcoming Events

### Volunteer Open House

105 Post Street • Midland  
April 10 • 6 to 8 p.m.

If you want to volunteer with the Conservancy but don't know how you can help, join us for our Volunteer Open House. You can learn about (and sign up for) our different volunteer opportunities.

### Wetland Walk

Riverview Natural Area  
May 11 • 2 p.m.

Grab your boots and join AmeriCorps service member Erin Quetell at Riverview Riverview Natural as we explore the extensive wetland habitats throughout this beautiful 419-acre property.



### Follow us on Facebook or Twitter?

Take a quick survey to tell us what you want to hear from us!

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/7PRNWQ6>

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kathy Brooks	George Lane
Eric Brubaker	Chuck Martin
Greg Dardas	Jan McGuire
Jon DeGroot	Dan Rader
Bill Gebo	Steve Scott
Bethany Goodman	Bill Thomson
Jill Gushow	Jerry Ziarno
Kristen Jones	

### STAFF

Douglas Koop  
*Executive Director*  
Elan Lipschitz  
*Director of Land Conservation*  
Joelle Ferguson  
*Communications Specialist*  
Kelley Moore  
*Administrative Assistant*

Phone: 989-835-4886

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[info@littleforks.org](mailto:info@littleforks.org)



## Volunteer OPEN HOUSE

THE CONSERVANCY'S OFFICE  
105 MAIN STREET • MIDLAND

Wednesday, April 10  
6 to 8 p.m.

